

ICCH

International Catholic Community of Heidelberg

St. Michael's Church

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06221/13020 – office Fr. Christof Heimpel

Today's readings:

Acts 5:12-16 | Rev 1:9-11a, 12-13, 17-19

| Jn 20:19-31

Welcome Father Peter

April 3, 2016 – 2nd Sunday of Easter (Divine Mercy Sunday)

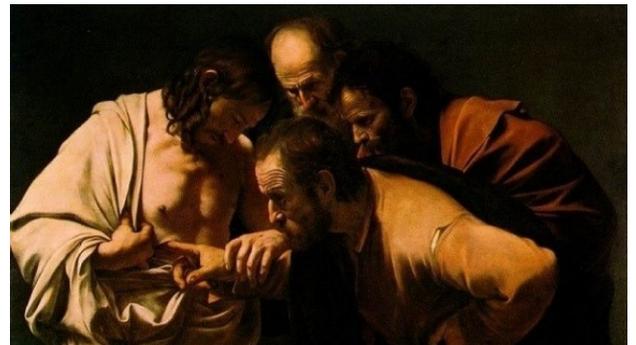
The touch of Thomas

John's story of Jesus and Thomas (John 20:19-31) records the first post-Resurrection appearance of Jesus and provides us with an archetypal experience of doubt, struggle, and faith. Herein lies every Christian's challenge: to believe without having seen. In this Gospel passage, we have a story within a story: the resolution of Thomas' doubts during Jesus' appearance to encourage the fearful disciples. Thomas only believes upon hearing the Lord's call to belief.

Thomas is not the eternal skeptic, nor the stubborn personality that the Christian tradition has often painted. The Greek word *skepsis* translates as "doubt, misgiving, hesitation, and disbelief." Thomas, the doubter, was permitted to do something that we would all like to do. He was allowed to touch and "experience" something that by human means was not possible. For us it is more difficult. We need to begin with faith and then blindly touch our way to the heart of our lives.

Though we know very little about Thomas, his family background, and his destiny, we are given an important hint into his identity in the etymology of his name in Greek: Thomas (*Didymous* in Greek) means "twin." Who was Thomas' other half, his twin? Maybe we can see his twin by looking into the mirror. Thomas' other half is anyone who has struggled with the pain of unbelief, doubt, and despair, and has allowed the presence of the Risen Jesus to make a difference. When this happens, the ice of skepticism thaws.

Thomas and his twins throughout the world risk everything in Jesus and for Jesus and become sources of blessing for others, in spite of their doubts and despair and because of their doubts and despair.



Divine Mercy Sunday

A teaching attributed to St. Augustine about the Easter Octave, which he called "the days of mercy and pardon," is referring to Octave Day itself as "the compendium of the days of mercy." There is no need to force a link between Divine Mercy and the Gospel story of Thomas and the Risen Christ. The celebration of Divine Mercy Sunday does not compete with, nor endanger the integrity of the Easter Season, nor does it take away from Thomas' awesome encounter with the Risen Lord in today's Gospel. Divine Mercy Sunday is the Octave Day of Easter, celebrating the merciful love of God shining through the whole Easter Triduum and the whole Easter mystery.

At St. Faustina's canonization on April 30, 2000, Pope John Paul II said in his homily: "Jesus shows his hands and his side [to the Apostles]. He points to the wounds of the Passion, especially the wound in his heart, the source from which flows the great wave of mercy poured out on humanity." Thomas' encounter with the Risen Lord can give us a whole new perspective on the meaning of mercy. Now more than ever in the Church and in the world, we need mercy.

[Fr. Thomas Rosica, shortened from: <http://saltandlighttv.org/blog/category/rosicareflections/>]

NEWS

Social gathering – This Sunday, with hopefully everyone back happily and safe from their Easter vacancies, we would like to come together once again for our monthly Social Gathering. Please **stay a while** after Mass with the community! If possible, **bring a dish to share** or consider helping with set-up or cleaning up...

If you would like to be added to our email list please send your contact information to:

infoheidelberg@internationalcatholiccommunity.com