

## **Second Sunday of Easter (Divine Mercy Sunday)**

**April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018**

“Blessed are those who have not seen me but still believe.” We are those blessed, not only because we believe in Jesus without seeing him in human form and without the wounds from his crucifixion, but because we have the compilation of Jesus’s birth, life and miracles. We know the mystery and love associated with his death and resurrection. We are blessed to have all these truths collected in the Bible for us to reflect on and find solace in our times of need.

This week’s gospel brings us the story of “Doubting Thomas”, the apostle who is unfortunately remembered for doubting Jesus’ resurrection after being told that Jesus had appeared to the other apostles in a locked room. Thomas responds to the announcement by saying he will not believe until he sees the marks in Jesus’s hands and puts his finger into the nail marks. Perhaps this story should be approached from a different viewpoint than of Thomas’s doubts. This Bible passage has always struck a chord with my heart because I relate to the apostles that were hiding in fear, yet I also take comfort in Thomas’s reaction.

As a twelve-year-old girl (the same age as the number of apostles), I was having a new school friend stay overnight for the first time. There was a lot of excitement that evening with me having my friend for a sleepover and my older brother having a date. After enjoying pizza at my grandparent’s house, we headed home where my friend and I spent the remainder of the evening in my room, no doubt avoiding my younger siblings. Suddenly, I heard my mom’s voice, full of anguish, saying “No! No! It can’t be true.” I turned to my friend and said, “My brother is dead.” I just knew it, and my reaction was the same as the apostles. I ran to my closet to hide in fear. Fear of what, I still don’t know. Fear of life without my brother? Fear of the future? As much as my friend told me not to think the worst, I couldn’t shake the fear. A little later my dad came to my room to confirm what I knew in my heart to be true. My brother had been killed in a car accident.

In the days, months, and years that followed, I went through the stages of grief, adapted to life as the oldest child, and was adamant in my belief of God’s non-existence. I couldn’t have been more wrong. After that period of doubt, I

ended up developing an incredibly strong and deep faith. However, like Thomas, I still need constant reassurance of Jesus in my life. The more I seek those signs and miracles in my everyday life, the more I find them.

There are countless times I see Jesus. I see Jesus daily in my children's zest for life, my husband's quiet and loving actions, and even in my dog's unconditional love for me. I see him in my frightened patients as they question their mortality after a diagnosis of cancer. With every patient, I pray for Jesus's guidance in my words, that I may be a calming voice in their private storm. I feel blessed to have the opportunity to be a part of Jesus's ministry in my work as I recall the Bible passage, "Lord, when did we see you naked and clothe you? When did we see you hungry and feed you?" His response was that when we cared for the least of His people, we cared for Him.

This Sunday is also recognized as Divine Mercy Sunday which provides an opportunity to reflect on how God's mercy can overcome sin. Today is meant to be a day to strengthen people's trust in God. By participating in reconciliation and receiving the Holy Eucharist, we shall obtain total forgiveness for all sins and punishment. Although I seek God daily, I can't help but feel at fault for needing that reassurance of His presence in my life. However, by seeking Him in all things, great and small, I am confident that He shows me mercy and continues to give me signs. If I had to guess which came first, His signs or my devotion, I would say His signs. At a time in my life when I was at my lowest, I was given so many signs that I could no longer say they were "just coincidences". Such as in 2013, despite my doctor telling me I would deliver my third son prior to my due date of October 22<sup>nd</sup>, he wasn't born until October 27<sup>th</sup>, which is my brother's death anniversary. These signs in my life I believe to be God's acts of mercy to make sure I don't become a "Doubting Thomas" but instead a minister to His word.

Anna Manfredo