

2nd Sunday of Easter – “My Lord and My God”



John 20:19-31 “My Lord and My God”

Introduction

How has God spoken to you this week?

I have been grading student projects on Values and Virtues. In this project they were asked to identify the virtues, principles and values that are most important to them. They then must assess how operative and evident those virtues, principles and values are in their decision making. Finally they need to assess their spiritual well being. In their self-assessments the struggles with God become evident. I call them my doubting Thomas's... It is clear that their doubts about God are anchored to the crosses of their lives.

This week was also the last RCIA meeting for this year's class. In this meeting the sponsors and the neophytes get to share the experiences and the self-discovery of their journey.

Both my kids and our RCIA class have a great deal in common with Thomas.

Doubting Thomas

Thomas was natural pessimist... the Cross was the only things he had expected... he was sure of the cross... not the resurrection.

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Thomas was not there when Jesus first appeared to the Apostles... but he had heard the stories. The news of the Resurrection to him seemed far too good to be true, and he refused to believe it. Belligerent in his pessimism, he said that he would never believe that Jesus had risen from the dead until he had touched the wounds of Jesus and put his hand into His side. And one week later Jesus returned again to the Apostles... and to Thomas. Jesus knew Thomas' heart... he knew him so well that he uses Thomas's own words... He invites him to find the truth that he was looking for.

Thomas - Two Great Virtues... Honesty and Conviction

In the face of doubt it is hard to see the greatness of a man.

Not only was there doubt in Thomas... There was also great virtue. He absolutely refused to say that he understood what he did not understand, or that he believed what he did not believe. There is an uncompromising honesty about him. He would never still his doubts by pretending they did not exist. Thomas had to be sure... and the need to be sure is the kind of doubt that confronts the tough questions. It seeks doggedly until it finds answers. It is a doubt that in the end arrives at certainty.

Thomas' other great virtue was that when he was sure, he went the whole way. His response to certainty was... “My Lord and my God.” There is no half-heartedness about him. He did not air his doubts for the sake of mental acrobatics or to prove how intelligent he was. His doubt was so strong that it drove him to become sure. That kind of doubt is risky... because it takes effort to overcome. And when he was sure, his surrender to certainty was complete.

Jesus respects our needs

There is something incredibly powerful in the way that Jesus responds to Thomas. He does not prey on Thomas's anxiety and his doubt. He does not chastise him for being away from the community and for not believing. Rather Jesus tenderly invites him to draw near. Jesus respects Thomas' need... He respects where Thomas is. He does the same thing with us... He comes to us and invites us where we are.

“My Lord and My God”

Thomas's response to our Lord is the greatest affirmation of faith by anyone anywhere at anytime. There is no greater affirmation of faith anywhere in the Bible. And there is a delightful bit of irony in Thomas's affirmation of faith... No matter

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how hard he might want to... He could not put his hands in Christ Divinity. Thomas did not see this... he could not feel this. He could not grasp this in an intellectual way. Thomas had to make a leap of faith. And he makes a great leap of faith... in fact he makes the greatest act of faith ever, with his confession... “My Lord and my God”

Great leaps of faith

One of the highlights of Easter is the Vigil Mass where the RCIA Candidates and Catechumans, who have journeyed for almost nine months, make a great leap of faith. The highlight of the RCIA experience is the meeting after the Vigil where the neophytes are introduced to the period of “Mystagogy”. The period of “Mystagogy” is a chance for our new Catholics to savor the sacramental mysteries. It is a chance to for them to share their experiences and in that sharing to deepen their understanding of their faith. This is always a deeply moving experience... you see God working through a catholic school, children and grandchildren, in illnesses, the loss of a loved one, moments of despair, in marriages... good and bad, a new suit, and a sweatshirt. It is a powerful reminder of the crosses people carry, and how through those crosses God invites us to make a leap of faith.

Mystagogy - Savoring the Mystery

Thomas had an experience of mystagogy... He was invited by Jesus to a deeper understanding of the mysteries of faith. And he accepted with everything he had. I see a bit of Thomas in my students and most certainly with the RCIA candidates and the catechumens who journey so far to find certainty, truth and love. Truth be told I think there is a bit of Thomas in all of us.

The Gospel messages of the past week have been filled with experiences of mystagogy... We see Christ meeting the apostles and disciples where they are... At the tomb, on the way to Emmaus, in a meal, in an embrace, locked away in fear in the upper room. He touches them, he walks with them, He feeds them, and invites them to draw near... to touch him. They come to realize what Thomas discovered, what we are all called to confess... that Jesus is my Lord and my God.

Conclusion

Do we need evidence? Yes we do! And there is evidence to be seen. And we also have a God who respects that we need to see and to touch. But at the end of it all, evidence can only take us so far. Ultimately we need to leap. Leaping is a choice... a

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choice to surrender to the invitation that is available to us. A choice to surrender... like Thomas... to kneel down to the risen Jesus. Jesus... Who has come into the locked room of our fears and doubts. And the best place to surrender is here... at the altar of our Lord. It is up to us... to accept the invitation to bow before Jesus and to confess... “My Lord and my God”