

2 Easter B SML 2021
JN 20:19-31

The dead of winter comes to life each spring, in token of Our Resurrected Lord. It reminds us of the great lesson of Easter: that it was not Christ who died on the Cross. It was *death* that died.

The Resurrection proves He did not die. The Resurrection was a fact, but a fact which nobody around Him was prepared to believe. Christ had said He would rise again, and He did. "He has risen as He said," records the Gospel of Matthew (28:6) but His words were not taken literally, even by the close companions of His teaching years. The apostles believed the Crucifixion was the end of the whole story; only one of them was present on Golgotha for what they thought would be the final chapter of His life.

On Easter morning, the women went to the tomb with no thought of meeting the Risen Christ; they had gone only to anoint His body, and their only concern was how to roll away the stone before the tomb. Even when they found the stone rolled back and the grave empty, they saw these things as evidence of a shameful theft. The very message of the angel

frightened them; they still did not dare to believe the story had a happy ending.

The apostles were the next skeptics. When the women told them the Good News, they regarded their words “as idle tales, and did not believe them.” (LK 24:11) Peter and John went and looked into the empty tomb, but even so they did not understand what they saw. Later, when they actually saw the Risen Lord, they still were so unprepared for belief in the Resurrection that they thought they were seeing a ghost.

Everyone doubted the Conqueror of Death. The very onlookers of Our Lord’s Easter doubted their senses and refused to believe their eyes. Mary Magdalene mistook Him for the gardener; the disciples on the road to Emmaus did not recognize Him until He broke bread with them.

Thomas said he would not believe until he had put his finger into His hand, and his hand into His side. But Thomas was finally cured of his doubts by evidence even he could not refuse - the presence of Our Risen Lord, Who repeated his very words to him. Thomas thus became the precursor and patron saint of everyone on the spectrum from agnostic to doubter of faith, that Jesus is their healer and their hope.

If the followers of Christ had anticipated His Resurrection, they would have accepted it at once. Instead, we have their strong resistance to belief, which was overcome only by the sheer weight of unanswerable evidence. The apostles had to be convinced... and they were convinced. They had to readjust their whole conception of death to make room for this astounding trust that Christ, Who had died on the Cross, was not dead.

Life, then, could not mean what men had always thought life meant. They began to believe death is a kind of partial death, and that bodily life is not the truest life. They caught glimmerings of the Christian truth that those who surrender their souls to go on “living,” to “live” more enjoyably, cannot save their lives unless they lose them; and that whoever lays down his life for Christ’s sake, finds it. It was not Our Lord Who had died; it was death that died.

Everyone wants:

- ✓ abundant life,
- ✓ a life that is joyous and intense
- ✓ and a life lived to the hilt.

True believers realize there is no need to look for this in any of the places which earlier and current generations have searched and found empty.

We don't need to test new methods of fulfilling man by tinkering with his body. That only gives us higher suicide rates, thoughts and attempts than the general population.

We don't need to repeat the experiments of those who believe in the supremacy of man, since they've found that man without God becomes subhuman.

We don't need to try indifference to religion. That only leads to the lifeless dead end of every corpse.

We have also tried "following the science," but not within the context of religious belief. We have:

- ✓ weighed the earth,
- ✓ measured the distance between the stars,
- ✓ and stuck our thermometers in the sun.

And as a result, we fed our minds but starved our hearts. And it seems that "following the science" only suffices when science suits our political agendas.

We have tried to square the circle of human problems not by obeying God's laws, but by changing God's laws to suit our way of living.

We have tried to live in a world of unsolved riddles and have discovered that our doubts left us in “confusion worse confounded,” for the mind cannot rest with a question mark as its ultimate destiny. The mind needs a solid profession of faith in Jesus Christ, My Lord and My God, as its ultimate destiny.

We chose wealth as a goal, and ended up poor.

We chose power and found ourselves weak.

We chose pride and we were brought to our knees.

Believers know better and we just shake our heads and say there is only one experiment in living has not been tried by modern man, and that is the experiment of love, directed:

- ✓ not toward a limited Jesus the Teacher,
- ✓ nor toward a limited Jesus the Social Reformer,
- ✓ nor toward a limited Jesus the Humanitarian,

but toward the infinite Jesus Who is True God and True Man, Our Resurrected Lord Who alone can show us how to live by conquering death on the Cross.

One of my confessions during Holy Week was a man in his 80s who was expelled from a Catholic university when he was in his 20s for violating the honor code. And that was his reason for not being part of the Church for the last 60 years.

He had finally admitted to himself, after the constant prayers and promptings of his friends, many of whom are daily communicants, that his reason for not being part of the Church was his excuse, and how he suffered these last 60 years for not having God in the Church to help him steer his course in life. “Father, how I wish I had what they have,” he sobbed. I said, “You can. And your first step on this course of life begins when you walk out of this confessional.” He said he wasn’t sure he would be a daily communicant. I said I couldn’t think of one reason why he shouldn’t be.

Year after year, Divine Mercy Sunday records the Gospel story of Doubting Thomas. We churchgoing “should be” believers or believers “want to be,” know the story upside down and inside out. I say “should be” or “want to be” because if we learned from Doubting Thomas and were at the other end of the spectrum from him, there would be nothing, and I mean nothing, that would take away our inner peace. If we could make the solid profession of faith as solid as Thomas’, “My Lord and My God,” no matter what the “this” that is on our plate, would be taken off our plate, and left at the foot of the Cross, as I preached on Good Friday. Yet how many did not leave it at the foot of the Cross on Good Friday, but picked it

up again, and carried their full plate out of the Church. We all know believers with a faith stronger than ours, like the man in my confessional, and how we want to have the faith they have.

There is no better Feast than the Divine Mercy to lessen our doubt like Thomas and profess our trust in Jesus by repeating my favorite mantra which comes from the Divine Mercy, “Jesus I trust in You.” “Jesus I trust in You.” “Jesus I trust in You.”

I usually watch the news and then go to bed. Ever since the crisis at the border, it’s hard to watch the news and then go to bed, knowing that I have a bed to sleep in and these abused children don’t. So I hold my crucifix (Jesus who conquered death on the cross) and repeat the mantra, “Jesus, I trust in You. Jesus I trust in You.” Because I know this crisis is bigger than me, but it’s not bigger than Jesus.

G. K. Chesterton said it best, “it is not correct to say that Christianity has been tried and has failed. Christianity has been found difficult, and not tried.”

Jesus, I trust in You!