

Homily – April 27th, 2025 – 2nd Sunday of Easter

History hasn't always been kind to Thomas even though he brought the gospel to India, was martyred for that stubborn faith of his, and became a saint. We tend to



still call him “Doubting Thomas.”

Other people's reputations get rehabilitated in ways that Thomas' didn't. For instance, Peter, denied knowing Jesus not once, not twice, but three times, yet we don't call

him “Denying Peter.” We call him Prince of the Apostles. Likewise, Paul persecuted Christians and was present and cheering on when Stephen, the Church's first martyr, was stoned to death. But we don't call him “Stoning Paul.” We call him Apostle to the Gentiles. Thomas, unfortunately, is still called “Doubting Thomas.”

I think, in some sense, Thomas was the most honest of the 12 and is a role model for anyone who has ever had the courage to honestly admit, even just to themselves, that they struggle with following Jesus, that it isn't easy, and that it is costly just as Jesus himself predicted it would be.

Thomas was like the least intelligent kid in grade school. Do you remember that kid? While the rest of us were so sure we understood the teacher and the lesson of the day—even though deep down we weren't all that sure—this kid would honestly display his ignorance, his lack of knowledge, and say to the teacher, “I don't get it.” The truth of it was that most of us didn't get it either but were too

shy or to proud to say so. So, the teacher explained it again, in even simpler language, to the kid who said he didn't get it. And because of that second explanation, we all had a better grasp of the lesson. Unknowingly, that kid did us all a favor.

Thomas is the one in the gospel who says, "I don't get, I don't get it, I don't get it.

Lord, we do not know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

Without that question, from the dumbest kid in the class, Thomas, we would never have the brilliant answer of Jesus—***"I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life"*** (Jn. 14:6). It's what the whole group was questioning in their own minds. It's what they were all struggling with, but only Thomas had the honesty to ask.

Because of the dumb question we all get the benefit the Teacher's brilliant answer.

Without questions, there is no growth in faith. The only people who never question were the Pharisees. Why would you bother if you already feel you've got all the answers anyways? It's the only group Jesus couldn't do anything with.

When we pray, do we pray with the answer already mind? Do we pray simply for the outcome we are so sure has to be the only outcome and that God better get on side with it? Or, do we pray like Thomas, a more open prayer where we admit, "I don't know the way, Lord, in this situation, but I'll stay open. I won't shut it down. I'll keep asking the questions, even the dumb ones, until I tap your mind. And once I've tapped your mind, give me the courage to live from this new understanding." That's a much more mature way of praying.

Like the rest of the Apostles, Thomas is in pain and is grieving the loss of Jesus—the person who meant the most to him. What do you do when you've left everything behind to give your life to the one who said, "Follow me"? and that person is dead and buried. You either seek out comfort in others who are also experiencing the same loss or you separate yourself and try to process your own grief by yourself. The group of disciples have done their own form of isolation by locking themselves in the room where they met for the Last Supper, but at least they have each other. Pain shared is pain cut in half. Pain not shared is double the pain.

Jesus hopes that people don't demand empirical proof in order to believe in him. He says as much when he tells Thomas, "***Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.***" But here we have Thomas, who has already told the other disciples that he needs empirical proof in order to believe. He needs to see with his own eyes the mark of the nails in Jesus' hands. He needs to put his own finger in the mark of the nails, and he needs to put his own hand in the side of Jesus. If these conditions are not met, he's not going to believe. For Thomas, it's too hard to invest in hope just three days after that same hope was crushed. The loss is too great for Thomas to reinvest so soon. Personally, I've never met anyone, including myself, who rebounded perfectly after burying a loved one just three days prior.

Pretend you've never heard this story before. Jesus would like for people to believe even though they have not seen. Thomas, on the other hand, set up the

conditions for belief—"I refuse to believe unless I can see and touch for myself." Who will win in this stand-off? Who will blink first? Who will concede ground to the other? Jesus? Thomas?

It's Jesus. It's as if Jesus is saying, "I wish your faith was stronger, Thomas, and I wish you had not set up the conditions you have set up in order for you to come to me. But, if this is the only way for you to believe, I'll come to you on those conditions. I wish you were part of the 99 sheep in the pen, but I'll go after you, my lost one, every time including this time."

I think Jesus easily saw past Thomas's doubt. He saw, instead, a person who desperately wanted to believe, but who struggled. He saw the kid who asked the dumb question that proved to be not so dumb in the end. The question, that if it wasn't asked would not have moved the entire group forward. Jesus saw Thomas' need for continuity. Thomas wanted to know if this Risen One was the same as the Crucified One. By revealing his wounds, Jesus answered that question with a resounding, YES!

Thomas needed to touch the real. A couple struggling in their marriage needs to talk to an older couple who have wounds of their own, who struggled and came through the other side still intact, in fact, stronger than ever. By the older couple sharing their wounds they bring healing to the younger couple. An alcoholic, who is serious about charting a new path to recovery, doesn't need to talk to someone who has never touch the bottle themselves. The recovering alcoholic needs someone who can show him their own wounds and who can tell him that while

the wounds are real, the promise of recovery is even more real. By showing their wounds recovering alcoholics bring about healing in others. Perhaps this is all that Thomas was seeking in the first place...someone who was real, genuine, and not afraid to be vulnerable. Jesus wasn't afraid, even in his risen state, to share his wounds. That's exactly what Thomas sought and found...the Wounded Healer.

Don't give too much credence to therapists, to teachers, or even to priests, if they haven't rolled up their sleeves and got their hands a little dirty, that is, if they don't have wounds. The late Pope Francis rightly criticized priests who were supposed to be shepherds but who never smelled like sheep.

Allan Boesak, the South African anti-apartheid activist, once said, "We will go before God to be judged, and God will ask us: 'Where are your wounds?' And we will say, 'We have no wounds.' And God will ask, 'Was there nothing worth fighting for?'"

Thomas, the kid who came a week late to the upper room, the kid who asked the dumb questions, turned out to be the one who rolled up his sleeves and gave his life for the gospel. He knew what was worth fighting for. Do we?

~Fr. Phil