

2nd Sunday of Easter or Sunday of Divine Mercy-Cycle A.

There may be nothing quite so meaningful in life as to have the faith to pray to God for something that our fear, nevertheless, makes us feel is impossible to be achieved and then, the prayer is answered within the same day or hour and you know that no one but God could have made the impossible happen. In response, the huge relief, the overwhelming praise for God, is immediate. It makes one know that God cares and He really loves us. And most importantly, it means that He WANTS us to know this truth.

During World War II, a group of eight service men survived twenty one days afloat on three small rubber rafts after their plane crashed in the Pacific. This is a true story which was written in the book, “ We thought we heard angels sing”. One of the group, a Lt. James Whittaker, was a professed atheist. Everyone else were men of faith and made part of their daily routine a prayer service of reading from a pocket bible. After three days, they were out of food and water. On the sixth day, they fired a flare, hoping that someone and not the Japanese, would see and rescue them. The flare failed and landed near them causing two fish to jump into one of the rafts. Their prayer had been answered. Another day, a seagull landed on one of the men’s head. It was captured and cut up as bait to catch fish. Another prayer was answered. Some days it rained and they had water to drink. Another prayer answered. On the thirteenth day, it was Lt. Whittaker’s

turn to direct prayer. A heavy rain approached them but it was about a thousand feet away. He prayed for the rain to move to them and it did. This was a final prayer answered that convinced Lt. Whittaker that there is, indeed, a God. His life was transformed. He was no longer an atheist because he had seen for himself the love and mercy of Christ, despite misfortune and suffering, in small miracles during the twenty one days at sea and also, through the faith and hope of his seven friends, united forever by their heartbreaking experience.

Just like Lt. Whittaker, Thomas didn't believe. Like Lt. Whittaker, not even his friends' faith would convince him about what they told him until he had experienced the resurrected Jesus on his own terms, in his own way, in his own time. What kind of friend is that? But we all know friends and family like Thomas, don't we? He had the audacity to set the conditions by which he would believe; only if Jesus appeared to him and allowed him to put his finger in the holes in Jesus' hands and side. What a nerve! And indeed, the next time Jesus appeared to them, Thomas was among them. How ridiculous he must have felt and even more so when Jesus introduced himself to Thomas. All Thomas could say was, "My Lord and my God!"

There are so many messages for us in this dramatic gospel but what caught my eye most was the dynamic between Thomas and the other apostles. Before the apostles bore witness to others outside their group, they had to bear witness to Thomas within their group. These

visits from Jesus were priceless. Now, His suffering and death had an entirely new meaning and it was too big a secret to keep to themselves. They had to proclaim it to everyone who would listen to His gospel, His good news. But what does this have to do with us, right now in a pandemic that has changed our lives dramatically? Maybe, sometimes in our lives, we have felt like Lt. Whittaker and St. Thomas where we have looked for a sign. We wanted God to do things our way. We set conditions for our faith. The fact that, today, we are seeking faith and life with God IS a sign that Jesus must have come for us, however, on His terms, in His form and in His time. Some of us may have taken longer than others but we are here. Perhaps we don't listen to the people around us, especially our family and friends who encouraged us to believe and have faith, to try again with God. But finally, as after all the miraculous events in the life of Lt. Whittaker and his friends, we believed. God went through us.

The next step is to go out and talk about it, witness about Jesus Christ. We don't have to write a book about it but we have to tell ourselves our story; our story of faith and disbelief, of hope and of fear, of triumph and disappointment. We all have one, we just need to articulate and share it in the Name of the Lord. That testimony, your testimony, can make a difference in the world of the person who listens. As we are isolated from each other to such an extent, we need that testimony more than ever. It will transform us into our discipleship of

Jesus by reclaiming His “victory” in our lives and how we have shared our new life of His resurrection. Like Thomas, we too should declare with all of our heart, “My Lord and My God!”