

Sunday April 27 2025 Sermon Easter Sunday 2

John 20:19-31

Poor Thomas! He has gone down in history as the "unbeliever," when his reaction was not much different from that of his fellow disciples. The same Gospel of John tells us that Peter, when he received the news that the tomb was empty, did not quite believe it and ran out to check what that crazy woman, called Mary, Magdala, was saying between disconsolate sobs. Peter, too, and the enigmatic "beloved disciple," had to "see to believe." But... History is like that, and Thomas will always be remembered as the "unbelieving" disciple.

Thomas did nothing that any of us would not have done. Perhaps, rushing the story, he was much more sincere than many of those who on these dates have gone "out of habit or tradition" to the recent special Easter services. It must have been hard for Thomas to admit, in front of his companions, that he could not believe what they, with such enthusiasm, proclaimed. It is not easy to go against the tide, it requires great honesty and a good dose of strength.

How can we believe that which contradicts pure logic? They, including Thomas, had seen with their own eyes, even from afar, how their master died. They had seen his corpse brought into the tomb. From that day on, many questions would come to mind. Peter would no doubt think a lot about his lack of courage at decisive moments,

and how Jesus announced it to him (Jn 13:38); the young "beloved disciple" would remember the words that Jesus addressed to him from the cross, and in the great responsibility that his teacher entrusted to him (Jn 19:27); Thomas also had something to think about; he too, like Peter, had his moment of euphoria not corroborated later by the facts. Yes, it had been a few months since Jesus wanted to go to Bethany to see his friend Lazarus, who had died. Bethany, so close to the dangerous Jerusalem where they wanted to kill the master. On that occasion it was Thomas himself who said to his companions "let us also go, to die with him" (Jn 11:16). What happened that they left him alone? Why didn't he even try to fulfill what he promised, without being asked? Yes, there are many questions that assail them, many regrets that must be ruminated on. But they all revolved around one incontrovertible fact: Jesus had died, **he was** dead. That was the hard and sad reality. Besides, if God had wanted to save him from death, wouldn't He have done so while He was on the cross? There, when everyone was watching Jesus, with the troops of the Romans present, with the Pharisees, the priests and other servants of the temple in front of them; there it would have had an echo. But he didn't, and Jesus died, and was buried, and somebody stole his body. How could we believe what the women were saying? How can we not think that what the disciples saw was not a ghost, or a strange apparition from beyond? Yes, we should not be surprised

that Thomas asked to see; moreover, that he asked to touch, to feel with his own hands, because ghosts have no body.

Brothers and sisters, God's love in Christ has no limits. Jesus was present again at the meeting of the disciples and this time Thomas was there. And he presented his hands to him, and offered him his side. "Here they are, Thomas, touch with your fingers, put your hands in. Check that what your eyes reveal to you is true. Touch and believe"

Traditionally, this passage has been read as a certain reproach of the risen Jesus to Thomas, as if Jesus had been disappointed by the unbelieving attitude of his disciple. But if we look at the text without prior intentions, without the prejudices of having already labeled Thomas as the distrustful and unbelieving, we will realize that the reproach is nowhere to be found. On the contrary, the text shows us an understanding Jesus, who understands Thomas' problems and lovingly lends himself so that he can overcome them. Far from considering Thomas' request an affront, Jesus exposes his wounds so that the disciple can put his hands in them, and can touch and check. Such is God's love. It descends and adapts to our needs. Such is God's love. Respect and understand the personal processes of each one of us. Instead of putting obstacles in the way of our faith, it smooths out the difficulties of believing. Such is God's love.

In an old treatise on pedagogy it was said that the good teacher is the one who, recognizing the incapacities of his student, descends

to his height and, taking his hand, brings him to the level of the teacher himself. This is how God is and this is how he manifests himself in Jesus. Mary needs to hear, and Jesus calls her by name; Peter needs time and to be prepared, and Jesus sends emissaries who announce their desire to come to see him; Thomas needs to touch and feel, and Jesus holds out his hands and his side to him. This is the God who manifests himself in Jesus, who puts himself at the level of his disciples and leads them in their process of growth.

Because that's what this story is about, the growth of the person; or, if you prefer, reaching maturity. It is Jesus' final phrase that gives us the key to the meaning of this story: *"Do you believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who believe without having seen!"* Authentic faith, genuine faith, is that which is not supported by what we can see and prove. True faith is that which is not based on evidence or reason. "Blessed are those who believe without seeing", that must be our goal, our growth, the maturity of our hope.

That call of the Risen Jesus has much to do with our present days and with the lives of our communities. Because Jesus confronts us with the quality of our faith, he forces us to ask ourselves the important question: *where is my faith based? Do I still need to see in order to believe, or has my faith matured and I can believe without seeing?* When in many churches the presence of the Holy Spirit is doubted if certain visible signs are not manifest, these words of Jesus

are forgotten. When these visible manifestations are made the indispensable requirement for being the Church of Christ, this call of Jesus is denied. It is true that, sometimes, we all need certain supports to start walking, like children when they learn to walk and need support, but it is hoped that the day will come when they can walk on their own, without help. Or like when someone breaks a leg, and temporarily needs the support of crutches, knowing that they are not forever. We thank God for the support He gives us to affirm our weak and wavering faith, we thank God because He shows us the wounded hands of Jesus Christ and His open side; We are grateful because, even beyond pure seeing, he lets us put our fingers and hands in his wounds. But we cannot remain anchored in our weakness and hesitation. We must learn to believe without seeing, without touching or touching, we must learn to recognize the action of the Spirit even without hearing with our ears, even without seeing with our eyes, even without touching with our hands. Jesus is risen and I believe it because He has promised it and revealed it.

Happy Easter to all in the living presence of the Savior. **Amen.**