

Second Sunday of Easter: Leaping into the Arms of Divine Mercy

The Second Sunday of Easter every year has the same Gospel: we usually call it the Gospel of Doubting Thomas. It is embarrassing to doubt. It is also human. We are all embarrassed when we go to Church and while we are there some thoughts fly through our mind, and we begin to doubt God's very existence. We feel embarrassed because here we are before God, and yet we are still questioning Him. It is embarrassing, but it is also human to doubt. We will always doubt until the day we know, and that knowledge comes after the conclusion of our lives, when we see God face to face.

Consider Thomas' doubts. What if you or I were part of that intimate group Jesus called, but, like Thomas, were not in the room when Jesus first appeared to them after the resurrection. Would we have believed that bumbling fisherman, Peter, those scheming brothers, James and John, that former tax collector and thief, Matthew, that political nutcase, Simon the Zealot, or any of those guys? Probably not. For one thing, these same people, commoners all, believed that they would soon be princes in a new Kingdom. They were delusional.

That was Thomas's mistake. He could not get beyond the humanity of the other disciples. He was not considering that they were only saying what Jesus had said would happen: Jesus had said that He would die and rise again. If Thomas had believed the other disciples, he would have been able to see through their superficiality to the fact that Jesus had also picked them to establish the Kingdom of God. If he had not been held back by their humanity, he would have believed what they had to say about Jesus' Divinity.

So often we do the same thing. We miss the presence of Christ in others because all we can see is the mistakes they have made and not the good they are doing. Sometimes children and Teens do this when they consider their parents. A child or Teen might say, "How can Mom and Dad be so right about Jesus when they are so wrong about some other things? They lose their tempers, don't behave like they tell us to behave, etc."

Sometimes parents do the same thing to their children. "How can he or she be so holy and demand to be allowed to come to Church, when we have had to put up with so many outbursts and tantrums?" All of us follow Thomas worst inclination: Thomas doubted because he could not get beyond the humanity of the others to see their pointing to Divinity among them.

Your parents, your teachers, your children, your Teens, are good people, holy people who are pointing us to the Lord. But sometimes their arms are shaking. We need to stop concentrating on the shaking. We need to get past their own limitations and look in the general direction they are pointing.

There was another reason why Thomas doubted. Thomas was disappointed in himself. Perhaps you remember that when Jesus said he would go to Jerusalem and suffer and die, Thomas said that the disciples should go with the Lord and die with him. Bravo, Thomas. Brave guy, Thomas. But where was Thomas on Calvary? When Jesus was arrested Thomas joined all the others except John and went into hiding. Thomas must have been horribly disappointed in himself.

We have all done this. We have all been disappointed in ourselves. It gets us nowhere. We need to stop focusing in on ourselves, and our mistakes and realize that God loves us as we are, frail human beings who need Him so much.

God loves me unconditionally. God forgives me. God is with me. I can cross from doubt to faith when I reflect on the tremendous love that God has for me as I am, a frail human who trusts himself even less than he trusts others. It is not easy to take the step, the leap really, and trust in ourselves, trust in others and, ultimately, trust in God.

One of my favorite stories, a true story, is that of a little blind boy named Jason. Jason was ten years old and lived with his Father in an apartment building in New York City. One day the Father stepped out to get some groceries. When he came back, the fire department was outside the building. The first floors of the building were engulfed in flame. Their apartment was on the third floor. Jason realized what was happening and had worked his way out a window and was standing on a the ledge of the window sill. Because of the flame, the firefighters could not get a ladder to Jason. There was no choice. Jason had to jump. But he was blind and afraid. Then his father called out to him, "I am here, Jason. Trust me. You can do it. Jump." And Jason trusted and jumped into the safety net and into his Father's arms.

Sure you and I might doubt our own abilities, and perhaps at times we should. On top of that, there are many times that we are not all that sure about the faith of others. We have to trust that God works in us and works through others. We can jump. We can take the leap into faith when we realize that God is there to catch us. He loves me. He forgives me. He is with me.

Another one of my favorite stories is the incident in the *Gospel of Mark* when Jesus came upon a man whose son had a form of epilepsy. The man had brought his son to Jesus' disciples, but they couldn't help him. Then Jesus came onto the scene.

"What's going on?" He asked.

"My son is possessed of a demon that overtakes him. He loses control of himself. One time he fell into a well, another time into a fire. (The man was describing an epileptic seizure). Your disciples couldn't help. Can you heal my son?"

"Can I?" Jesus asked. "I can do all things if you have faith." It was right there that the man recognized his own doubts and then joined us all in saying to the Lord, "I

do believe, but help my unbelief.” By that he meant, “I have faith, but sometimes I have doubts. Please help me, Lord.”

It is the same for all of us. When we are feeling remarkably human and are full of doubts, we need to say along with the man in the *Gospel of Mark*, “I do believe Lord, help me get over those parts of me that don’t believe.” And then, like Jason, we need to simply trust in our Father and leap into the loving arms of Divine Mercy.