

Opening the Word: Love's mercy received



In drama, conflicted characters generally are more interesting. If Hamlet had had a clear conscience, a definite sense of purpose, then the tragedy would have ended pretty quickly. In fact, it wouldn't have been a tragedy.

Perhaps it's our fascination with such conflict that draws our attention to the figure of St. Thomas on the Second Sunday of Easter.

Christ appears to the disciples on the first Easter Sunday, bestowing peace. He shows them his glorious wounds. Then he leaves.

But Thomas isn't there. One could imagine the conflict that he experiences. Why did Jesus appear without me present? Are my friends just making this up?

Our tendency to focus on St. Thomas' doubt may block us from seeing the more important dimension of the Gospel.

Jesus has mercy on Thomas in his affliction.

Our Lord appears a week later. Jesus comes especially for Thomas, letting him touch the very side that was pierced. Now Thomas believes.

[Second Sunday of Easter \(Divine Mercy Sunday\) – April 8, 2018](#)

ACTS 4:23-35

PS 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24

1 JN 5:1-6

JN 20:19-31

But Christ's mercy in the Gospel does not stop there. We, the

Church of God, are not so privileged to touch the physical wounds of Our Lord. And yet, Jesus has saved the greatest mercy of all for us: "Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed" (Jn 20:29).

How are we the blessed? Are we not conflicted just like Thomas? Have we not longed for some consolation from God in the midst of suffering? In the loss of a child? In the doubts we've experienced about God's very existence: "Where are you, O Lord?"

But let's look again. In the first letter of John, we hear: "Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God" (1 Jn 4:7). The mercy of God is that we have been given an opportunity to love the body of Our Lord through love of neighbor.

That's why, in Acts, we hear about that first Christian community in Jerusalem. Gathered together in unity. One heart. One voice. Sharing all things in common because they have been gathered together by the same love made manifest in the wounds of Our Lord.

If we want to see the risen Lord, we need to run toward the mercy of God made visible through our neighbor. We have to run into the arms of the Church, gathered together in love around the Eucharist, to "taste and see" the hidden wounds of the beloved Son in the Eucharist.

It's not that we Christians after Thomas are simply dependent on some leap of faith into the unknown.

Rather, we are blessed because the mercy of God that is available to us is no longer dependent upon the physical presence of the resurrected Lord in our midst. Rather, this presence is now poured forth in mercy through the Scriptures, through the neighbor suffering for his or her faith, and through the Eucharist.

It's only natural that we want more than this. We want to be in the presence of Christ. To know him not simply sacramentally through the Scriptures, the Church, the liturgy or the poor neighbor.

But the mercy of God is that we have not been left as orphans. God is still present among us, offering his merciful presence in a world often bereft of mercy.

So run with Thomas to the side of Christ.

Run, don't walk.

And discover the mercy of a God who heals the conflicted soul with the word of mercy: "And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age" (Mt 28:20).

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