

Doubt – Webster’s Dictionary defines the word doubt as “to be uncertain, to lack confidence in, to consider unlikely, or an inclination not to believe.” All of these or perhaps none of these, could be used to describe the Disciple Thomas. In today’s Gospel reading Thomas stated that he needed to “...see the marks of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nailmarks and put my hand into his side...” in order to believe that Christ had risen. Thomas was lucky, a short week later Christ reappeared to the disciples and Thomas heard Jesus say “Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe.” Thomas was able to see, hear, and actually touch Christ. And then, he believed! What joy he must have had that day!

But we need to go back earlier in the Gospels to find out more about the disciple that some call Doubting Thomas. After Jesus’ friend Lazarus died, most of the other disciples tried to talk Christ out of returning to Bethany to mourn his death. When they were last in Bethany, Jesus and the disciples were threatened and ran out of town. Only Thomas spoke out and said “Let us go with Him, so that we may die with him.” (John 11:16) These do not sound like the words of a doubter. These sound like the words of a true believer and follower of Christ.

We do not have the luxury today, two thousand years after Thomas placed his hand into Jesus’s side to be able to personally see, hear, and touch Christ. But we believe that He has risen and has given all of us the hope of everlasting life with Him in the Kingdom of God, which we strengthen through our weekly attendance at Mass and reception of the Holy Eucharist. We do not need physical signs like Thomas, to believe. As stated in today’s Gospel, “Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.” Today we have a choice. Are we going to live and act as a doubting Thomas and doubt everything we hear about Christ, or are we going to be more like the Thomas that stood with Jesus and be willing to die for our faith with Jesus? I have made my choice. Have you made yours?

Today on Divine Mercy Sunday we all should believe in the strength and hope of God's boundless mercy. Even if we are like Thomas, an imperfect disciple, who needed to see and feel to believe, God still gives us His grace. Even the most faithful follower of Christ can make mistakes and sin. Though the Sacrament of Reconciliation (or confession) the Priest acting "in persona Christi" or in the Person of Christ, can absolve us from our sins and allow us to be reconciled with the community of the Church. (CCC 1422). This sacrament is referenced in today's Gospel reading (John 20:22-23) when Christ breathed on them and said "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven, if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." Those powerful words of Jesus spoken almost two thousand years ago still give us hope and strength with the help of God's mercy when we are offered absolution by the Priest in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. God continues to grant all of us His mercy through this Sacrament.

As the Holy Father, Pope Francis stated in his General Audience on February 19, 2014, "The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation flows directly from the Paschal Mystery. ...Forgiveness is not the fruit of our own efforts but rather a gift, it is a gift of the Holy Spirit who fills us with the wellspring of mercy and of grace that flows unceasingly from the open heart of the Crucified and Risen Christ. ...It reminds us that we can truly be at peace only if we allow ourselves to be reconciled, in the Lord Jesus, with the Father and with the brethren. And we have all felt this in our hearts, when we have gone to confession with a soul weighed down and with a little sadness; and when we receive Jesus' forgiveness we feel at peace, with that peace of soul which is so beautiful, and which only Jesus can give, only Him."

We all need to surrender our worries and problems to God. Through emptying ourselves to God, His love will come to each and everyone one of us as a flood of Divine Mercy entering our hearts. Thank God for His mercy towards us. Have a blessed Divine Mercy Sunday.

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