

Second Sunday of Easter or Divine Mercy Sunday



Make Us Merciful

Author of Divine Mercy,
whose Son, Jesus, welcomed Thomas
into great intimacy,
look kindly on our doubts.
Be merciful to latecomers
and those whose faith seems stalled.
Help us to see our own wounds
as the sites of our strength,
and show us the best ways
to extend your mercy to others.
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, forever and ever. Amen.

Sunday, April 7, 2013
Mercy for Doubters

Today's Readings: Acts 5:12-16; Psalm 30:2, 4, 5-6, 11-12, 13 (2a); Revelation 1:9-11a, 12-13, 17-19; John 20:19-31. It's such a beautiful story, and so appropriate during spring's rebirth. But do we really believe that Jesus rose from the dead? Perhaps we are those described in the phrase, who "come to believe." Jesus mercifully acknowledges that faith can evolve through a slow process, marked by stalling and detours, numbness and tangents. Perhaps it is never fully, brilliantly achieved, but an ongoing path composed of small steps.

Our great hope is that Jesus will treat us as mercifully as he did Thomas. The "doubter" is brave to admit he can't swallow the story simply on the word of others. He has the integrity to refuse to "play along," even if it would make community

matters flow more easily. He demands visible, tangible proof. Jesus doesn't seem troubled by the request. Indeed he invites Thomas to probe his wounds. Oddly enough, it isn't recorded whether Thomas actually does. Apparently the willingness of the Risen Lord to entertain doubt and invite Thomas into a place of deep intimacy, is enough. Thomas doesn't touch Jesus; Jesus touches him. Thomas then pivots into a declaration that shows he is filled with the Holy Spirit even if he missed the previous appearance where Jesus breathed on his friends.

In today's Gospel, there's hope for us all: doubters, latecomers, party poopers, proof-demanders, slow studies, even those who seem to miss the boat completely. And *that* is a mercy to celebrate.



This Week at Home

Monday, April 8

The Annunciation of the Lord

In today's Gospel, humanity's future hangs on Mary's answer to the angel's question. Her "yes" transformed her life, starting with uncomfortable journeys, birth in a stable, her son's growth and eventual death. He would follow her lead. "Jesus Christ . . . was not 'Yes and No'; but in him it is always 'Yes'" (2 Corinthians 1:19). When do we say "yes"? It may seem small and insignificant, but it can represent our best efforts and affect many other lives. When do we need to say "no" to projects that drain energy, so that our "yesses" can be fuller, more life-affirming? Today's Readings: Isaiah 7:10–14; 8:10; Psalm 40:7–8, 8–9, 10, 11 (8a, 9a); Hebrews 10:4–10; Luke 1:26–38.

Tuesday, April 9

What Color Is Doubt?

If you were to paint the scene of Thomas and Jesus from Sunday's Gospel, what color would you use? G.K. Chesterton might suggest the color grey, because against a dark background, colors look richer. "Against a dim sky all flowers look like fireworks." That reminded him of the "indefinite hope that is in doubt itself." Doubt means we are looking for something more than what is first obvious, as Thomas certainly was; thus it implies hope. Today's Readings: Acts 4:32–37; Psalm 93:1ab, 1cd–2, 5 (1a); John 3:7b–15.

Wednesday, April 10

"The Medicine of Mercy"

In the documents of the Second Vatican Council (whose fiftieth anniversary we are now celebrating) we hear an echo of Jesus's words in today's Gospel, "God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world" (3:17). In his opening address to the Council, Blessed John XXIII said the Church "prefers to make use of the medicine of mercy rather than that of severity. She considers that she meets the needs of the present day by demonstrating the validity of her teaching

rather than by condemnations." Today's Readings: Acts 5:17–26; Psalm 34:2–3, 4–5, 6–7, 8–9 (7a); John 3:16–21.

Thursday, April 11

St. Stanislaus, Bishop and Martyr

Anyone who's ever stood up to power knows what a tricky business it can be. St. Stanislaus, the eleventh-century Bishop of Krakow, Poland paid with his life for attacking the immoral war-mongering and cruelty of his king, Boleslaus II. The first native Polish saint, he is patron of the country. The Polish constitution was dedicated to him in 1791, and he might well have inspired the Solidarity movement to stand against oppression. Stanislaus evidently felt as the Apostles did in today's reading from Acts: "We must obey God rather than any human authority" (5:29). Today's Readings: Acts 5:27–33; Psalm 34:2 and 9, 17–18, 19–20 (7a); John 3:31–36.

Friday, April 12

Gamaliel's Test

In today's reading from Acts, the solution proposed by the respected teacher to the Israelites confronting the problem of the Christians can also apply to dilemmas in daily life. If the "undertaking is of human origin, it will fail; but if it is of God," (5:38–39) don't waste time fighting it. If we question launching a project, entering a relationship, stepping into a new role, Gamaliel's test will show whether it is of God or not. Today's Readings: Acts 5:34–42; Psalm 27:1, 4, 13–14 (see 4abc); John 6:1–15.

Saturday, April 13

St. Martin I, Pope and Martyr

As pope in the seventh century, Martin had his own experience of the "stormy seas" in today's Gospel. During a theological dispute, Martin condemned the patriarch of Constantinople. The emperor then had Martin, a noble and intelligent man, chained, dragged through the city, imprisoned, tortured, and exiled. Our response to rough weather can be like his and the disciples': take Jesus into our boats—or hearts. Today's Readings: Acts 6:1–7; Psalm 119:23–24, 26–27, 29–30 (1ab); John 6:16–21.



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 Keeping the Seasons
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