



Church of the Holy Family
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Reflection for 2nd Sunday of Easter

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, the second Sunday of Easter is also called Divine Mercy Sunday. Why does the Church celebrate a feast for God's mercy? It is to honour God who is so merciful to both sinners and saints alike.

In today's Gospel, the Risen Lord reveals His mercy to the disciples. When He appeared to them, He could have remonstrated them for being unfaithful, He could have chastised them for being cowards, He could have scolded them for betraying Him. Instead, He shows them His mercy. He says to them, "Peace be with you". He shows them His hands and His side and then repeats again, "Peace be with you". Jesus blesses them with peace just as He wants to bless us with peace. One sign of the presence of the Risen Lord is the presence of His peace, a peace the world cannot give. This is the peace experienced in the midst of undergoing turmoil.

In today's gospel, Thomas doubted. He was not there in the community when Jesus appeared to them the first time. Hence, he demanded both visual and tactile proof. He refused to believe what the other disciples were saying about Jesus' resurrection. He demanded, "Unless I see the nail marks in His hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand in His side, I will not believe." The crucifixion and death of Jesus was a reality to Thomas, nothing could annul it, except a visual and tactile verification that He is alive. Was Thomas really unfair on his part to go to that extent of doubt? Would it be unfair on our part, if we just put Thomas as one relying on his sensory experience before believing? As the world is full of doubters and unbelievers, today's gospel reminds us that we all have the "Thomas Syndrome", or doubting mentality of Thomas. Thomas was a faithful disciple but he still doubted the news about the risen Lord. Like Thomas, we too can be faithful disciples but can doubt. Is it weakness to have doubts about God or faith? At one point or another in our life, we all go through the "Thomas Syndrome" Doubt can be a growing point, a stepping stone to deeper understanding. Thomas doubted in order to become sure.

In today's gospel, Jesus appears to the community for the second time and Thomas was present. Jesus in a gentle and merciful way relates to Thomas at his level by inviting him to carry out the test he demanded; to put his finger into the nail prints and his hand into His side. Jesus heals Thomas's doubt. Jesus always relates with us at our level. He lowers Himself just to meet our needs and requirement so as to heal and save us.

Thomas the doubter transforms to Thomas the believer and a great missionary. Thomas was a totally changed man after his dramatic encounter with Christ. What a leap of faith. When Thomas realised that Jesus, indeed, had risen from the dead, he came to see something beyond. He came to a realisation of what the resurrection of Jesus implied. Jesus was not mere man; men do not rise from the dead. Jesus was divine. Hence, Thomas is the first to proclaim the divinity of Jesus after the resurrection, "My Lord and my God!"

What do we see in ourselves today? Daily, we encounter Christ in so many ways. Daily we see His wounds in others and in ourselves. Often enough, we partake of His body and blood in the Eucharist. Do we really believe? Do we see more of Thomas the doubter or Thomas the believer in ourselves? Are we like the Pharisees who persisted in their unbelief even when there were so many signs for them to see?

When we doubt God's love and ask for signs and confirmation just like Thomas in today's gospel, Jesus does not abandon us. When crisis come our way such as a loss of a loved one, terrible illnesses, pandemics, natural disasters, marriage on the edge of a breakup, broken relationship within the family, loss of a job or an encounter with an accident, we tend to blame God and enter into a period of doubt. Instead of hiding our doubts, we must do what Thomas did, to bring those doubts to the Lord and not turn away from Him. The Lord will transform our doubts into beliefs.

Thomas believed on the basis of his sight but we are called to believe in Jesus without seeing. A faith that depends on the evidence of the senses cannot survive trials. We are called forth to believe in Jesus by the words of the Gospel. It is about us that Jesus is talking about when He says to Thomas, "You believe because you can see me. Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe." Thus, when we live our faith, we proclaim the joy of the resurrection because we believe in the Risen Lord. The resurrection is the kernel of Christian faith. In believing in the Risen Lord, we are able to face suffering, persecution with courage and confidence that He struggles with us and assures us of our ultimate victory.

We are pilgrims on earth and our faith may make a lot of demands on us, but it is what guides us on the right path that will lead us to the safe harbour of heaven. We are called to believe that Jesus rose from the dead to give us new life and life to the fullest. He frees us from sin and assures us of eternal life with Him and the Father. Unless we believe that Jesus is truly risen, we will not be justified. In Romans 1:17, Paul reminds us, "The one who is righteous by faith will live". Our faith in the Risen Lord should be reflected in the way we live our life, the way we treat our brothers and sisters showing love, compassion and mercy. In James 2:14, it states, "What good is it if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?"

Prayer

My Dear Jesus, my Lord and God, sustain me in my moments of doubt and strengthen me in my moments of weak faith. In Your divine mercy, lift me up when I fall. Grant me the grace to carry on in my journey leading and guiding me as a companion in the journey of faith and life. Amen.

As we celebrate the Solemnity of the Divine Mercy, let us be more merciful and generous with compassion to the people in our life, even to the people who don't deserve it. Let us be open to receiving the mercy of God to sooth and heal all our

wounds and brokenness. May we learn from Jesus, how to share His merciful love with others.

God bless and loves you.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Alphonsus Dominic