

Second Sunday of Easter or Sunday of the Divine Mercy



Prayer for a Merciful Heart

O God of Mercy,
you who offer doubters your healing hand,
guide us to a deeper understanding
of your mercy to us all.
Teach us to quiet our desire to strike back,
to lay aside faultfinding,
and to offer to others
that same compassion
we have received from you.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ,
your Son, who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God for ever and ever. Amen.

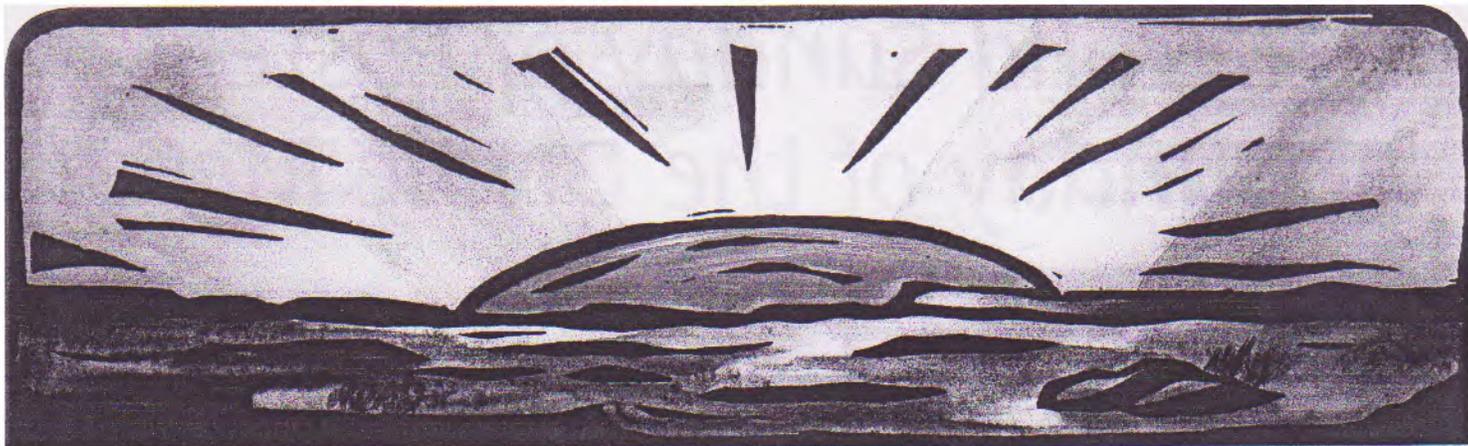
Sunday, April 15, 2012 Unwarranted Doubt

Today's Readings: Acts 4:32–35; Psalm 118:2–4, 13–15, 22–24 (1); 1 John 5:1–6; John 20:19–31. Thomas would understand times when doubt is the right response. How else would we protect ourselves from internet scams, bogus advertising, and phony offers? Everyone has doubts, because God gave us intelligence. Doubt can serve us well. But as Thomas would surely tell us now, we can never go wrong in trusting Jesus. In spite of Thomas's doubt, the Lord meets him with open arms: never criticizing, always welcoming. His response shows us the face of Divine Mercy. This quality isn't simply a platitude: carved into Jesus' hands are the nail marks of evil.

Completely innocent, Jesus bore suffering for love. His compassionate act shows clearly that no matter what we've

done, we can always anticipate his forgiveness. His reunion with Thomas could have been awkward, with Jesus demanding, "Why did you doubt me?" and Thomas stammering, embarrassed by his failure. Instead, it is a celebration of faith, with Thomas declaring so sincerely, "My Lord and my God!"

Perhaps Thomas appreciated Jesus' gift of peace more than the other disciples, because for him it was hard won. Was his faith more alive and strong because it had been tested? Did Thomas, later in life, look at his finger that had probed the wounds and marvel at the endless well of mercy it touched? And what of us who have neither seen nor touched? Do we too entertain doubts confidently, knowing them as gateways to deeper belief?



This Week at Home

Monday, April 16

A Song of Celebration

Today's Readings: Acts 4:23–31; Psalm 2:1–3, 4–7a, 7b–9 (Alleluia); John 3:1–8. Today's passage from Acts describes the vitality of the first disciples: "the place in which they were gathered together was shaken" (4:31). They asked to be able to speak God's word with boldness. Capture their enthusiasm by singing or listening to favorite Easter hymns, such as "I Am the Bread of Life," "Jesus Christ Is Risen Today," "We Who Once Were Dead," "Alleluia! Sing to Jesus!" or "O Sons and Daughters, Let Us Sing!"

Tuesday, April 17

Signs of Easter Spirit

Today's Readings: Acts 4:32–37; Psalm 93:1ab, 1cd–2, 5 (1a); John 3:7b–15. The description in Acts of the early Christian community sounds idyllic: "The whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul" (4:32). Celebrate that harmony, and encourage it in your home with signs of the Easter spirit. Hang ornaments such as flowers, crowns, fish, doves, and eggs on a bare branch for an Easter tree. Set flowering branches in vases. Place a white cloth and candle, and a bowl of water on your table or in your prayer space.

Wednesday, April 18

Seek Spring—Outside

Today's Readings: Acts 5:17–26; Psalm 34:2–3, 4–5, 6–7, 8–9 (7a); John 3:16–21. Imagine the excitement of the apostles freed from jail when "an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors" (5:19). After a winter of confinement indoors, the smells and sounds of spring are best appreciated outside. Savor the freedom to explore without heavy coats. If possible, have a picnic, like the breakfast cookout in John 21:1–14. And if the weather is rainy, in addition to today's Psalm, pray Psalm 29:3: "The voice of the LORD is over the waters;/the God of glory thunders,/the LORD, over mighty waters."

Thursday, April 19

God's Higher Law

Today's Readings: Acts 5:27–33; Psalm 34:2 and 9, 17–18, 19–20 (7a); John 3:31–36. Peter's words to the high priest have echoed through human history. "We must obey God rather than any human authority" (Acts 5:29). Early Christian martyrs died, refusing to follow the laws of Roman emperors forbidding them to practice their faith. Martin Luther King, Jr. challenged segregation laws, following the same principle: God's laws have priority over human laws. Do you see examples today of unjust laws? Have you ever felt called to obey God's law instead?

Friday, April 20

Feast on Bread and Fish

Today's Readings: Acts 5:34–42; Psalm 27:1, 4, 13–14 (Alleluia); John 6:1–15. John's account of the multiplication of loaves and fishes contains a detail the synoptic versions don't. The bread was made of barley, used by the poor. Yet Jesus' attention makes the commonplace precious. He cautions the disciples to "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost" (6:12). This evening, or soon, have a meal of bread and fish, talking over this famous story.

Saturday, April 21

Saint Anselm

Today's Readings: Acts 6:1–7; Psalm 33:1–2, 4–5, 18–19 (22); John 6:16–21. While a monk and later abbot of Saint Bec in Normandy, Anselm (1033–1109), whose optional memorial we may celebrate today, wrote theology. His best known work was *Why God Became Man*. He also originated the phrase describing the task of theology as "faith seeking understanding," and is called the "father of scholasticism." At the age of 60, Anselm was made Archbishop of Canterbury. He fought the appointment, perhaps foreseeing his conflict with the English monarchs. He struggled with two kings who wanted to name England's bishops. Gentle and scholarly by nature, Anselm stood firm on principle and became a strong leader.

