



Daily Reflections

April 3, 2016

Scripture

John 20:19-31

On the evening of that first day of the week,
when the doors were locked, where the disciples were,
for fear of the Jews,
Jesus came and stood in their midst
and said to them, "Peace be with you."
When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side.
The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.
Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you.
As the Father has sent me, so I send you."
And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them,
"Receive the Holy Spirit.
Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them,
and whose sins you retain are retained."
Thomas, called Didymus, one of the Twelve,
was not with them when Jesus came.

So the other disciples said to him, "We have seen the Lord."

But he said to them,

"Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands
and put my finger into the nailmarks
and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

Now a week later his disciples were again inside
and Thomas was with them.

Jesus came, although the doors were locked,
and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you."

Then he said to Thomas, "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 answered and said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

Jesus said to him, "Have you come to believe because you have seen me?
Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed."

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples
that are not written in this book.

But these are written that you may come to believe
that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,
and that through this belief you may have life in his name.

Our Scripture Reflection

What a beautiful Gospel passage we have for the second Sunday of Easter. Like the other Gospel stories of Easter, it begins with fearful, faithless disciples who have their eyes opened by the Risen Lord. Unique to John's account is the story of "Doubting Thomas." Upon closer examination, however, we must question the designation of "doubter." Looking back to John 11: 18, we find a devoted disciple who is willing to lay down his life for Jesus. Most striking, however, is the response of Thomas when challenged by Jesus to probe and examine His wounds. Thomas, rather than probe and examine, falls down and proclaims Jesus to be his "Lord and God." He is the only disciple to do so! Tradition outside the New Testament reveals that Thomas went on to India where he was crucified for the sake of the Gospel. Quite a turn around for a "doubter", eh?

Food for your Journey

Thomas is gaunt, his face stark and raw-edged like a Palestinian landscape. Sharpness of bone, hollowness of flesh. And there's something else, something in the eyes: a shrewdness, a wariness, a caginess. He is sparing with words. He watches. He listens. He can unnerve you with his silence, with the depths and layers of it. What is he thinking? His silence is more inflected than Cantonese.

Thomas is a doubter, the doubter - the doubter's patron saint. His name comes conjoined, hip to bone, feather to wing, with that unshakable epithet: Doubting Thomas.

The Bible never describes Thomas this way. It describes his moment of doubt. But it is one moment, only one, and he moves quickly beyond it. His identity, despite our perception and description of him, is not rooted in that moment. There is much that is praiseworthy in him. When Jesus, hearing of his friend Lazarus' sickness in Bethany, tells the disciples that they are returning there, some of them protest: People want to kill you there, Jesus. But Thomas speaks up. "Let us also go," he says, "that we may die with him" (John 11:8, 16). These are hardly the words of a chronic doubter.

-Mark Buchanan, "The benefit of the doubt," *Christianity Today*, April 3, 2000.

The fields were parched and brown from lack of rain, and the crops lay wilting from thirst. People were anxious and irritable as they searched the sky for any sign of relief. Days turned into arid weeks. No rain came. The ministers of the local churches called for an hour of prayer on the town square the following Saturday. They requested that everyone bring an object of faith for inspiration.

At high noon on the appointed Saturday the townspeople turned out en masse, filling the square with anxious faces and hopeful hearts. The ministers were touched to see the variety of objects clutched in prayerful hands - holy books, crosses, rosaries.

When the hour ended, as if on magical command, a soft rain began to fall. Cheers swept the crowd as they held their treasured objects high in gratitude and praise.

From the middle of the crowd one faith symbol seemed to overshadow all the others. A small 9-year-old child had brought an umbrella.

- Source unknown.

Prayer from the Heart

Dear Jesus, during times of testing, I have been so much like Thomas so many times. Lord, like Thomas, I will never give up on You. Please deepen my faith and take away my worry, fear and doubt. Amen.

