

St Thomas the Apostle Feast Sunday 3 July 2022 –

Reflection

Habakkuk 2.1–4; Psalm 31; Ephesians 2.19–22; John 20.24–29

It's a pity that St. Thomas, who left everything to follow the Lord Jesus, who gave his entire life for the Lord and died in witness to faith, is called "Doubting Thomas."

Without a doubt, he is the most famous doubter in history! But his doubts were not unique among the first disciples and apostles. Except for the Blessed Virgin Mary, none of the early disciples believed after the resurrection. The women went to anoint a corpse. The disciples in Emmaus were talking to an anonymous man about Jesus, which they thought to be dead. When they went to inform the other apostles that they had seen Jesus, the apostles didn't believe them. That's why Jesus, when he appeared to them, as St. Mark reminds us, "rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart because they had not believed those who saw him after he had been raised" (Mark 16:14). So, Thomas' distrust was neither unique nor the only one.

Faith is the belief in something based on confidence in someone giving witness.

Thomas was the only disciple who loved Jesus so much that he was ready to go to Jerusalem to die with his Master.

This happened outside of Bethany. Martha and Mary had sent word to Jesus that Lazarus was deathly ill, and Jesus committed to going there. Some of the apostles noted that people were threatening to kill Jesus and tried to persuade him to walk into an ambush. But Thomas said, "Let us also go to die with him" (John 11:16).

The death of Jesus was something I think that Thomas must have expected. However, when this happened, everything in his life was covered with pain that he could not break through.

Thomas was going through a crisis. His heart was so broken that he couldn't meet people's eyes. He was a victim of his shattered enthusiasm and, possibly, his guilt over the unfulfilled promise to accompany Jesus until his death. All he wanted was to be left alone with his grief. Perhaps that is why Thomas was not there when Jesus appeared to the disciples in the Upper Room.

Thomas did not want to give himself vain hopes that Jesus was alive so that - if this turned out to be not true (as it seemed to him) - he would not experience another disappointment. It was a defensive reaction to the pain he couldn't deal with.

But eight days later, Jesus comes to the disciples again. It looks a bit as if this time, especially for Thomas. He comes and humbly fulfils the demands made by him a week ago.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd who releases the lost lamb carefully and with care from the snares. Thomas got stuck and stopped at the Cross and Passion of Jesus. He got tangled up in the thickets of his pain and suffering. That is why the Lord makes contact with him through his wounds. But these are wounds of victory, not of death. Jesus is looking for all ways to

reach each of us. He is ready to meet the demands of Thomas and anyone who wants to meet him.

Pope St. Gregory the Great makes the following reflections: "Thomas' unbelief has benefited our faith more than the belief of the other disciples; it is because he attained faith through physical touch that we are confirmed in the faith beyond all doubt."

This event gives us one more important piece of information about our faith experience: to meet God, one more "condition" is necessary: we need communion with the community of believers. The risen Christ can be experienced only in the community of our brothers and sisters.

This is where our faith begins; this is where our faith matures, and this is where our faith bears fruits.

Thomas understood this because of Jesus. Risen Lord came to Thomas, but only after Thomas ceased to isolate himself and returned to the community, even though he had not yet shared the same experience with others.

So, we know Doubting Thomas but let's not forget Confessing Thomas. He's in today's Gospel as well. 'My Lord and my God!'. With those words, Thomas has recognized and named a new relationship, a new way of being.

'My Lord and my God!' - they are liberating words. Words that heal Thomas from pain, sorrow and despair.

Somewhere between Doubting Thomas and Confessing Thomas is the story of resurrection in Thomas' life. It was there that Jesus' Easter victory in Thomas' life and the final breakthrough in his soul took place.

In the same way, somewhere between Doubting Thomas and Confessing Thomas is the story of my and your life, of my and your faith. This is where we meet the Risen Lord.

St. Thomas Aquinas wrote about the connection between St. Thomas and our approach to the Eucharist in his Adoro Te Devote when he said, "Wounds, like Thomas, I do not see; nevertheless I confess you my God to be. Make me always more and more believe in you, have hope, and love you." As we prepare to enter into the celebration of the Liturgy of Eucharist, we ask God for the grace to believe in him and love Christ as our Lord and God; and to be so transformed as to confess him as Thomas did publicly and bring Him and his message to all the world. Amen.

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