

Doubting Thomas

In this week's lectionary we got to hear about one of Christ's 12 apostles named Thomas who didn't believe the others when they said they had seen Jesus in the flesh. That little faux pas earned him the nickname "Doubting Thomas" in later generations. Here he was, one of the twelve apostles who got to follow Jesus around and hear His words and watch Him perform miracles. But even still, when the others said they had seen Jesus after His death, he didn't believe. He needed to see it to believe it. We might be being a little hard on Thomas though. He was just a practical kind of guy. Let's look at another conversation Thomas was involved in.

John 14:1-14: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it."

It's a big chunk of text but I like that it shows Thomas asking what I might even ask myself in his shoes. He's basically saying, please, no more riddles, just come out and tell me exactly what I need to do and exactly what is going to happen so I can know and not have to doubt or wonder. You obviously know what's going to happen, so spill the beans already!

I think Thomas is the kind of guy who today would subscribe to Consumer Reports. If he were buying a car he would actually run the history on the VIN number to make sure that there was nothing hidden in the car's history. He was less interested in a story's presentation and just wanted the facts. Who did what when and how did it end?

I also like Philip's follow-up to Christ's response to Thomas. Just show us God and we'll be content to

trust and believe. You know, nothing extravagant, just show us what Moses himself was only allowed a fleeting glimpse of on a secluded mountain. Sure, I've seen you personally risen from the dead in three days like you said would happen and all the miracles and the obvious Truth that comes in every word you speak but, could you give me something a little more substantial so I can believe that you are the son of God and that everything you say is going to happen really will?

We all have seen and felt that feeling before haven't we? From time to time we pray to God for something that will embolden our faith. Like the man in Mark we cry out "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!". We don't want to buy that car without knowing where it came from and how long it's going to last.

But let's go back to what was written in John 20:29-31. **Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.**

Were any one of you there? Is there anyone who can now claim I saw Christ risen from the dead and it is true! ? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe. These words were written that through believing you may have life in his name. How blessed are we so many generations removed from Christ's sacrifice and yet we believe? When you doubt the strength of your faith, remember that you are in good company, but also that your faith is greater than you think. We have texts and tradition for the source of what happened. But thankfully, we also have the Holy Spirit in us to help us recognize Truth from lies.