

2nd Sunday of Easter -Divine Mercy Sunday- April 3, 2016

"Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nailmarks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." These words of Thomas forever labels him as "Doubting Thomas."

Thomas gets a bad rap. The disciples in the upper room when Jesus makes his first appearance are no better than Thomas. If we take a look at what goes on in the verses immediately preceding today's Gospel, we find that these disciples are just as unbelieving as Thomas.

"Mary of Magdala went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord." This precedes today's Gospel. And what do these disciples do? They huddle in fear in that upper room. If they have believed in Jesus' Resurrection, their actions suggest otherwise. They do not believe the words of Mary Magdalene. They still live in fear. They will not believe until they see.

So what does Jesus do? He appears. He shows them his wounds. They have believed, but only after seeing him...seeing his wounds.

God opens the tomb. These disciples lock the doors. Jesus breathes on them the Spirit. They in turn do nothing, except talk...to each other and to Thomas. So why should Thomas believe? After a week, he doesn't see much change in them. They still huddle in fear.

Thomas is not doubting. He desperately wants to believe. He doesn't understand how? Just like the others who have had the benefit of seeing the Risen Lord, Thomas wants to see. He wants to see and touch for one reason...so that he too might believe.

My friends, that is not doubt. It is authenticity! It is a struggle that we all know too well.

What do you want to believe about Jesus' resurrection? What gets in the way? What makes it difficult to believe? How are you wrestling and struggling with the resurrection of Jesus in your life?

We want to believe in the Resurrection, but we see wars, innocent people being persecuted, loved ones who suffer, children who experience brokenness, the death of a child, spouse or parent.

We are not much different than Thomas. We seek evidence. We want to see the struggles end. We want to see suffering eliminated, relationships restored.

Far too often we fail to see the power of God in the Resurrection, but instead place our faith in what we judge to be sufficient evidence. Our preconceived ideas become more locks on the door. They won't keep Jesus out, but it will keep us trapped inside and it won't be long before our house becomes our tomb.

John doesn't tell us that Thomas actually touched the wounds. What we learn throughout John's gospel is that believing doesn't come from physical evidence, but from spiritual insight.

The Resurrection does not end wars, but it does reveal the dignity and sanctity of human life. It empowers us to speak out and work for justice, freedom, and peace.

The Resurrection does not cure disease, but it moves our hearts to love and have compassion for those who suffer.

The Resurrection does not heal broken relationships, but it plants in our hearts that ache to break down walls and heal those relationships.

The Resurrection does not eliminate our pain or tears over the death of a loved one. Rather, it provides us with strength to live without our loved one with fortitude and patience. The Resurrection allows us to not mourn without hope, but rather be thankful in our remembrance of God's abundant goodness and with joyful anticipation of everlasting life with those we love.

Every time we live in the power of the resurrection we engage the world, one another, and our life in a new way.

When we live in the power of the Resurrection, we can't help but find ourselves engaged in the Works of Mercy. The hungry, the thirsty, the sick, the prisoner, the outcast, the naked, the doubtful, the sinner, and the dead, experience the power of the Resurrection by our works, our words, and our prayers.

In the end, it doesn't really matter what Thomas did. That's not the issue. This story isn't about Thomas. It's about us. How will we live? What will we do? Have we come to believe?

As we continue our celebration of this Eucharist, as we approach the altar of the Lord, as we are nourished by the Body and Blood of our Lord, Soul and Divinity, may we proclaim with Thomas...My Lord and my God.

— *Deacon Paul Lewis*