

## Doubt Leads to Belief

**Intro.** I am Thomas. I also am a doubter. I have doubted in the past and I will probably doubt again. Friends have been in accidents; family members have had serious illnesses; and some have died. Each time I questioned where God was. These difficulties forced me to examine *what* and *in whom I believe*. Through prayer and the support of a faith community, I remain a believer in the Lord. The Apostles and disciples struggled with doubt too. In today's gospel we heard the most famous story of doubt.

**I.** Where was Thomas and what was he doing that he was not with the other disciples? Maybe he didn't get the memo for the meeting in the upper room after the morning news about the empty tomb. No explanation is given. Maybe he just went back

to bed. I think there were two emotions racing through the disciples in that upper room: fear and doubt. They feed each other. When we are afraid, many things seem uncertain. When we have doubts, we get fearful and our world feels out of balance. Probably *all* the disciples in that room were having doubts about the Lord's resurrection; it just seemed too unbelievable. Being together didn't take away their doubt but it might have helped knowing they weren't alone. When we experience doubt due to something we don't understand, some of us want to be with our family or our friends. We find comfort and love there. For others the reaction is to stay away from people and usual activities. Some of us need time alone to sort thing out. Maybe that was Thomas. But too much isolation can make us crazy when we can find no answers. A good group of

friends with faith is important for *our* faith. The disciples were in the upper room hoping to find the presence of God and in his Divine Mercy he did not disappoint.

**Concl.** Other events have caused me to doubt but I keep coming back to understand that God has been present with me in the *past* and so I believe he will be with me *now* **and** *in the future*. I also have friends who witness to me about the Lord's presence in *their* lives. Doubt *can* be used positively to examine and strengthen faith. We can't put our hands on the Lord the way Thomas could, but we can keep looking for the signs of the Lord's presence in our lives and by continually returning the community of disciples who tell us they have seen the Lord.

**\*Concl.** [First Communion] Today we celebrate another way to know the Lord is present in our lives: receiving Him in Communion. At the Last Supper, the Lord, knowing he was leaving his friends to go back to his Father in heaven, gave the Apostles and all of us a way to remember him. The Lord in the bread and wine we bless at mass becomes part of our body and spirit. He stays with us all during the week helping us do the good and right things. You who are receiving your first Communion may not fully understand how that happens; it's okay because the rest of us don't *fully* understand it either. It's a miracle. We **do** know Jesus is present with us in a very special way. Today you will *begin* to know what the rest of us know, that each time you receive the Lord in Communion you grow closer to him and **he closer to you.**

Fr. Michael Pendergraft

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By the way, after his profession of faith, Thomas took on one of the most difficult missions of any of the Apostles. He went to India where the overwhelming faith is Hinduism. The most Catholic state in India today is Kerala where he went. That is where most of the Indian priests in our diocese come from. Thomas overcame doubt and took his belief in the Lord to India and the Carmelite priests bring that same faith to our diocese. Thomas came a long way from that day in Jerusalem.

### **Confirmation Retreat Ending**

**\*Concl.** My father died suddenly of cancer when he was fifty-two. That made me doubt God. I did not have the gift that Thomas had of the Lord appearing to me so I could touch his wounds. Or his

appearance to Mary Magdalene so she could hug him. But after several months of struggling with doubt and being angry with God, I *did* receive an insight, a thought that gave me something to thank God for. Unknown to my brothers and me for most of our lives, our dad had a drinking problem. I thank God he was never mean or violent; he just wasn't present to us. However, in the two years before he died of cancer, he quit drinking. The insight I got was realizing that for the last year or two of his life my father was really himself. I was grudgingly able to thank God for that gift to my father and to me. It didn't make it all better, but it gave me a place to hang some faith on and shed doubt about God's place in my life. In the years since, [\*pick up at Concl. above.]