

Doubt

2nd Sunday of Easter (Year A)

April 19, 2020

Fr. Tony Davis

In the sacrament of reconciliation, where we experience God's Divine Mercy, we often confess sins having to do with doubt. Maybe we've doubted God, doubted a teaching of the Church, or doubted ourselves. For some reason, we believe that doubt is always inherently sinful because it questions something that supposedly should be unquestionable. The truth is, however, that doubt and questioning are not always sinful. In fact, they can be great tools for deepening our faith and growing in the spiritual life.

In our Gospel today, Thomas doubted the resurrection of the Lord. He said, "unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nailmarks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." While tradition has therefore called him 'Doubting Thomas' in a pejorative sense, we forget that because he doubted, the next week he had the great experience of personally touching the nailmarks of the Risen Christ and exclaiming, 'my Lord and my God!' His doubting and questioning are the very things that opened a way for him to have a more profound experience of Christ.

Far from being people who never doubt or question, the Dominican priest Fr. Timothy Radcliffe says that "Christians should be the ones who go on asking questions when others stop." To not ask questions puts us at risk of becoming brainwashed, a tactic unfortunately used by some Christian churches as well as by leaders in the secular world. True Christians, however, keep prying, knowing that God is big enough to handle all of our hesitations and uncertainties.

For our faith to grow, we have to allow it to be tested. As our second reading this weekend from the First Letter of St. Peter said, this is "so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that is perishable even though

tested by fire, may prove to be for praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” A faith that is not tested will eventually crumble. It will not get us through tough real life situations.

This point in particular can be a connecting point with the youth of the Church, especially our middle school, high school, and college aged students. So often, they have a lot of questions as they go through their rebel phase in life. Rather than punish them for being so rebellious, we can allow them the freedom of asking anything they wish, all the while trusting that God is still with them. By encouraging them to ask questions about God, the Church, and themselves, we hope that they will come to a stronger awareness of who God is, who they are, and what a relationship with Christ means.

Doubt and questioning are not always sinful, but can be invitations to go deeper in our faith.

In what ways have I been afraid to admit my doubts about God, the church, or my faith?

To be clear, we don't doubt and question so that we can purposely lead ourselves astray. We doubt and we question because we want to make sure that that which we cannot see is in fact true.