

04/23/17 2 Easter A

-- This gospel has left the apostle Thomas with the unfair nickname "Doubting Thomas." In fact, though, Jesus never called him a doubter. Rather, he told him, *Do not be unbelieving, but believe.*

-- In Thomas' defense, the other disciples had pretty much been in the same boat as he had. I'm sure, after Mary Magdalene had told them she'd seen the Lord, they didn't believe her. They remained locked up out of fear.

-- Jesus had come and shown himself to them. They were shocked and overjoyed. Yet they were still remained in that upper room behind locked doors. They were afraid; their belief wasn't fully formed yet.

-- Belief is a challenge in our own day as it was back then, and perhaps moreso. Many people will not believe something unless they can see it with their own eyes. They are kind of like Thomas.

-- But that's not the only issue. We've always had people who are the practical, "show me" types. Now, more recently, we have people who will actually deny what is factual. (March for science to counteract this)

-- They will put out "alternate facts" in answer to real facts, and accuse people who are factual of concocting fake news. They do this because the facts do not fit their view of the world; they are inconvenient truths.

-- The Risen Jesus must speak to this type of world just as he did to the world of those first disciples. And how does he do that? Notice how he appeared to his first disciples.

-- He did not come on a royal throne or in a big chariot. He did not glow all over in a blinding light. He came back as the flesh and bone man they had known. And he came back with the scars of his crucifixion. No plastic surgery for our Risen Lord.

-- Those scars were significant. They showed what he went through, but not only that. They were signs that he identified with all suffering people. That included his own disciples.

-- For, though they may not have had the physical scars of crucifixion, they had plenty of emotional scars. The fact that they were still hiding tells us as much.

-- All of us have scars as well. Some of them may be physical; most of us know people who've been victims of physical abuse. But many of those scars are deeper, signs of emotional abuse, or betrayal by friends, or the pain of divorce....just to cite a few examples.

-- Jesus comes to us as he did to Thomas. He invites us to look closely at his scars. He knows and feels our pain. He understands our tendency to lock ourselves up spiritually and emotionally. And he wants to free us from these barriers to his new life.

-- Jesus' resurrection gives his crucifixion new meaning. It does not undo the pain, nor does it undo our pain. But it assures us that there is a greater life ahead for us.

-- But Jesus did not just appear to give the disciples reassurance. He sent them out on a mission. He commissioned them to spread a message of peace, mercy and reconciliation to their world.

-- And so he sends us out into our world as well. We celebrate this Sunday as Divine Mercy Sunday. It reminds us of God's mercy, but it also calls us as individuals and as a Church to reflect God's mercy.

-- May we be instruments of God's mercy to the people we touch this week. Otherwise, we will simply be locked up in our own misery.

-- God wants to free us of that misery. And he wants us to free the world of that misery as well, through the power of the Risen Jesus .