

HOMILY for 2nd EASTER/DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY – Year A

As we hear about Thomas not being there when the risen Lord appeared, I'm reminded of this cute story I'd like to share with you.

On Palm Sunday a five-year-old boy had a sore throat and had to stay home from church with a babysitter. When the family returned home, they were carrying several palm branches. The boy asked them what they were.

"Son, people held them over Jesus' head as He walked by," his father told him.

"Wouldn't you know it," the boy fumed. "The one Sunday I don't go; and Jesus shows up!"

Anyway, Thomas must have felt the same way when he heard his friends say, "We have seen the Lord!" Like the boy in the cute story above, he must have been upset because the risen Christ showed up in his absence. He probably wondered if he was a bad luck or did something to be excluded from the honor of meeting the risen Christ. If you have ever been excluded from something or mistreated for some reason, you would understand how Thomas had felt. But, instead of giving in to his bad luck or mistreatment, he looked for ways to meet the risen Christ himself. He could not take the words of his friends about the news of Jesus's resurrection from the dead. He had to examine the risen Christ with his own senses and come to the same conclusion like his friends did. That is why he made this proposition to the group in today's Gospel, "I'll never believe it [the resurrection of our Master] without probing the nail-prints in his hands, without putting my finger in the nail-marks & my hand into his side."

As people who live in an age of rationalism and scientific advance, most of us would agree with Thomas' proposition. We cannot blindly accept someone else's story of Jesus' resurrection. We have to question the authenticity of the story and the motives of the tellers. Otherwise, we might be duped and look stupid to the public. Evidently, the risen Christ did not have any problem with Thomas' proposition. Today's Gospel shares with us His revelation to Thomas as following, "... A week later, the disciples were once more in the room, & this time Thomas was with them. Despite the locked doors, Jesus came & stood before them. 'Peace be with you,' he said; then to Thomas: 'Take your finger & examine my hands. Put your hand into my side. Do not persist in your unbelief, but believe!'" It goes on, "... Jesus then said to him: 'You became a believer because you saw me. Blest are they who have not seen & have believed.'"

I don't know about you, but I would freak out if I see one of my family members or friends come back from the dead. I would not know what to say. That was exactly what happened to Thomas. All he could say was, "My Lord and my God." He was probably surprised to learn that Jesus heard his challenge & wanted him to check out everything personally. The risen Christ evidently did not discourage Thomas' demand & tell him to stop questioning the Easter miracle. Rather, He asked Thomas to have faith in Him & blessed all of His future disciples for their simple faith. Jesus basically embraces all the believers whether they question their faith or not.

One of the challenges for Christians in the twenty first century is that we do not study our faith diligently and ask enough questions about it. We would like to get involved with politics and spend most of our time on social media. We work hard to get more material things & do everything in our power to gain the whole world. But we spend very little time to take

care of our spiritual life & rarely open the Holy Bible or the Catechism to learn more about our Catholic tradition. Catholics are notorious on being ignorant of the Bible & its history. Those apparent problems make us less appreciative about Thomas' inquiry of the risen Christ. They have turned us to be lukewarm toward our faith life and have less interest in learning more about the risen Christ & the Easter miracle. The Church might like to talk about the importance of evangelization and show its interest in political & social issues. But, its idea of evangelization lacks in details & specific plans. Meanwhile, its involvement with political & social issues has stirred up all sorts of emotions & created lots of divisions among its members. I think it's time for the Church to turn its focus on faith matters only & encourage its members to ask more questions about that like Thomas did. That way all Christians will be more interested in their faith & do a lot more evangelization like the early Church did. Furthermore, the Church will do the world a big favor by giving it another tool to deal with its daily problems by counting on divine help & the spiritual world.

This second Sunday of Easter the Church calls us to celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday. We can show our interest in the Christian faith by asking questions about the topic of Divine Mercy. For example, we can ask, "What is Divine Mercy? Why does the Church call us to celebrate it instead of something else?" One of the great qualities about our God is mercy or compassion. God is so merciful that God welcomes us home with open arms & can forgive us almost anything. That is why biblical stories like the Prodigal Son were written to remind us about that divine quality & call us to take advantage of it by trying to change our lives every day. St. Faustina wants highlight that divine quality & asks us to recite the phrase "I trust in you" as we make our way home to God & ask for God's mercy & forgiveness for what we've done wrong to God & our neighbors.

My dear brothers & sisters, Thomas wants to meet the risen Christ personally; & Jesus granted him that wish. May we find the same blessing & see the risen Christ in our daily life also.