

2nd Sunday of Easter

Christ the King • April 18-19, 2009

Today our Gospel presents us with a wonderful, but maybe unlikely, role model, Thomas, or as he is also known: doubting Thomas.

Put yourself in Thomas' shoes. He and the other disciples had felt abandoned when death robbed them of Jesus. All their hopes and dreams were pinned on Jesus. They had left their jobs, their families, everything to follow him. And then Jesus was gone.

Now enter that private upper room in Jerusalem where the disciples had gathered in the days following the death of Jesus. Maybe it was even the same room where Jesus had broken bread and poured the wine with them just a few days before, the room where he washed their feet, the room where brave words and professions of faith were courageously proclaimed. But now Jesus was gone and the memories of that night linger.

The disciples huddle together in fear, like children hiding under the bed during a thunderstorm. They jump at the sound of the rustling wind, or the sound of children playing in the street, or a key in the locked doors.

In the midst of this fear, Jesus appears and invites them to peace. Jesus breathes life back into them and the mission he had started with them. If ever there was proof for the resurrection of Jesus, this is it. This huddled bunch of terrified disciples could never have mustered the ingenuity to make up the story of the risen Christ, and even more, they could never have mustered the courage necessary to die for the story if they knew it wasn't true. There is one way, and only one way, to explain the transformation of this

frightened band of followers into the champions and martyrs of the faith they would become—Jesus had come back into their midst.

But back to patron saint; on that first appearance of Jesus to the disciples, Thomas was absent; the memories were too intense. But now, one week later, Thomas is back in the room with the others. But he is not to be convinced by their fantastic and enthusiastic witness to the resurrection. Thomas is a reasonable man. He has doubts, but that does not mean he has no faith, nor does that mean that he has a lower capacity for faith. Thomas wasn't going to simply check his brain at the door. His faith couldn't be unquestioned, unexamined or even borrowed from others. And then Jesus appears again in peace. Notice Jesus is not upset by Thomas's questions or his need for closer examination. Jesus allows him to come and see, and to believe.

Thomas is a good patron saint for us. We too have doubts and fears. We don't have all the answers; sometimes we don't even know the questions. And Jesus understands. There is room around Jesus for Thomas, and all those like him who can only come to authentic faith by means of questions, handling and wrestling with faith themselves. Despite the fliers that were put on our windshields last week, Christian faith is never intimidated or offended by honest questions, searching doubt, or rational thinking.

But also notice that Thomas remained in the community of the disciples; by belonging, he believes.

We all must claim faith for ourselves. We may question, we may wrestle, and we may doubt. But we must belong. Our faith can never be just between me and God, it must be lived out in community and communion. For it is only in belonging, that with Thomas we can say to Jesus, 'My Lord and my God.'