

Second Sunday of Easter
Homily ~ April 30 – May 1, 2011

Rev. Andrew A. Czajkowski
St. John the Evangelist Parish
Davison, Michigan

With so much of our culture completely unchurched and biblically illiterate, there are still three stories—three individuals—that remain popular in our cultural vocabulary:

- The first is *The Good Samaritan*, Jesus' classic story of unexpected compassion.
- The next is *The Prodigal Son*; again, a tale of unexpected mercy and unpredictable acceptance.
- The third is *Doubting Thomas*. Today's story of the disciple who would not take anyone's testimony as true unless he could see for himself that Jesus had risen from the dead.

The fact that *Doubting Thomas* has remained one of the most memorable of Gospel figures says as much about our own doubts and indecisions as it does to the appeal of Thomas. Doubt is not a bad thing. Genuine doubt keeps us engaged and ever questioning. Thomas was the only one of the remaining disciples who was not hunkered down in the upper room, quaking and shaking in fear when Jesus made his first appearance. Why he wasn't there we don't know. But we do know that he willingly chose to come back to this community, to the frightened followers of Jesus hiding out in that upper room.

When Thomas does return, he is bombarded by testimonies. Every one of his companions says, "We have seen the Lord!" Thomas doubts. It is not entirely clear what it is Thomas doubts.

- Does Thomas doubt the truthfulness of the other disciples? Does he doubt their sanity?
- Does Thomas doubt the actual death of Jesus?
- Does he doubt the actual identity of the One the other disciples claim to have seen?

Whatever it is that Thomas doubts, it is not enough to break the bond he has with the disciple community. His doubts have not caused him to leave the other disciples. His doubts have not led the believing disciples to throw him out of their fellowship. They live together.

It seems that this doubtful disciple became the impetus for Jesus' second visit to the locked-in disciples. The moment Thomas experiences for himself the presence of the Risen Lord, he abandons his doubt. He does not cling to it stubbornly. His response is totally immediate. He makes his profound belief: "*My Lord and my God!*"

When it comes to Thomas, maybe we should think of "Doubting Thomas" as a spiritual comrade on those dark days when what we are unsure of seems to outweigh what we know to be true. Despite all his doubts, Thomas was pretty darn healthy. After a week that he saw his rabbi, his spiritual leader, tried, convicted, crucified, and buried, Thomas was still around. When he could've left and never come back, he came back.

Just as there are five servings of vegetables and fruits per day to keep us physically fit, there are five spiritual exercises to keep a healthy spirit. We might call them the five *P*s of spiritual health.

Proximity: Like Thomas, we must keep ourselves connected to our community. The greatest gift Jesus left was the strength of a community of faith. For our souls' health and holiness, the reality of relationships is not an option. Relationships are where our spiritual faith is fed and watered, weeded and nurtured.

Pray In Private: Jesus was always seeking alone time with his Father. Singular prayer is never solitary. There is always a listening ear. In the silence of solitude, all doubts and despairs, all heights and depths can be revealed and relinquished to a higher power.


Pray In Community: Coming together like we are, praying for your faith community, your schools, your workplace, your family, your hometown, your country, your world, connects you and suddenly makes you invested in your world. Praying communally grows your spirit beyond your own need.

Practice What You Preach: The fourth *P* really means exercising your faith in everydayness. This can be offered on your most Doubting Thomas days. Sometimes you have to go through the motions, even when you doubt. Sometime the only thing you can do is keep moving and doubt your doubts. Go buy groceries for the St. Vincent DePaul Society. Deliver some Meals On Wheels for those who can't get out. If you have a day when you cannot feel your faith, do acts of kindness.

Praise—The Final P: The world is God’s creation and slowly but surely it is exploding with new creation. How can we not see God’s presence in what’s all around us? Even on your most dismal days, stretch your spirit and find a praise to offer God...for light, for dark, for noise, for quiet, for a loving family, for a singular life, for great success, for simple sustenance. Praises multiply every day we take time to express them.

Live the five-a-day regimen and you will come to live the life of Thomas, a life of wholeness and holiness.

∞140th Jubilee ∞

1871  2011