

DOUBTING THOMAS

In John 20:1-18, we are told how Mary of Magdela and two disciples found the empty tomb. In the remainder of the chapter, tells us the rest of the story. The disciples are hiding in a small dark room, with the door locked. They are scared that they too will be arrested and killed. All are there except Thomas. Jesus appears in the midst of them, despite the locked door. Now they are REALLY scared. To them, Jesus says "Peace be with you." He then goes on "As the Father sent me, so I send you." This is the Great Commission. The Disciples become Apostles. The Followers become Proclaimers. Jesus then says "Receive the Holy Spirit." This is what happens at Baptism, when we become disciples and apostles.

All are there but Thomas. He is separated from his friends. In pain and fear, he went off by himself. He is alone. Later Thomas comes back. He does not believe Mary. He does not believe his friends. Now I ask you, would YOU have believed that the tomb was empty? That Jesus appeared through locked door? More likely we would conclude that everyone was in the Denial Stage of Grief!

Because Thomas separated from the other disciples, he did not see Jesus appear in room. He did not receive Great Commission. He did not receive the Holy Spirit with his friends. He was not a part of excitement and joy of friends. In short, Thomas had doubts.

Have you ever had doubts? The Church, your community of faith, is the place for those with doubts. The Church is the place to deal with questions. This is the story of Thomas. It is OK to have doubts! We are all "Walking Civil wars." One day we are sunny and confident in our faith and the love of God. The next day, we are cloudy and unsure that anyone is up there. It is a little hard to believe. Ask Thomas. Doubts are natural. Indeed they are healthy. They are challenging and stretching and allow us to grow. The Church is the place for people with doubts. God is on the Golf course. God is at Beach. What isn't at Golf course or Beach is a community to deal with questions. It is hard to have faith when alone. Doubts creep in. Look at Thomas.

A week later, Thomas is with his friends. He brought his doubts to his community of faith. In Church we explore doubts and questions. We NEED Questions. If we can't get them out in open, we can't find out that we are not alone. And we can't get answers. Doubts are nothing we all haven't experienced ourselves or heard already and dealt with. Doubts are ONLY dangerous outside Church, where individuals flounder without help.

We can not walk with Jesus as the first disciple did. We can not put our fingers in the holes in his hands. But for us twentieth Century Christians, Jesus has a Special Blessing: "Blessed are you who have not seen, yet believe."

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