

SECOND SUNDAY of EASTER – Year C

Nine-year-old Jeremy's mother asked the boy what he had learned in Sunday school.

"Well, Mom, our teacher told us how God sent Moses behind enemy lines on a rescue mission to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. When he got to the Red Sea, he & his engineers built a pontoon bridge & all the people walked across safely. Then, he used his walkie-talkie to radio broadcast headquarters & call in an air strike. They sent in heavy bombers to blow up the bridge, & all the Israelites were saved."

"Now, Jeremy, is that really what your teacher taught you?" his mother asked.

"Well, no, Mom, but if I told it the way the teacher did, you'd never believe it!"

Anyway, we've heard many incredible stories in the Bible as well as in our human history. One of the stories we just heard above is the Exodus Story telling how the people of God got out of Egypt. Let's stop for a moment to recall some details & facts of the Exodus story before we get to how that story should be told. First, there was a large number of the people of God being enslaved in Egypt. They were taken out of their homes & kept in a foreign land as slaves. They had to call on their God to ask for help. God listened to their cry & sent Moses to rescue them from the yoke of slavery. But, Moses did not have a big army or any military background to lead God's people out of Egypt. We know that the Egyptian leaders would not let their slaves go freely. Besides, Moses would have a tough time gather all the Israelites & lead them out of Egypt without attracting the attention of the Egyptian leaders. But, somehow Moses was able to extract thousands of the Israelites & lead them toward the Red Sea. Meanwhile, Pharaoh & the Egyptian army caught on this great escape & chased after them with all their military might. With the Egyptian army hot on their tail & a huge Red Sea being in front of them, what would the people of God have to do?

We all know what Moses & the people of God did after that. The Bible & many movies have told us the rest of the Exodus story in riveting details. They have been able to bring to life a miraculous story & help the whole world see the hand of God at work in the darkest moments of the people of God. Their ability to share the Exodus story like that has helped the people of God cherish it for the last two centuries. That story has inspired the future generations of believers to have faith in God & let God protect & lead them in their most desperate time. For they've seen the mighty hand of God at work & experienced one of the best miracles in the human history.

For us Christians, we just learned about another great miracle in this Easter season, namely, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. This miraculous story never happened before. For no one had ever seen someone come back from the dead. However, some of the disciples had seen signs of that great miracle or had a personal encounter with the risen Christ Himself. First, three of the disciples – Mary Magdalen, Peter, & John – saw the empty tomb on the Easter morning when they went to that sacred place to pay him respect. Mary Magdalen herself met the risen Christ & was asked to share with the rest of the disciples about that wonderful news. Then, two other disciples on their way to Emmaus also had a personal encounter with the risen Christ at the breaking of bread & sharing of the Scriptures. They were told to return to the group & let all the disciples know about that special encounter. Now, today's Gospel tells us that the risen Christ appeared to the rest of the disciples except Thomas. We do not know if it was his bad luck that caused him to miss out on the apparition of the risen Christ. But, he could

not see the risen Christ & felt very disappointed. He also did not take seriously the testimony of others around him & believe in everything they said. They must be very bad at sharing their account of the risen Christ with him. That is why Thomas did not believe that Jesus could rise from the dead at first. So, he demanded to see the risen Christ with his own eyes & touch Him with his own hands. His sincere search for the risen Christ & persistent prayer was finally answered. Evidently a week later, Thomas was with all the disciples when Jesus showed up & said to him, "Peace be with you... Put your finger here & see my hands, & bring your hand & put it into my side, & do not be unbelieving, but believe." Thomas was so surprised at the experience that he could only respond, "My Lord & my God!" Can you imagine being there to witness that awesome reaction from Thomas? Or better yet, how would you feel if you can help someone like doubting Thomas to meet the risen Christ & believe in His resurrection?

One of the big problems we have with Christianity in the twenty-first century is that we do not spend enough time sharing the story of the Easter miracle with doubting people like Thomas. Instead, we've wasted an awful lots of time & effort debating & fighting over political & social issues. Imagine if the early disciples would sit around or go to Rome to debate those issues, we'd never have heard about the risen Christ & His Easter miracle. Christ's mission of salvation for the world would stop with His death & empty tomb. No one like Thomas would be able to meet the risen Christ & say, "My Lord & my God!" So, I urge you to stop wasting your time & effort on political & social issues; & start sharing the story of the Easter miracle with the world. We must be like the boy in the cute story above & try to figure out how to make that story more believable with our own understanding & interpretation. Otherwise, the story of the Easter miracle is simply another nice story in the Bible. Worst yet, we might be the last believers in the story of the Easter miracle. But, what about the future Christian believers one year from now? Or, ten years from now? Or, a hundred years from now?

My dear brothers & sisters, the Easter miracle story would be more believable if we're able to experience it ourselves. Doubting Thomas sincerely wished to meet the risen Christ & looked hard for opportunities to have that special encounter. His wish was granted not long after he made that prayer request. I hope that we all will have a personal encounter with the risen Christ like Thomas did during this Easter season, perhaps in our time here with the Eucharist or in our prayer time with the Scripture. For that is the only way we can tell the world our own version of the Easter miracle story & convince it that our Lord Jesus had truly risen from the dead.