

Acts 2:42-47
Ps 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24
1 Pt 1:3-9
John 20:19-31

Michael J. Hughes, O.S.A.
Church of St. Thomas of Villanova
Rosemont, Pennsylvania

“A truly peaceful day from beginning to end is a great rarity in this world.”
Malcolm Muggeridge

The first words of the Risen Christ were “Peace be with you.” Peace is the surest sign of the presence of the Lord in our lives. Peace is not the absence of strife or suffering in our lives. Peace is an interior disposition flowing from a faith-filled union with the Lord.

The first disciples were traumatized by the Crucifixion and Death of the Lord. This was evidenced by the two demoralized disciples on the Road to Emmaus saying, “We had hoped that he would be the One to redeem Israel...” The focal point of the Resurrection Narratives is the profound transformation that took place in those first followers as they moved from the desolation of doubt to the liberation of renewed faith. In this sense, the Resurrection Narratives are their story.

This remarkable transformation is beautifully illustrated in today’s gospel text. The Risen Lord appears to the disciples showing them the wounds in his hands and side. In response to these signs of the enormity of his victorious love, the disciples rejoice. Bestowing Peace on them, he confirms them in their faith. However, Thomas was not present and emphatically refused to believe their story unless he too saw the Risen Lord. In truth, Thomas was only expressing the skepticism initially felt by all the disciples.

I find Thomas a particularly appealing character: a man of strong emotion, self-reliant and sure of himself. He was clearly devoted to Jesus, saying earlier, “ Let us also go with him and die” (John 11:16). There is something beautiful about generosity even when it is unrealistic.

A week later, Jesus appeared again, and Thomas was present this time. Jesus invited Thomas to probe his wounds and move from doubt to faith. This resulted in Thomas’ profound profession of faith: “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28).

Thomas’ profession was based on the undeniable manifestation of God’s enormous love. With Thomas, the Lord calls us to this same lifelong transforming experience from doubt to faith. “Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed” (John 20:29). We must open our minds and the eyes of our hearts to recognize the Lord present in our own wounds and the wounds of others. Christ has risen, but his wounds are visible in the least among us. Teresa of Calcutta said it well: “It is always Christ suffering.” In genuine compassion for others, we experience Divine Mercy.

Psalm 34 tells us that the Lord is near to the brokenhearted. Allow the Lord to come to you on your own personal cross, whatever form it may take. We must live in such a manner that our faith in Jesus is visible and palpable to all because we, the Church, are the sign of his live with us yet.