

## **HOMILY for 2<sup>nd</sup> SUNDAY of EASTER – Year A**

This Sunday's Gospel tells us how the risen Christ appeared to Thomas in particular. Reflecting on that, I'm reminded of this cute story I'd like to share with you. There was a certain energetic young preacher who had a thriving country church. He was always prodding his people to do greater things for God, spent much time in preparation of his sermons.

There was a deacon in his congregation who did little and seemed to care less. It caused the young preacher much concern. On several occasions the preacher would tell him exactly what he thought. The old deacon never caught the point. The old deacon always thought he was referring to someone else. One Sunday, the preacher made it plainer as to whom he was talking. Following the service the deacon said, "Preacher, you sure told them today."

The next sermon was still more pointed than ever. Again, the deacon said, "Preacher, you sure told them today."

The next Sunday it rained so hard that no one was at church except this one deacon. The preacher thought that he would not know about whom he was talking. The sermon went straight to the deacon who was the only one in the congregation. Following the service, the deacon walked up to the preacher & said, "Preacher, you sure told them if they had been here."

Like that cute story, we have a similar situation in this Sunday's Gospel. Here is how the situation is described for us: "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. At the sight of the Lord, the disciples rejoiced... 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!' It continues, "...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!'" Certainly the deacon in the cute story would tell Jesus, "Lord, you sure told them [the whole world] today if they had been here." That is why Jesus praised Thomas, "You became a believer because you saw me!"

The deacon & the early disciples wish that Thomas & all of us would be there when the risen Christ appears. They want us to share a similar encounter with the risen Christ like they had. For that experience has brought them joy & peace. They have found a sense of spiritual renewal & hope in the risen Christ. They have discovered courage & enthusiasm to go out & witness the resurrection of Christ & His Good News to the world. But, first they would need to have the Easter experience & meet the risen Christ themselves. Lately, we have heard the Church talk a lot about evangelization, especially from church leadership. Its members would not be able to evangelize & tell the world about the wonderful miracle of the risen Christ unless they have experienced it themselves.

That is why Mary Magdalen, one of the member of the early Church, had to experience the Easter miracle herself & saw the empty tomb & the risen Christ in the garden whom she thought it was the gardener before she could tell the other disciples. That is why Peter himself first denied Jesus in the courtyard, went through a personal conversion, & later met the risen

Christ on the shore of Galilee before he could travel the world to tell the story of His resurrection. That is why the two disciples who felt depressed & hopeless found their faith in the risen Christ again after a personal encounter with Him in the Holy Eucharist and then went back to tell other disciples about it. That is why our parish here has created all sorts of opportunities for you to meet the risen Christ such as weekend & weekday Masses, Eucharistic Adoration, Bible study, Feeding America program to help the poor, & so on. That spiritual encounter with the risen Christ is not something we can easily get in the world if we do not try to search for it ourselves. So, unless we have such an encounter with the risen Christ, we do not truly know Him and cannot do any evangelizing for Him.

Surely you have met some Christians/Catholics who think that they know a lot about the Christian/Catholic faith. But, in reality, they only know of the Christian/Catholic faith or retain enough information about the Christian/Catholic faith to help them respond to the public & make them look good. In fact, I have met some Catholics who claim they know this Novena or that devotional ritual that might make them spiritually more superior than others. They have forgotten how Jesus despised that kind of spiritual life that the Pharisees & spiritual leaders had embraced & showed off to Him. The most desirable spiritual life that Jesus wanted His disciples to have is one of personal conversion. That is why He encouraged sinners to search for His Good News & come home to Him. That is why He called on the world to stop following a spiritually pretentious lifestyle & embrace a life of personal conversion instead.

As you might know, that life of conversion could only happen if a person would admit one's own sinfulness & look for divine assistance. That is why Mary Magdalen sought the Lord to drive evil spirits out of her life & continued to do so at His tomb. That is why the conversion stories like the ones of St. Paul & St. Augustine are so meaningful & powerful in our Christian/Catholic faith because these men met the risen Christ & were able to turn their lives around. That is why today Thomas demanded to touch the risen Christ with his own hand & ended up turning from being a doubter of Christ's resurrection to a believer. Tradition tells us that Thomas later travelled to India to preach about the risen Christ & witnessed the Lord with his own martyrdom there. Like all the conversion stories, Thomas' conversion could only happen unless he personally looked for the risen Christ & came to a personal conclusion, "My Lord & my God." Likewise, if we truly follow a life of personal conversion, we need to admit our own sinfulness & search for every opportunity to come home to the Lord. We should touch the risen Christ with all of our senses & call on the world to embrace a life of conversion. That is how it would be able to meet the risen Christ & find many wonderful blessings in its daily life. That is how it could turn away from its current situation of violence & destruction & find a new life of hope & peace.

My dear brothers & sisters, Mary Magdalen & Thomas both met the risen Christ because they sought out every opportunity to meet Him despite all kinds of daily challenges. If we would like to have similar experiences & find wonderful blessings that the risen Christ would bring us, we must look for every opportunity to have a personal encounter with Him. More importantly, we must embrace a life of personal conversion. That is the best way for us to meet the risen Christ & become His strong believer & evangelizer like Mary Magdalen & Thomas did.