**Doubt** April 27, 2025 Jn 20:19-31

* The writer of the letter to the Hebrews says: “***Faith is being sure of what we hope for & certain of what we do not see.***” (Heb 11:1)
* Jesus said to Thomas; “***Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed***.” (Jn 20:29)
* Just a week ago we celebrated Easter, and affirmed in the strongest possible way our faith as Christians.
* We shouted with great joy, “***Alleluia, He is risen***!”
* And here we are today confronted with something that is very real for all of us at one time or another - ***DOUBT***
* In one sense I believe Thomas represents many of us who may have doubts at one time or another.
* Have you ever been at a gathering and gone along with the crowd only because you were reluctant to speak up – didn’t want to look or sound foolish.
* Not Thomas! He was a bit like Peter in that he could be impulsive, but he didn’t go along with the crowd simply for the

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sake of going along.

* He was his own person and he was willing to speak his mind.
* To get a better sense of Thomas’s character, we can look at several other places in the gospels.
* Once, when Jesus was comforting his disciples and speaking very profound words, He said:

“***Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going."*** (John 14:1-4)

* Thomas interrupted Jesus and said: “***Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way***?” Thomas didn’t get it . . . but he had the courage and the honesty to ask.
* This exchange elicited this response from Jesus: “***I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father***

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***except through me***.” - **You can’t get much clearer than that.**

* Thomas has become known as “*Doubting Thomas*” because of today’s gospel reading.
* But you might note that Jesus did not rebuke him for doubting.
* Thomas was being brutally honest, and I believe that is exactly the way God wants us to be.
* God knows our hearts anyway, so even if we have doubt, we cannot hide it from Him.
* Besides, to acknowledge doubt or disbelief, we then have an opportunity to discover reality and truth. – Like Thomas hearing, “*I am the way and the truth and the life*”
* Thomas doubted in order to become sure, and there is a big difference between that kind of doubt when you want to investigate something and discover its truth, and the kind of doubt when one simply doesn’t want to believe at all.
* Nicky Gumbel (Alpha) tells of a time when he & others were speaking at a

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Christian conference & there was one individual who kept asking questions.

* Not the kind of questions where this person was really interested in learning the answers, but the kind of negative questions that just seemed to be more directed at antagonizing the speaker.
* Finally, Nicky asked the man. “*If I were to answer every one of your questions to your satisfaction, would it make any difference to you or to what you believe?*”
* The man answered, “*no*”
* That man had lots of doubt, but he didn’t really want to believe.
* Christianity is not, and was never meant to be, a blind faith where its participants blindly follow without questioning.
* Just the opposite is true.
* That is why doubt is not bad - because it causes us to ask questions and to get answers.
* Honest doubt is always caused by faith - faith searching for deeper answers.
* Theologian named John Drummond said: “***Christ never failed to distinguish***

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***between doubt and unbelief.***

* **Doubt** *is* ***can’t believe****;* **unbelief** *is* ***won’t believe****.*
* **Doubt** *is* ***looking for light****;* **unbelief** *is* ***content with darkness****.*”
* Doubt can be a natural part of the believer’s life, because it is through questioning that we grow deeper in our faith.
* Theologian, Frederick Buechner writes, “***Were there no room for doubt, there would be no room for faith either***.”
* Thomas said: “***Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe it.***” It was a week later that Thomas got his chance to do just that.
* Please note that while Thomas made his strong statement of doubt, he was still with the other ten disciples a week later.
* He hadn’t run away with his hands in the air declaring that it just wasn’t true.
* Because of his doubt and questioning, he was then able to say: “***My Lord and my God***”.

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* We might think that it would be much easier to believe & have faith if only we could have seen & walked with Jesus like the disciples did.
* We might say that if we were able to see and to touch Jesus following His resurrection, like the disciples did, then it would be easier for us to walk the path that God has called us to walk.
* What we must remember however, is that God has a plan, and what has happened and how it happened is all part of God’s plan for the world.
* Jesus said on the cross, “***It is finished***” and it was. God’s purpose was accomplished.
* Jesus died for our sins which meant that we could now be reconciled with God. The door was open – the veil was torn, and all we had, or have to do is choose to enter the relationship now made possible.
* At this point however, while Jesus was on the earth, only a few people in Jerusalem were involved. But God’s plan was for the entire world.
* Let’s back up just a bit. In the 16th

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chapter of John, Jesus tells His disciples that He will be returning to the Father who sent him, and while acknowledging the disciples’ grief, He says: “***It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin . . .” –*** not just Jerusalem, but **the world*.***

* Yes, the disciples saw Jesus following His resurrection, but that wasn’t the event that empowered them to go out fearlessly and proclaim the gospel and start the Church.
* In the first chapter of Acts we read where Jesus said: “***"Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."*** (Acts 1:4-5)
* It was only following the receiving of the H. S. at Pentecost, the very thing that Jesus promised, that the disciples were empowered to do the things they did.

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* And this group of men who had been hiding in absolute fear following the crucifixion, as we read in today’s lesson from Acts, were in trouble again with the Jewish authorities. They had gone back into the very environment that they were hiding from. We read”

***“Having brought the apostles, they made them appear before the Sanhedrin to be***

***questioned by the high priest. "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood." Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men!*** ( Acts 5:27-29)*There doesn’t seem to be much fear anymore.*

* God’s plan has not changed. Jesus said to Thomas "***Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed***." (John 20:29 )
* Jesus was referring to you and me.
* We will not necessarily see Jesus in a physical sense, but we can meet the risen

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Jesus.

* We meet him in our life together.
* We meet Him in our worship, especially in the Eucharist.
* And we meet Him in His Living Word, Holy Scripture.
* It is here, in Scripture, where most people come face to face with the risen Christ.
* Jesus wants each one of us to meet Him.
* There is a much deeper seeing than what we experience with our physical sight. St Paul described it this way: “***I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints”*** (Ephesians 1:18)
* Like Thomas, if our doubt is the focus in looking for light, we will not be disappointed. The eyes of our hearts will be enlightened and we too will be compelled to say, without equivocation , “***My Lord and my God***”