

2 Easter A SML 2020 JN 20:19-31

Throughout the scriptures there are those who have not seen yet believed.

- ✓ Noah had been warned by God of the things that had not yet come to pass; but he believed and prepared his ark.
- ✓ Abraham went out of his own home not knowing where he was to go, but trusted in God who promised that he would be the father of a progeny more numerous than the sands of the seas.

There were others who did not believe even when they did see, such as the likes of Pharaoh, who after each plague, still remained obstinate.

In this morning's gospel, the spotlight shines on Thomas. In three different passages from the Gospel, Thomas is always portrayed as looking on the darker side of things. Thomas was the pessimist of the Apostles, and possibly his pessimism had something to do with his skepticism. Thomas' name means twin. Thomas was a twin in another sense, for in him lived side-by-side the twins of unbelief and faith, unbelief in that he could not believe without probing the nail prints and touching his side, and faith, that by touching Him, he made a full confession, My Lord and My God. But prior to touching His hands and His side,

Thomas was the pessimist.

When the news came to Our Blessed Lord that Lazarus had died, Our Blessed Lord said he wanted to go to Lazarus. Thomas said why don't we all go to die with him.

At the Last Supper, when Our Blessed Lord said he would return again to the Father and prepare a place for His Apostles, Thomas' woeful answer was, "Master we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?"

And in today's gospel, Thomas' refusal to trust the testimony of ten long time competent companions, who had seen the Risen Lord with their own eyes, proved just how skeptical he really was.

Thomas, the pessimist, not the one want to be stuck with during this pandemic.

In Thomas there was faith, because he believed it was better to die with the Lord than to forsake Him; but there was unbelief in him as well. Nope, not going to believe it until I see it with my own eyes . . . which in and of itself is a contradiction in terms, because once you see, it's no longer a matter of belief, it's a matter of knowledge. I do not believe this vestment is white. I know it's white. Blindfold me and tell me it is white, and I believe it is white because I cannot prove it with my own eyes.

The name means twin, faith and unbelief. Sometimes I have faith strong enough to move mountains. Sometimes I don't.

When I was a priest in Freehold, we celebrated our appreciation party for the volunteers of our parish. I didn't go to bed until late, only to rise and shine at 5:30 because two priest friends of mine was arriving on at 6:30 plane at Newark airport. Needless to say I looked and felt like death warmed over. Scott and Lee were getting off of that plane looking like the picture of health, dark tan, straw hats after a week and a half in Puerto Viarta. The only thing I know about Puerto Viarta is the Love Boat went there. Before the days of checking whether or not flights were on time or delayed, I arrived at the airport at 6:30 a.m. only to find out the plane was delayed until 8:00 a.m. Dressed in my collar, I found a bench near the gate, and closed my eyes. read my breviary. When a young man sat at the other end of the bench, I woke up and nodded.

"Can I ask you a question? Is having the desire for faith just as good as having faith itself?" My first thought was, "It's 6:30 in the morning." "Yes, as long as you are doing everything you can do to get faith, reading, talking to people . . . yes the desire for faith is just as good as having faith. I came to learn this young man had no faith. Baptized a Roman Catholic, he made his First Holy Communion, but that's as far as his religious upbringing went. He had a lousy childhood. His parents got

divorced, his mother became Lutheran. He had no religious education and he lost what little faith he had while in college.

“I feel like I'm standing on a cliff and I have no where to go. And I'm scared to death. I question everything. I question why I am in this airport talking to you.”

Married and divorced at 26, he told me he does not know love. What is love? I said, “It makes sense that he does not know love for God is love. It says it right in the scriptures.”

He said he knew that. We talked for an hour and a half waiting for my priest friends and his father, who were on the same plane. And I pulled out every card up my sleeve to argue the existence and will of Almighty God. When we parted, he couldn't say he left me a Christian, but he certainly had a lot to think about. Unlike the young man, was way past belief. Like Thomas, I know why I arrived in that airport so early on a Saturday morning to talk to a young man who had the unbelief of Thomas, and I thank God I am a priest.

You go through a tough time in your marriage, and doubt whether you're going to make it and you do, and your marriage is that much stronger. Go through a tough time in your priesthood. Enter into a depression, take a leave of absence, and come back a much stronger priest. Every night I was

depressed, I used to go to the chapel for about a minute and stare at the Tabernacle, “I just don’t feel you anymore. I just don’t believe it anymore.” Looking back, if I didn’t believe it anymore, if I didn’t believe He was in that Tabernacle, why was I still talking to the Tabernacle?” You get through the tough times, and you come out a much stronger person with a much stronger faith. We will all get through this pandemic, and we will all come out stronger with a much stronger faith. And like Thomas, who was the last to believe, we will make the full confession of the Divinity of the Risen Savior: My Lord and My God.