

Read

Acts of the Apostles

5:12-16

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

Revelation 1:9-11a, 12-13,
17-19

John 20:19-31

LIVING THE WORD

Second Sunday of Easter / Sunday of Divine Mercy

April 28, 2019



REFLECTION

There are numerous paintings depicting the scene of the Risen Lord with Thomas, the doubter. For example, Rembrandt and Caravaggio have famous paintings illustrating this scene. While John's account only mentions Thomas' doubt, Caravaggio takes it a step further and has Thomas actually touch the wounds of Christ. As humans, we struggle with doubt all our lives. Sometimes it is doubt in our own abilities or purpose in life and sometimes it is in our faith. We know that Thomas does become a believer: "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28). Maybe his purpose in this Easter story is to remind us that there will always be doubters. We could be one of them or we could be one of the faithful disciples. Our prayer for this week is that we may be the latter.

? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Reflect on a time in your life when you doubted yourself. Where was God?
- ❖ What encouraging words would you share with Thomas or other doubters?



ACTION

Make an effort to say hello to each person you meet one day this week. Genuinely wish them a good day. In doing this, you may find some doubters who question your optimism and kindness. Remain resolute in your positivity. Others will believe you and might even spread your kindness through their own actions. Through these kind greetings, you may start a movement!





April 28, 2019

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER / SUNDAY OF DIVINE MERCY

LECTIONARY #45C

Acts of the Apostles 5:12-16

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

Revelation 1:9-11a, 12-13, 17-19

John 20:19-31

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

Each of today's readings zoom in on the idea that "seeing is believing." People see the Apostles heal the sick and dying and they come to believe in the power of God. John sees a vision of Christ in heaven and is able to write down what he hears and comes to understand. The Apostles see Jesus breathe upon them. Doubting Thomas sees the very wounds of Christ and his faith is restored. Sight seems to be critically important to faith; yet, it is our faith that must be stretched when we cannot always directly see.

Q FOCUS: *Jesus rose from the dead and established his Church on earth.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

The Second Sunday of Easter is also called Sunday of Divine Mercy. On April 30, 2000, Pope John Paul II canonized St. Faustina Kowalska, a Polish nun and visionary to whom Christ had appeared with red and white rays streaming from his heart, an image that has since become famous as the "Divine Mercy." St. Faustina realized that God sees the world through the wounds of his Son, and that God's gaze is full of mercy and love. We need not fear, therefore, but only trust in Jesus. Many people pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet on this day.

Church Teaching Connection

"The people of God believes that it is led by the Spirit of the Lord who fills the whole world. . . . For faith casts a new light on everything and makes known the full ideal which God has set for humanity, thus guiding the mind towards solutions that are fully human" (*Gaudium et spes*, 11).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

John 20:19-31

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained."

Thomas, called Didymus, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other

disciples said to him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nailmarks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

Now a week later his disciples were again inside and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, although the doors were locked, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe." Thomas answered and said to him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed."

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in his name.

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

► Have you ever heard the phrase "We walk by faith, and not by sight"? If so, where have you heard it? What do you think it means? Why would we say this?

The phrase "Walking by faith . . ." seems almost ironic, maybe counterintuitive, or a bit silly, doesn't it? It almost sounds as if we're walking blindly, unaware of what's ahead or right at our feet. Walking by faith means walking with a spirit of intense trust, not necessarily seeing the full path right away but continuing to move forward anyway. Today's readings focus in on this concept of "sight,"

especially in regards to the Apostles and their lack of immediate faith in the Resurrection.

► What are the Apostles doing when Jesus appears to them in today's Gospel?

They are hiding, with the doors locked. They are hiding because they are scared. They just witnessed their leader's brutal execution, and now, they're worried that they could be killed next.

► What would you have done in this situation?

Probably hide too. The Apostles are hiding in a locked room. When Jesus appears to the Apostles, what does he say? Jesus says, "Peace be with you." He brings comfort and assurance to the Apostles; they need not worry, they need not fear. Jesus has returned and will aid them as they journey forward. Jesus shows the Apostles his wounds from the Cross. He shows them the nail marks in his hands and the wound in his side where he was stabbed with the Roman soldier's lance.

► Why does he do this? What is Jesus trying to prove to the Apostles by showing them his wounds?

Jesus is proving to the Apostles that he is the real deal. Jesus really died. He really suffered. And he really is back. He really has defeated death and returned to establish the Church on earth.

► How do the Apostles respond when Jesus shows them his wounds?

They rejoice. They are filled with faith. They have seen his hands and his side and they are now confident. They see and they believe. Jesus then breathes on the Apostles and gives them the power to go forth with his power to forgive and retain sins. This is traditionally seen as one of the moments when Jesus establishes the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The Apostles are being sent forth with the power of the Spirit, not their own authority, to offer mercy and forgiveness to those in need. Their renewed faith (brought about by what they have witnessed and seen) is the catalyst for this mission they are given.

► Who isn't present? Who was not with the Apostles when Jesus came to them that day?

Thomas, who we now know as "Doubting Thomas," wasn't in the room. He didn't see what happened. He

didn't hear Jesus speak. He didn't witness these moments or lay eyes on the wounds of his friend whom he saw die a brutal death. So, he doubts. Thomas doesn't walk by faith, he walks by sight . . . and if he hasn't seen it, he doesn't believe it.

► **How is Thomas' faith restored? Who appears to him? And what then happens?**

After Jesus appears to Thomas and shows him the wounds, Thomas comes to believe. He understands now and accepts the testimony of his friends who had seen the same thing.

► **But what is Jesus' response to Thomas? What does Jesus say about people who only believe once they have seen something?**

"Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed" seem like fairly harsh words. This is Jesus' way of telling all of us, both the Apostles then and us today, that sometimes we may not fully see (or understand) what is going on, but we must still have immense trust in God.

Tell teens about St. Faustina and the Divine Mercy (see page 184). The words at the bottom of the traditional Divine Mercy image say, "Jesus, I trust in you." Today's Gospel is a reminder about the need for trust. Jesus will reinforce our faith, in due time and in his way. But this will not always occur with him appearing to us to show us his wounds or to perform some radical miracle or speak directly into our ear. We are sometimes called to first walk in faith, trusting that he will guide us even if we do not have complete and perfect vision of what is going on.

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 184.

Faith is the grounding principle (or should be) of our walk with God. It illuminates our path.

It is through faith that we are able to accept, understand, and confidently follow the directions, inspirations, and will of God.

Act on the Word

Have the teens pair off in partners. The youngest teens act as a "leader" and the oldest teen acts as the "follower" in the first round of this game. Gather the leaders in a place where the followers cannot hear. Tell the leaders that they are going to blindfold their partner and lead them to another designated place. Leaders are only allowed to speak to the followers. Leaders cannot touch the followers; they are only allowed to give verbal instructions. Leaders must try to get their blindfolded partner to the designated location as quickly as possible. Leaders are not allowed to tell their partner where they are going, only that they will be guided on a journey. If the leader's blindfolded partner runs into anything (other people, objects, the wall, and so on) they must go back to the original place and start over.

Make sure each pair has a blindfold. All the groups will begin to move at the same time to their new location. Once every leader has guided their blindfolded partner to a new location, the followers may remove their blindfolds. Then have the teens form larger groups (each group should include both leaders and blindfolded followers). Have them discuss these questions:

► **Why was it hard to be blind? Was it hard to give verbal instructions?**

► **What was frustrating or difficult about this task? Did you get angry or upset? Why?**

Once the groups have processed, have the people that were blind in the first round blindfold their leader and guide them back to where you began this activity. Hopefully this will help illustrate the challenge and difficulty of walking blind.

Closing Prayer

End today's session by praying the Divine Mercy Chaplet. Here is a helpful website: www.thedivinemercy.org/message/devotions/praythechaplet.php.

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.