

2021 April 11

Second Sunday of Easter.

Reading:

First: Acts 4.32-35 “The whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul.” (32)

The Psalm: 118 “This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad.” (24)

Second: 1 John 5.1-6 “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God.” (7)

The Gospel: John 20.19-31 “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” (29b)

Doubting is for seeing

Expression of doubt by Thomas the Apostle could have been purposeful or even childish, and it was in order that he may see the Risen Lord! It must have originated from his knowledge of Jesus his Master as the one who listened intensely to every word Jesus said, tried to understand and believe it. This faith of Thomas and the Lord’s response to it might have also contributed to increase and consolidate the faith of the other disciples and all who came after Thomas. This increase of faith would include a better understanding ‘of the font in which they were washed, the Spirit in whom they have been reborn, and the blood with which they have been redeemed’, as we pray in the opening prayer today.

By coming to know the visitation of Jesus to the other disciples Thomas also might have realized that Jesus had already forgiven all his disciples their sin of abandoning him, running away from him, and not believing in his words. This might have given him the assurance to believe that even his doubting will be forgiven by Jesus. St. Augustine called the sin of the first parents “*Beata Culpa*” blessed sin. His reasoning was that because of that sin there was the abundance of grace brought about by Jesus, or humans had the fortune of having Jesus as their Redeemer. Life with Jesus and the grace that came in and through him to humanity is much superior to the sinless state of the first parents. The long sinful life of Augustine and the experience of the absence of God in that life made him feel the bliss and joy when he finally discovered Jesus and the salvation he brought to humanity. This intense experience of Augustine made him to hold the above view on original sin. The stories of many saints in the church also testify to their joy in discovering Christ after prolonged sinful lives.

Jesus always wanted to make the return of the sinner a celebration on earth and in heaven. He highlights this in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15.23), in dining with Matthew and Zacchaeus after he called them off from their tax collector’s seat, (Matthew 9.10); (Luke 15.7, and 10). All these instances in the story of Jesus, his disciples, the sinners who met Jesus in his earthly human life and in the story of the church, etc., point to the fact that sin is not the end but the beginning to provoke God to show his mercy.

The disciples including Thomas were among the first to receive and experience and the immensity of God’s mercy very clearly expressed in and through Jesus. Thomas’ refusal to believe and his insistence on seeing came from his intense desire to see the Risen Christ. While the love of Peter was exuberantly expressive that of Thomas was in silent meditation and absorbingly listening to the words of Jesus. The celebration of the return of the sinner, including that of Thomas and Peter and other disciples gives unlimited hope to the sinful humanity of our times and all times. That hope is the precious gift of Jesus to humanity.

Fr. George

(The readings of the day are given at the beginning. The numbers in parentheses refer to the quotes from them. Good to go through the readings beforehand to properly understand the Reflections)

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