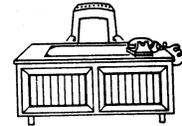


2nd Sunday of Easter
(Sunday of Divine Mercy)
April 11, 2021



From the Desk of
Fr. Romanus

Dear Parishioners,

In this Sunday's gospel, we read about the risen Christ appearing to his petrified disciples. As we know, fear leads to anxiety, restlessness, intimidation and paralysis. Hence, as a testimony to his abiding, forgiving and reassuring love, Jesus showers them with peace. "Peace be with you," he said to them over and over. To help conquer their fears, he gave them the awesome gift of the Holy Spirit. He also gave them power to forgive sins, thereby entrusting them with the ministry of forgiveness and reconciliation.

One of the hallmarks of this encounter was the incredulity of Thomas who was absent during the visit. He simply refused to believe that the crucified Lord had actually risen and had appeared to his comrades. We should not be quick to judge him since it was unheard of (except in the case of Lazarus) that a dead person would come back to life after three days in the tomb. However, given their master's predictions of rising on the third day and the raising of Lazarus, Thomas' skepticism seems unwarranted.

Drawing from our gospel passage and parallel passages, the term 'doubting Thomas' is often used to describe one who refuses to believe something without direct, personal evidence. As a concept, skepticism is an attitude of doubt or a disposition to incredulity about particular things or things in general. Today's world boasts a lot of skeptics, especially in the area of religion. These skeptics doubt everything dealing with faith: the crucifixion, resurrection, creation, angels, heaven, hell, purgatory, etc. Unfortunately, some of these committed skeptics are baptized but non-practicing Catholics. Even some practicing Catholics find it hard resisting the strong lure of skepticism.

Scientific skepticism is certainly understandable given its emphasis on the empirical method. The empirical method questions the reliability of certain claims until they have been subjected to systematic investigation involving observation, verification, and analysis. Considering the rigors of the scientific method, science itself could reasonably be referred to as an organized form of skepticism.

As if anticipating a case of scientific skepticism, Jesus showed Thomas the nail marks on his hands and urged him to put his finger into his side where he was pierced. Then, he lovingly said to Thomas, "... do not be unbelieving, but believe." That was the kind of evidence Thomas needed. Having satisfied his curiosity, Thomas proclaimed unequivocal faith in the risen Lord, stating, "My Lord and my God." The good news is that Thomas' doubt presented an opportunity for Jesus to bless present and future generations of believers who do not have to see to believe. That blessing extends to all of us whose faith is not based on science.

Like the gospel, the first reading reminds us that to be Catholic or Christian is to belong to a community of believers. We are told that the early community of believers was of one heart and mind and had everything in common, sharing of their possessions. Those in religious orders seem to best exemplify this way of life. For the rest of us, it is a call to take care of the church and one another, ensuring that no one is left in need. Obviously, we are doing a lot in this regard as evident in our social justice ministries and human concern efforts. However, there is always more to be done. We can choose to magnify our efforts through increased commitment to parish financial support and the Catholic Stewardship Appeal, helping to sustain the institutions that keep us united.

Have a great week!

Fr. Romanus