

Showing Up and Confessing Christ

Thomas Sunday

John 20.19-31

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In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. Christ is risen!
This day where we are remembering, St. Thomas.

St Thomas had doubt but he also expresses deep and true belief. Today, we also remember our mothers.

Happy Mother's Day to all of our mothers!

In this gospel today we hear about how the disciples were gathered together, and Christ appears in the midst of them. And one of them, Thomas, is not there. We don't know if it was just the ten disciples gathered. Probably, it might be many more than that. We hear that 120 are gathered up before the Holy Spirit descends upon them at Pentecost (Acts 1.15).

So it's probably something like that. There's just a gathering of the disciples. But even if it's just the ten, it's still the gathering of the assembly. And this is what we are doing here. We're gathered. We're in the gathering. We are an assembly of people and this is what the Church is. It is the assembly of believers of disciples.

And so, Thomas is not there. And the Lord appears to the disciples in the midst of the gathering.

So if you think about what we're doing here, Our Lord is appearing to us in the midst of our gathering. We are here in our common faith and for holy communion. We are coming to receive the words from the Gospel, coming to hear the healing words of the Church. So our Lord is here among us, right? And we are here receiving Him, receiving, again, the Holy Spirit

from Him as He breathes upon us.

We're receiving His peace as we receive the peace during the divine liturgy. So this is what we are doing here.

So, Thomas isn't there in the gathering of the disciples. We don't know if he's not there for a good reason. We don't know if he's not there for a bad reason. But he is not there. And so he is not able to receive this gift of the Holy Spirit.

This peace from God that our Lord offers. And the disciples say, We've seen the Lord, they see Thomas and they say, "we've seen the Lord."

He says, I will not believe unless I see with my own eyes. You know, the saying, "When I see it, I will believe it." Right? And there's something to that. When we come to worship here in the church, all of our senses are engaged.

We hear the gospel. We see the icons. We touch our Lord's body. We taste our Lord's body. We give each other the brotherly and sisterly kiss of love. Right? So these are the things we do. We experience the liturgy and experience God in our senses. There's nothing wrong with wanting to see and experience the Lord this way.

This is what we're doing when we're here. Our bodies are part of our salvation. And therefore our senses are part of how we experience God. It's not just about our minds. It's not just about our minds, it's about our bodies and how we participate in that salvation. And the Church offers that to us.

So, Thomas says, I'm not going to believe unless I see.

And, you know, it would be easy to think that the Lord would be, frustrated with Thomas and be like, "Okay, I thought you were one of my close disciples. Forget you, I'm going to pick somebody else," right? But he doesn't do that. He doesn't do that. Eight days later, they are gathered again and now Thomas is there, right—Now Thomas is there.

Maybe he was pricked because he wasn't there last time, and something happened, and he wasn't there and He says to himself, "What if the Lord, what if the Lord comes again?" And so now he's in the gathering and the Lord comes and says to him, "put your hand in my side," as

we see in this icon. And Thomas is able to reach out and put his hand in the Lord's side, and put his fingers in the print of the nails in the Lord's hand.

And so now he's in assembly. So when the Lord comes to us, wherever we are, He meets us wherever we are. If we're having trouble, trouble with doubt, like like Thomas, that's okay. He comes to us and He meets us in that doubt. There's no sin that we, we can commit or do where our Lord doesn't want to call us back from that sin.

He'll meet us wherever we are. He'll meet us wherever we are. Thomas experiences this and his confession is marvelous, he says, "My Lord and My God." And this is the only time in the Gospel of John where one of the disciples declares Jesus as God. Now you might say, whoa, wait isn't this whole Gospel about Jesus being God.

Well, yes it is. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God, and the Word was God." And we heard that, on Pascha, right? But now one of the disciples is making that confirmation.

So, it might be easy for us to think, oh, you know, we're here, we're in the gathering, we're doing pretty good. We can kind of pat ourselves on the back and say, we're doing everything we need to do.

But there's more that we need to do because we need to make that confession that Thomas made. We need to make the confession that Thomas made that Jesus is Lord and God.

The Church, the church is what helps us to make that confession. The Church is our mother. And it is fitting on this Mother's Day that we could talk about the Church as our mother.

What does a mother do? A mother brings her little ones to her when fall and she embraces them. She prepares food for them. She clothes them. She nourishes them. She does everything that a child needs to survive and have life...what a gift, what a gift our mothers are!...

What a gift our Church is... Doing these same things for us. Offering us these things to nurture us. And bring us along so that we can have life. And what is life but to know we want to be with God. And to live with Him and have life. This is what the Church does for us. So we are, as we live our lives in the church, connected to God through the Church, we receive this

nourishment for our souls.

We receive life for our souls. Because this is what a mother does, she offers life. Adam names Eve...

Eve means the mother of the living. Right? And so the church is our mother. The church is the new Eve, right? She's the new mother of life. And because the church is from God's from Christ's body, you know, the rib,

God takes Adam's rib and forms Eve, who is the mother of life, out of Adam's rib.

And now the new Adam—our Lord—from out of his side comes blood and water as we hear when He is crucified.

This is the Church, right? The water of baptism. The blood of the eucharist.

These things come out of our Lord's side. And now, this Church fashioned from our Lord's side out of blood and water is our mother and she gives us life.

Thomas actually reaches his hand, puts his hand in our Lord's side.

And he connects himself to our Lord's body, which is what gives us life.

So, practically speaking, what can we do? Okay, we're here today. That's great. That's a very good start. And just showing up, is 90 percent, maybe 99 percent of the battle. We have to show up. We have to come, and we have to be ready to be transformed.

That's the second part. We have to show up, and then we have to be ready to be transformed. We come as we are, absolutely. Our Lord meets us where we are. Nobody is supposed to stay where they are though. We are to be transformed into God. Into sons of God. Like thousands of others. Our Lord expects us to change.

He expects us to make that confession, My Lord and my God. And that, as we've talked about before, all the rungs climbing up the ladder, right? Climbing up the ladder that our Lord offers us to Him. Higher up and higher up, it never stops. Our transformation is always to greater and greater glory. More and more grace.

So, first we just need to show up. That's 99 percent of the battle. And then need to be ready to be transformed. And to be ready to be transformed, we have to have a spirit of humility.

Thomas is humbled when the Lord comes to him. He's humbled, and in that humility, he's able to make that confession—my Lord and my God.

So we have to have a humble spirit. And that's the tricky part, being humble. Because as soon as we say we're humble, we're not humble. Right? So we need to actually do humility. We need to do acts of love and mercy and kindness. This is what our Lord does. This is a humble person. A person that doesn't think about themselves, but they think about other people.

And this is what humility is. So doing what our Lord asks us to do. Doing what the church asks us to do. This is humility. This is humility and this is part of what enables us to be transformed by our Lord. So we ask for our Lord's mercy and grace that we can show up, that we can continue to show up in the future and then that we can be willing to be transformed as we try to do the works of humility, the works of love, the works of mercy that the church, and our Lord ask us to do. Lord strengthen and help us. Amen!