

Doubt and Mercy: My Lord and My God

Intro. Words have real power. “I hate you.” “You did really good work.” Power to hurt and power to heal. Often we are not careful about *how* and *on whom* we use words. “Peace be with you.” No words were more welcome to the people in that room than those four, simple words.

I. Despite the initial news from the tomb on Easter morning the women brought, the group was so afraid they too would be arrested and killed that the good news could not penetrate their locked minds and hearts. The Lord had to say it twice before it sank in. Slowly fear gave way to disbelief and finally belief. The Lord breathed on them and they began to breathe again. For some reason Thomas was not there. I can’t imagine the other disciples not asking,

“Where have you been? You missed it,” and Thomas had some lame excuse like, “I overslept.” Or maybe more true, “I couldn’t face the pain.” I wonder why he didn’t believe his closest friends about seeing the risen Lord. For many years Thomas has been derided for his doubt. It takes some strength of character to doubt friends’ word. If he was going to commit his life to as a disciples and missionary, he wasn’t going to take someone else’s word for it. He went on and on about putting his fingers into the nail marks and his hand into his side. All he wanted to do was put his *eyes* on the risen Lord. After confirming his faith, Thomas took on one of the most difficult missions: India. Thanks to him we have the support of the Carmelite priests from India in our diocese. Doubt is scary. We like certainty. But doubt can make us examine what we take for

granted: love, faith, friendship. Relationships including with the Lord can become dull, ritual exercises. Doubt can energize our faith as it did for Thomas.

Concl. Many of us who have never known real fear have experienced it during these days. Fear for our loved ones, our co-workers and even people we don't know. Emergency workers, peace officers and medical and military personnel know fear but do not let it overcome them to the point they cannot do their jobs or live their lives. Every now and then, fear must come close, but due to their training, faith in each other *and a commitment to their work* fear is not banished, but controlled. For us who follow the Lord, we have another reason not to be paralyzed: faith in him and in his divine mercy. He or his messenger's first words to people was often the ones

we heard addressed to a roomful of frightened people today, "Peace be with you;" words that were welcome in that upper room and are as welcome in our homes, schools and workplaces today. To be at peace, I think it means not to let fear consume and paralyze us. The disciples were temporarily stunned but when they saw and experienced the Lord, they were freed from fear. Look around our neighborhoods, our country and our world and see people who have been and are still fearful, relying on some inner strength that enables them to evade paralysis. For people who believe in God, it's called faith. May we tap into God's Divine Mercy and experience the freedom that comes from Thomas' words, "My Lord and my God." And the Lord's words, "Blessed are those who have not seen and believe." We who have received the Holy Spirit trust

in the God of our experience as well as the testimony
of people who have passed on their faith in the risen
Lord to us, beginning with those first disciples.

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