

Read

Acts 5:12-16

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

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

John 20:19-31



REFLECTION

My dear friend, Thomas, cannot stand today's Gospel reading. It conjures up memories of being teased in elementary school. His classmates jumped on the nickname "Doubting Thomas" after hearing of the Easter character bearing the same name. They teased as if having doubts was a bad thing, as if Thomas was the only one to question the extraordinary experience described in John 20.

But if we take our faith seriously, I imagine all of us have some "doubting Thomas" in us.

To doubt is to take a claim seriously enough to play with it, to turn it over and dissect it from all angles. The key is to stick with the doubt, like Thomas. He did not walk away. He did not say, "I will not believe, period. Ever. Resurrection is not possible and I will never believe otherwise." Instead, Thomas challenges the disciples to move closer to the risen Christ. "If the Lord really is here, I want to touch him!" (Just as the other disciples who had an opportunity to see Jesus.) A week later, the risen Christ appears to the disciples again, and in doing so, brings Thomas face-to-face with his doubts.

Thomas's doubts draw him into an intimate encounter with Jesus. May our doubts do the same.

QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ What parts of the Christian faith do you have doubts about?
- ❖ How can you, like Thomas, move closer to Christ through these doubts?

LIVING THE WORD

Second Sunday of Easter / Sunday of Divine Mercy

April 24, 2022

ACTION

It can be easy to keep questions and movements of faith stored up in our minds. But Thomas shows how touchable faith can be, too. Find a way to connect your sense of touch to faith this week. You could run your fingers along the beads of a rosary, swirl your hands around the water in the baptismal font, or offer a handshake sign of peace to a fellow parishioner.



Do an image search for *The Incredulity of Saint Thomas* by Caravaggio. Spend some time reflecting on the painting and imagine how you would fit into the scene.



April 24, 2022

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER / SUNDAY OF DIVINE MERCY

LECTIONARY #45C

Acts 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

The apostles were gathered behind locked doors, fearful of the crowds who may persecute them. Jesus, their teacher, had been buried, and while his tomb was empty, the disciples did not yet know where Jesus was. When he appeared to them, they rejoiced. Jesus brought his followers the gift of the resurrection. In Christ and his victory over the grave, the disciples grew from a group of scared people into the ancient early Church, spreading the Good News of Jesus over the entire region and beyond. Instead of letting fear hold us back from sharing the Gospel with other people, we are called to be a people of the resurrection. We are filled with the joy of Christ's victory over death and share that Good News with others.

Q FOCUS: *The resurrection illustrates Jesus' power over death, and reminds us of our own freedom from death's fear.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

On April 29 the Church remembers St. Catherine of Siena, who lived in Italy in the fourteenth century. She was the twenty-fourth child in her family. She became a Third Order Dominican. This means that she did not become a religious sister or nun but remained a lay woman and adopted the spirituality of the Dominicans and followed their charisms (preaching and evangelizing) while living in the world. She

wrote letters to many Church and political leaders, encouraging them to act in a manner befitting followers of Christ. She became such a prominent and trusted figure that when the papacy experienced a division, her letters helped to restore unity to the papal office. She is considered a doctor of the Church.

Church Teaching Connection

In today's Gospel reading we hear Thomas refer to Jesus as "my Lord and my God." In the early centuries of Christianity, Christians had different opinions on the nature of Christ. Some people believed that Jesus had human skin but was only divine not actually human. Others believed that Jesus was only human and blessed by God. Still others believed that Jesus was specially created by God to do God's work, but not God himself. The Church councils of Nicaea (AD 325), Constantinople (AD 381), and Chalcedon (AD 451) were instrumental in authoritatively teaching that Jesus is fully human and fully God, and that he is consubstantial with God the Father. This means that Jesus and the Father are of the same substance. We profess this belief in the Nicene Creed.

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:

The tomb was empty, but where was Jesus? Last Sunday's reading witnessed Mary Magdalene bringing the news of the empty tomb to the disciples—they arrived at the empty tomb, but they didn't know where Jesus could be. This week we find the disciples fearful of persecution, hiding, and locked in a room. The disciples had seen Jesus give sight to the blind and raise the dead, and then they saw him die on the cross. Why did he not take himself off the cross? Could he not save himself? They must have been terrified for their own lives.

► **When people are scared, what is their typical reaction?**

► **How would you behave when fearing such terrible persecution?**

When Jesus appeared in the midst of his followers, they rejoiced. He showed them his hands and side, and they knew that the person before them was the resurrected Lord.

► **What is it like to go from complete sadness to overwhelming joy? What do you think the disciples were thinking and feeling in this moment?**

Thomas wasn't present the first time Jesus appeared to the disciples in the locked room, and he said he would not believe the other apostles until he saw Jesus and touched his wounds for himself, just as they had had the opportunity to do. When Jesus did appear to Thomas and showed him his hands and feet, Thomas' response is the highest praise and highest recognition of the identity of Jesus. Thomas replied, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). Thomas, despite his doubt, identifies and professes Jesus' divine nature.

Today's Gospel reading gives us a clear look at the beginning of a change in outlook that happened among Jesus' followers. At the beginning of the reading, the disciples are afraid, and they are locked in a room, away from everyone else. The Church wouldn't have been able to survive if Jesus' followers remained hidden in a locked room. When Jesus revealed his resurrection to the disciples, everything changed—they realized that death did not hold him, and that death itself was powerless. When Jesus breathes on them and they receive the Holy Spirit, they are a people ready to share the Good News, and preach Christ crucified, resurrected and glorified. They are infused

with the bravery they need to spread God's message to the world.

► In what ways does Jesus change us, and help us to do what is right and good when we are faced with fear?

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 172.

Jesus appeared to the disciples in the locked room, and they believed he was resurrected.

Thomas identifies Jesus' divine nature.

Jesus gives people the confident assurance needed to bravely share God's word.

Act on the Word

Jesus Gives Us Courage

For this activity, you will need copies of short biographies of the twelve apostles. You can find these online or in a Catholic resource book. Read through the accounts before sharing them with the young people; some accounts of the martyrdoms of some of the apostles may need to be edited to suit your group's maturity and development levels.

Jesus' followers huddled in a locked room, frightened of the crowds who had put their teacher to death. How did these people go from scared followers of a crucified radical leader to the early leaders of the Church who spread Christianity throughout the region and into the rest of the world? Put simply, these men witnessed the resurrected Christ. These ordinary people became the bearers of Christ in the post-resurrection world. But why? And how? What made them move past that fear to face persecution

head-on? What happened to each of the apostles as they spread the news of Christ?

Have the young people break into small groups or pairs and read an account of an apostle or apostles. Prepare the following list of questions for the teens to use to guide their discussion.

- * How did the apostle show bravery, faith, and trust in God?
- * What sort of leadership skills did the apostle possess?
- * How did each apostle's faith affect his life's trajectory?
- * How did the apostle's faith affect his approach to death and persecution?
- * What changes have to occur in a person to go from a fearful person hiding from persecution to a person willing to accept martyrdom if it is the result of preaching Christ?

Closing Prayer

God of tenderness and mercy,
you call us to share our belief in you
and minister to those in need of your care.

Guide our efforts of evangelization
so that we may bring others
to know of your love for them.

Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

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.