

## **HOMILY for 2<sup>nd</sup> SUNDAY of EASTER - Year C**

This Sunday's First Reading tells us how the early Church called upon the risen Christ to bring healing to the public. Reflecting on that, I'm reminded of this cute story that I'd like to share with you.

Mr. Curtis visited his doctor complaining about a pain in his leg that wouldn't go away. The doctor checked out Curtis' leg, but couldn't find anything wrong. So, he gave his patient a full physical exam & ran a gamut of tests, but still couldn't come up with any possible explanation for the pain.

After the exam, the doctor sat Curtis down in his office & said, "I'm sorry, but the pain in your leg is simply caused by old age. There is nothing I can do about it."

Curtis replied with a look of disbelief. "That's impossible! That can't be!"

"What do you mean?" the doctor said, astonished. "I'm the expert here – if you know so much, how can you say that it's not old age?"

"Well, I'm no doctor," Curtis answered, "but it doesn't take a medical degree to tell that your diagnosis is wrong. Clearly, you're mistaken. After all, my other leg feels just fine."

"So what?" said the doctor, "What difference does that make?"

"Well, it doesn't hurt a bit, & it's the same age!"

We'll discuss how the risen Lord would bring our world His healing power later in this Homily. As you might recall, in my Easter Homily, I have shared with you how the early Church had compiled all the evidence to show Jesus' resurrection. First, they told us about the empty tomb, which lets us know that Jesus rose from the dead. But, Jesus' body could not vanish into thin air. In the Easter season, we will find out more about the mystery of the body of Jesus as He had appeared frequently to the early Church. That leads us to the second set of evidence to prove Jesus' resurrection, namely, the personal encounters with the risen Christ.

This Sunday the early Church is going to share with us a personal encounter between doubting Thomas & the risen Christ. Here is how this Sunday's Gospel tells us about that story: "On the evening of that first day of the week, even though the disciples had locked the doors of the place where they were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came & stood before them. 'Peace be with you,' he said. When he had said this, he showed them his hands & his side... It happened that one of the Twelve, Thomas (the name means 'Twin'), was absent when Jesus came. The other disciples kept telling him: 'We have seen the Lord!' His answer was, 'I'll never believe it without probing the nail-prints in His hands, without putting my finger in the nail-marks & my hand into His side.' 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!' Thomas said in response, 'My Lord & my God!'"

As you can see, doubting Thomas was one of the lucky ones who had a personal encounter with the risen Christ. He might not be the first disciples to see the sign of Jesus' resurrection like Mary Magdalene, Peter, & John did with the empty tomb. In fact, he was not even there when the risen Christ appeared to some of the disciples in the upper room on the evening of the first day of the week. Thankfully the risen Christ gave Thomas the second chance to have a personal encounter with Him. Thomas did not need another chance to recognize the

risen Christ & turn his life over to Him. He could distinguish this apparition from other ones by examining the holy wounds on it & finally came to the conclusion, "My Lord & my God!" In other words, Thomas had a change of heart & turned himself from a doubter of Jesus' resurrection to a strong believer of the Easter Miracle.

We often do not associate a spiritual conversion with a healing miracle. But, that was what the risen Christ did to Thomas like He would do to Paul & other lost souls later on. He healed Thomas' spirit & turned it from suspicion & despondence to trust & hopefulness. When someone has turned away from God & the Church, it takes a healing miracle to bring that person home. We have heard a lot these days how the Church & most religions have lost many of their members. In fact, the reputable Pew Research Center has recently done a study on the Catholic Church & many Christian denominations & found out that most of them have lost members. The only denomination that has gained more members is the one of non-churchgoers. These folks might believe in God, but do not want to do anything with their spiritual life, including trying to keep up a good prayer life. No wonder why we have a mental health crisis in our world right now. No wonder why people of our time do not want to compromise & work for common good. All they care about is their own ways or getting what they want at the expense of someone else. I think it is time for us to pray for healing in ourselves, our families, our Church, our country, & our world. It is time for us to practice our Sunday Meditation Song & ask the Lord to turn away the stony parts of our heart & soften it a little bit. That way we could experience the healing Easter Miracle like Thomas did.

However, it is not just us who would need a healing miracle. The whole world desperately needs it. In case we have any doubt about it; this Sunday's First Reading reminds us with the following message: "...More and more believers, men & women in great numbers, were continually added to the Lord. The people carried the sick into the streets & laid them on cots & mattresses, so that when Peter passed by at least His shadow might fall on one or another of them. Crowds from the towns around Jerusalem would gather too, bringing their sick & those who were troubled by unclean spirits, all of whom were cured." As you can see, the early Church tried to show the world the healing power of the risen Christ & the relevancy of the Church to the world. The world evidently was in trouble by sickness & unclean spirits; & the early Church was able to call upon the risen Christ to bring it the healing solution. But, that was also the reason why Christ came to our world. He came to heal the broken relationship between us & God the Father due to our sins. Unfortunately, the Church nowadays, instead of bringing healing to our broken world, has stirred up all sorts of controversies & caused more fights & divisions every day. Thankfully our late Holy Father Francis saw that problem & tried to heal the Church & the world with his compassion & understanding. Unfortunately, he ran into lots of opposition. Hopefully we would continue his legacy & try to put aside our differences & look for more creative ways to bring healing to our Church & our world.

My dear brothers & sisters, the Second Sunday of Easter is often called Divine Mercy Sunday. It is the time for us to recall God's mercy & return to the Lord to find healing & a new life. More importantly, I pray that we will continue the tradition of the early Church & the late Pope Francis by looking for every opportunity to bring healing to the world around us & making the Church more relevant to our modern time.