



Contributed by Father Paul Voisin, C.R.

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SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

April 11, 2021

GATHERING TIME

(10-15 Minutes)

Introduction to the Word:

Harry Truman was the thirty-third President of the United States of America. He was from the state of Missouri, the state that has as its motto: 'Show me'. In our modern world, with so much emphasis on scientific proof, this is a more and more common attitude. This, in particular, is used as an attack in relation to articles of faith—or faith in general—by many in our secular society.

Today we meet Thomas 'the Doubter', providing us with an opportunity to reflect on our own faith and, perhaps, the 'show me' mentality that has crept into our own life, our own family, our parish community, and our Church.

Warm-up Activity *(about 8-10 minutes):*

Faith is a precious gift. In Scripture, Jesus often used agricultural analogies, such as a seed, a living thing that grows and develops with the proper conditions—soil, water, sun, and nutrients.

- a) How have you experienced, in your own life, that 'show me' attitude, in relation to the life of faith?
- b) How am I negatively influenced by others in relation to growing in my life of faith?
- c) How do I try to positively influence others in relation to their growth in their faith life?

The Table of the Word

Doubt is a reality in our lives. Doubts can be life-shattering, or just a passing thought. In our present time, it seems that doubts are very rampant, especially in regards to our faith in people, and our questioning of long-held truths. At times it appears that everything and anything is open to questioning. Pope Benedict XVI has warned often about relativism in our society. To my way of thinking, relativism means that there are no right or wrong answers, that what I believe is true for me, and what you believe is true for you, and even though they may be contradictory, a 'common' truth is elusive. However, our faith is based on convictions, not feelings ... on revelation, not whims ... on what is for the common good, not what serves only me. Although there is nothing wrong in questioning, it should provide for an opening up to truth. In our Church, the magisterium has provided us with so many sources of truth, but we only have to seek them out. Even with the help of the internet there are so many opportunities to discover more about our faith. We cannot 'live' on our doubts and fears and suspicions, but we need a firm foundation of truth.

Penitential Rite:

Faith is a journey. Sometimes we take a step forward, and other times take a step backward. However, we know we are moving towards a greater faith, and that the Lord's grace is accompanying us. The fruit of our faith will not only be our own sanctification and happiness, but will bear witness to others of the Lord who calls us.

Lord Jesus, help me in my unbelief,

Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, thank you for revealing Yourself to me,

Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, be with me as I share my life with You,

Lord, have mercy.

Let us pray:

Lord, You call us to be people of faith,
yet we are often people with doubts.

We doubt that love can grow again in relationships
where anger and bitterness reign supreme.

You know the strength of love and the power of prayer:
help us to be faithful lovers.

We doubt that peace can come in the Middle East, in Syria, in Israel and Palestine;
where hatred and racism reign supreme.

You know that peace is growing there:
help us to be faithful peacemakers.

We doubt that the hungry can be fed in Africa,
where despair and hopelessness reign supreme.

You know that there is enough food in the world;
help us to be generous and faithful.

You specialize in impossibilities;
you walked on water, you heal the nations,
you forgive sins, you set the captive free,
you set us free from our captivities.

Amen.

(Carol Penner)

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION TIME (45 minutes)

*(As Christians we believe that the **WORD** of God we hear proclaimed each Sunday is an empowering word, and that God is present in the word proclaimed. This is the word that God wants us to hear today. The dynamic of the small Christian community, namely, reflecting on our life story within the context of this word, and sharing the insights of these reflections, is such that God's Spirit becomes present, and the gifts of the Spirit are experienced as empowering and life giving.)*

FIRST READING (Acts 4:32-35)

The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul; no one claimed for his own use anything that he had, as everything they owned was held in common.

With great power, the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and they were all given great respect.

None of their members was ever in want, as all those who owned land or houses would sell them, and bring the money from them, to present it to the apostles; it was then distributed to any members who might be in need.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

SECOND READING (1 John 5:1-6)

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ has been begotten by God; and whoever loves the Father that begot him loves the child whom he begets.

We can be sure that we love God's children if we love God himself and do what he has commanded us; this is what loving God is – keeping his commandments; and his commandments are not difficult, because anyone who has been begotten by God has already overcome the world; this is the victory over the world – our faith.

Who can overcome the world? Only the man who believes that Jesus is the Son of God; Jesus Christ who came by water and blood, not with water only, but with water and blood; with the Spirit as another witness – since the Spirit is the truth.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God**

GOSPEL (John 20:19-31)

In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the authorities. Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, "Peace be with you," and showed them his hands and his side.

The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord, and he said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so am I sending you."

After saying this he breathed on them and said: "Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain, they are retained."

Thomas, called the Twin, who was one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.

When the disciples said, "We have seen the Lord," he answered, "Unless I see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe."

Eight days later the disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them. The doors were closed, but Jesus came in and stood among them. “Peace be with you” he said. Then he spoke to Thomas, “Put your finger here; look, here are my hands. Give me your hand; put it into my side. Doubt no longer but believe.” Thomas replied “My Lord and my God!” Jesus said to him, “You believe because you can see me. Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe.”

There are many other signs that Jesus worked and the disciples saw, but they are not recorded in this book. These are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing this you may have life through his name.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

COMMENTARY:

Our First Reading speaks to us clearly about the life and relationship among the apostles. They, in truth, formed a community that was “one in heart and soul”. After the resurrection, they had a particular mission, to share—as witnesses to Christ—what they had seen, heard and experienced beside Jesus. And by the grace of the Holy Spirit, not only did they give their testimony with courage, but they did miraculous acts. They gave testimony of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour by their words, their ministry, and their lives.

In the Second Reading, John speaks to us about the life of the community after the resurrection. He leaves no doubt that the grace of the Holy Spirit is with the community, allowing them to give testimony of Jesus Christ. The Spirit keeps them faithful to the teachings of Jesus, “completing his instructions”. He said that, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, “his instructions are not difficult”. These fine words not only encouraged them to follow Christ, but to share the Good News.

In the gospel we meet Thomas, one of the apostles. From this gospel he received the name ‘Doubting Thomas’. Maybe he was from Missouri, rather than the Holy Land! The more I thought of this passage, the more I thought about the relationship among the apostles. After all, they had been together for three years, following Jesus, being witnesses to His miracles, and hearing His wise words. But Thomas did not accept the testimony of others who had seen the Risen Lord. I would have thought that seeing their joy would have been convincing enough. I would have thought that they would have been surprised, and even offended, with this situation, if someone did not accept such important testimony. Jesus says that “Happy are those who believe without having seen”. Unlike Thomas, and the other apostles, we have not “seen” the Risen Lord with our own eyes. But, we have “seen” with our own lives and experiences. As Jesus did “many other signs”, we too have seen and experienced “many other signs” of the presence of God, His love and forgiveness, His healing and salvation. Maybe we have not put our finger into the hands of Jesus, or put our hand into His side, but we have touched the Lord, and the Lord has touched us. Then we also are called to give witness to the Risen Lord, depending on the same Spirit that was given to the apostles in the Acts of the Apostles, and that St. John assures the faithful about in his Letter.

Allow 5 – 10 minutes for the participants to react to the **commentary** to identify a newly discovered insight.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION:

1. “With great power, the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 4:32-35)

This great gift of faith we have is a treasure to be shared. Our sharing will illuminate the darkness of doubt of others. Our sharing will bolster the weak and troubled. Our sharing will give new life to others.

- a) How do I “testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus”?
- b) With whom do I feel “united, heart and soul” as a disciple of Jesus? How did that come about?
- c) How have I contributed to the life of the faith community? (THIS faith community too)

2. “The Spirit is the truth” (1 John 1:5-6)

One definition of truth is “conformity with fact or reality; verity”. The Lord Jesus said, in John 8:32, that “the truth will set you free”. Indeed, people are enslaved—by themselves and others—by lies. The truth that God offers us in His revelation is “fact” and “reality”. In our human condition, though, we may still doubt.

- a) How have I experienced doubt in my own life, in particular in my faith life?
- b) How does one overcome doubts?
- c) Do I relate to the words of Pope Benedict, in relation to relativism?

3. “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:19-31)

These words of Thomas, express his belief (at last) that, indeed, the Lord *had* risen. This realization was a new beginning for him in his relationship with Jesus. Thomas could now fulfill his ‘demand’, and could touch the Lord.

- a) Can I identify a moment in life when (like with Thomas) things came together, and I recognized the presence of the Lord?
- b) How have I lived with doubts, and/or been a ‘show me’ person?

CARING-PRAYING TIME: (15-20 minutes)

1. **Word of the Week:** “My Lord and my God!”

2. **Suggestions for the Week:**

This week, leave behind any tendency to be a ‘Thomas’. Be more aware how you express doubt or suspicion in areas of your life – in relationships, towards authorities, etc., and with God. Recognize the time and energy spent on doubt, and promise yourself (and others) to be more trusting. As you have “not seen”, but “believe”, give gratitude to Jesus for making Himself known to you, and think of ways that you can help others to “see” and “believe”. In these moments, you are saying to Jesus, “My Lord and my God,” and He is with you!

3. **Intercessions:**

We pray with confidence, recalling the constant faithfulness of God, and how the Lord continues to reveal Himself to us.

That we may proclaim the presence of Jesus, helping others to “see” what we do, to “believe” as we do. We pray ... **My Lord and my God**

That those who have helped us to grow in our faith will be blessed by God, and that those who are deceased will know the fullness of God’s life. We pray ... **My Lord and my God**

That those who are seeking faith, in particular those who are participating in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, may experience the presence of the Lord, calling them into deeper life. We pray ... **My Lord and my God**

That we will embrace the truth of God, and dispel the doubts and fears that can attack us. We pray ... **My Lord and my God**

How can we help you in prayer this week?

Let us pray:

We pray for people here who are filled with doubts,
who wonder whether you exist

and whether you are listening to our prayers,
who wonder what this whole community is about.

We pray for people who doubt the purpose of life,
who wonder whether to end it all,

who face feelings of meaninglessness and despair.

Even when we have that sinking feeling,
give us the wisdom to turn to you.

Lord we want to believe, help our unbelief!

Give us faith, small as a mustard seed,
so that we can be your faithful people,

believing in your power to save,
believing in your power to reign supreme,

believing that we can share this good news
with everyone we meet.

We ask all this in Jesus’ name.

Amen.

(Carol Penner)

With hands and hearts united in gratitude for God's favours today, we pray that all those in our influence be moved to be open to your Word and your Spirit, while we pray as one, **OUR FATHER**

Celebrating the Word, Resurrection Ministries of the Congregation of the Resurrection Ontario-Kentucky Province (including the former Resurrection Centre), 265 Westmount Road North, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada N2L 3G7. (*Celebrating the Word* was founded by Father Frank Ruetz, C.R. deceased 2012). For information: **website:** www.resurrectionists.ca. **Email:** provincialoffice@resurrectioncollege.ca The Scripture version used in this commentary is the New Revised Standard Version (copyrighted by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA).