

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

John 20:19-31

To get anywhere with Thomas and the entire episode in our Gospel today, that takes place in some closed room in Jerusalem, we absolutely must begin with the understanding that doubt is not the opposite of faith. The opposite of faith is indifference.

Doubt keeps faith awake and moving. Whether our faith is that Jesus is the Son of God, or that He is not, if we don't have any doubts, we are either kidding ourselves or asleep.

Thomas is not a doubter. Thomas is a true believer. He has made that clear earlier in John's Gospel. It is Thomas who, when Jesus insists on going to Judea, declares, "Let us also go with Him that we may die with Him." And it is Thomas who makes the first explicit acknowledgment that Jesus is God: "My Lord and my God!" This loyal believer who has given us the expression "Doubting Thomas" deserves to be remembered better than this. He did not refuse belief: he wanted to believe, but did not dare without further evidence. Because of his belief, loyalty, and goodwill, Jesus gives Him a sign after refusing to do so for the Pharisees. And it should be observed, that the sign did not create faith in Thomas, it merely released the faith that was in him already. Thomas is the patron saint of all who believe and still want to see for themselves.

This is why we come here every week. We want to see Jesus.

We want to be like Thomas and see for ourselves. The world wants to see Jesus. And the world looks to us, His body, the

church, for a sign. For some identifying marks that say, "My lord and my God!"

Thomas knows exactly what to look for as the identifying marks: the wounds in His hands and side: because any God apart from the Wounded One is no God at all. Thomas knows this.

We know this. But it is so easy to forget. And so easy to turn our heads and look away from the wounds.

But it is so important to know Jesus this way. Because of the kind of death that our God suffered, we know that our God not only knows our pain: our God is the One God who is in our pain and our grief and our suffering. This God, Jesus, not only shares our sufferings, grief, and pain, He is in it with us every step of the way. That is where we can see Him. So, when we are confronted with the loss of a loved one, Jesus is here in the midst of it. As we face the darkness of depression, disease, loneliness, racism, ethnic hatred, and religious intolerance, we know that Jesus is in the midst of it.

Any one of these situations should be enough to cause some doubt in our resurrection faith. Any one of these situations should be enough to send us to God asking for a sign. Our wounds are very much on the surface every day. Anyone can come into a church and look at around and see our grief, our pain, and our suffering. Anyone can come into our churches nearly any Sunday, at any service, and see people reaching out to Jesus for healing of whatever it is that hurts in mind, spirit or body, in themselves or loved ones. People come to us with a desire to see Jesus. For, in truth, the hands we extend in love and care for others are His hands. If people cannot see Jesus here and in us, where else can they honestly turn? Without the insistence and testimony of Thomas, all of it would be more than we could bear.

So we come here, like all the others, like Thomas, looking for a sign. As we worship, we begin to see Him. And the one we see is the one Thomas sees: the resurrected one; the one who overcomes death; the one who heals all who are broken; the one who has known our sorrows and is in our sorrows; the one who walks with us every step of the way to Judea and back again. For those unable to be here, we must bring Jesus to them, joining His woundedness with theirs. And if only for that moment, make the whole body of Christ, this sacred mystery the church, whole and united and reconciled and healed. If only for the moment as we hold Him in our hands, we can see Him and know that He is here. He does not abandon us. He joins us wherever we are. He comes back to show us that He has survived and risen above the grief and sorrow and pain of it all. He comes back to show us that He is the one who transforms our wounds into new life. He comes back to lift us up, so we might show forth in our lives and in our very hands like His what we profess by faith. So that we might have our doubts once again relieved. So that we might join with Thomas in proclaiming, "My Lord, and my God!" So that we might believe and have life, true life, abundant life, in His name. So that we might feel Him breathe on us as He did on the eleven disciples, and be filled with His Shalom, the very spirit and breath of God, and know that He is Risen, and does appear to us even in the midst of things we cannot and will not ever understand.

Jesus said: "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." Let us hold Him in our hands, feel Him breathe on us the Spirit breath of God, and then be sent into the world so others might see Him. All of us are sent, to show our hands so that others will see the wounds, so others will know Him as Thomas knows Him, so that others will know Him as we know

Him: our Lord, and our God!

AMEN.