

Homily for April 19, 2020 on Doubts and Faith
Acts 2: 42-47; Psalm 118; 1 Peter 1: 3-9; John 20: 19-31

The Sunday after Easter always presents the Gospel of Doubting Thomas. The reasoning is that the events in today's gospel take place one week after the Lord rose from the dead. A deeper reason, though, is that our belief in the Resurrection is based on our faith. We have faith that Jesus fulfilled the Scriptural prophecies that the Suffering Servant would be raised up. We have faith that He fulfilled his own prophecies that he would suffer, die and on the third day rise up. We have faith in those who witnessed His resurrection and testified to it: Peter and the other ten, Mary Magdalene and the women who had been at the tomb and many other disciples like those on the road to Emmaus, who proclaimed that they had seen the Lord. In 1 Corinthians 15: 6, St. Paul writes that one time Jesus appeared to over 500 disciples.

However, faith is always going to be met with doubts. This is part of the human condition. Everyone suffers times, often just fleeting moments, when he or she has doubts about the existence of God, the divinity and humanity of Jesus, the Eucharist or other teachings of the Church. Here is something you might find shocking: even the Pope has doubts. He has doubts because he is a human being. We will not be free from all doubts until we see God face to face in eternity. I love the story of the man whose son was suffering from some form of what we would call epilepsy. You find this in The Gospel of Mark 9:15-29. Jesus came upon quite a scene, a lot of noise and yelling. People all gathered, seeming to be upset over something or other. So Jesus asked, "What's going on. A man who was there said, "Sir, my son suffers from a spirit that seizes him, throws him down, causes him to foam from the mouth and roll around." Jesus asked, "How long has this been happening?" "Since childhood," the man responded. Then he added, "Sometimes he is thrown into the water or into a fire." Then the man said, "Sir if you can do anything, please help him." Jesus replied, "If I can. Everything is possible for someone who has faith. Then the boy's father shouted out, "I do believe, Lord. Help those parts of me that don't believe." With that

the Lord healed the boy. “Help those parts of me that don’t believe.” That is our prayer too when we realize how little our faith is at times.

We have many challenges to our faith. It takes a tremendous amount of humility to have faith. Having faith demands that we recognize that we do not have all the answers to the questions of life. Some answers can only be given to us through faith. If we are too proud to believe, then we limit ourselves to that which we can comprehend with our finite minds. When people say to us, “How can you explain the Doctrine of Holy Trinity, or the necessity of Jesus’ paschal mysteries, or the immaculate conception of blessed Virgin Mary?” the answer we should give is, “This is a mystery given to us by God which is beyond our mind’s capability.”

Another area of doubt comes not through intellectual reasons, but through physical challenges. A person becomes seriously ill. The doctor tells him or her that this might last for months, or years, or be a condition that might last a lifetime. A loved one dies. A young person dies. It is quite normal for us to ask, “Where were you God when I, when we, were going through this?” God’s answer is that He is with us holding us up, helping us get through and even grow stronger in our faith when it is challenged. Many times people will get through a crisis and then feel horrible that they doubted God, or even His existence. God sees the pain the person is suffering. He is crying with us, just as Jesus cried at the tomb of Lazarus. He tells us to use our challenges to draw closer to Him. We can, and we do.

Jesus looked at Thomas and said, “Do not be unbelieving, but believe.” Thomas then said, “My Lord and My God.” Then Jesus said something extremely important for us all to remember, he said, “You believe because you have seen. Blessed are those who have not seen and believe. So when doubts come, whether due to others or circumstances, or due to things welling up inside us, we need to say, “Lord, I do believe. Help those parts of me that don’t believe.” We need to trust that the Lord who promised to give us all good things, will give us faith and hope! May God bless you! +++ Amen. Fr. Thomas