

Today, the Second Sunday of Easter, is commonly called Low Sunday,  
not because everyone is tired of church and attendance is low,  
but because of its stark contrast to the High Feast of Easter itself

The Sunday after Easter couldn't possibly measure up to-  
the grandeur and exciting climax of last week  
Such momentum cannot be sustained, nor should it be.

What's interesting about Low Sunday-  
is that it's the only Sunday throughout our 3 year lectionary cycle,  
where the gospel reading is exactly the same year after year

No matter which year of the lectionary we're in, Year A, B, or C  
The gospel appointed for the Sunday after Easter-  
is always the twentieth Chapter of John,  
the story of doubting Thomas

John is the only evangelist that tells the story of doubting Thomas  
You won't find it in Matthew, Mark or Luke  
John's is the only account that we have of poor doubting Thomas  
It must be pretty important-  
to be repeated every single year, and so soon after Easter Day

It is important, because it acknowledges something that we all  
experience – doubt  
It confronts all our assumptions about doubting  
Many of us have been told that it's wrong to doubt,  
that it's blasphemous to doubt,  
that if you doubt you're on shaky ground,  
your faith is in trouble

The truth is – it's human to doubt  
Thomas, one of the 12 disciples,  
a member of Christ's inner circle – doubted  
Thomas didn't refuse to believe, he wanted to believe-  
he just doubted.

After the devastating horror of the crucifixion,  
the disciples were crushed, hopeless, grieved and frightened  
But unlike the other disciples,  
when the Risen Lord appeared in the locked room for the first time,  
Thomas wasn't there.  
Thomas was not there when Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit upon  
them  
Thomas wasn't there and it wasn't his fault.

When Jesus finally does appear to Thomas,  
some conclude that he belittles Thomas for doubting. I don't.  
When Jesus says to Thomas: *Do not doubt but believe*,  
he's not blaming or chiding him.  
He's **encouraging** him.

Jesus knows what Thomas must do in order to believe-  
Thomas must see and touch Jesus' wounds  
So Our Lord gently guides his fingers to the indentations in his  
flesh,  
and Thomas experiences a startling moment of grace:  
*My Lord and My God.*

Jesus then makes his point by asking a rhetorical question:  
*Have you believed because you have seen me?*

Yes, of course, Jesus knows the answer.

That's the point. So Jesus adds:

*Blessed are they who have not seen yet have come to believe.*

Besides, seeing isn't always believing

Many see and still do not believe

remember other post-Resurrection appearances?

In Matthew, the disciples see the Risen Christ with their own eyes,  
and yet Matthew tells us that some still **doubted**.

In Luke, the disciples' great joy at seeing the Risen Lord-  
is clouded with **doubt**.

And these are eye witnesses!

Clearly faith doesn't always come from seeing or experiencing

Faith comes from God, from the Holy Spirit,

that same sweet Spirit that Jesus breathed on them-

as He said, *Receive the Holy Spirit*.

The Holy Spirit cannot be controlled or manipulated.

It cannot be experienced on demand-

because like faith itself, the Holy Spirit is God's gift to us

Therefore, when your faith seems to be at its lowest ebb,

it's not your fault, just as it wasn't Thomas' fault.

But this is not license for spiritual complacency.

If your commitment to the Church and to the Sacraments is weak,

If coming to church is something you do only when the mood  
strikes

Don't expect anything more than anemic faith.

Sometimes, even when we're being faithful, our *well runs dry*,

we don't seem to feel much of anything

That's when we begin to doubt... a lot...just like Thomas  
But that doesn't make us bad people.

You see, there is a holy tension between faith and doubt:  
Doubt can be the means of strengthening and renewing faith  
Once we acknowledge doubt, and don't judge it,  
but simply sit with it,  
we eventually *move through* it,  
eventually we move through our dark night of the soul.  
And afterwards, we find our faith stronger than ever.

On the other hand,  
if we deny our doubts,  
or if we judge ourselves harshly for doubting  
and try to bury our doubts and keep them secret from God,  
our faith becomes lifeless, static and weak

Show me a person who claims never to doubt  
and I'll show you one of two things – a saint,  
or a soul who has never seriously examined what he or she truly  
believes.  
There are plenty of churches that tell you precisely what to believe-  
and how to believe it.

They tell their flocks *to pray away* doubt,  
or if that doesn't work,  
they threaten to shun or excommunicate the doubters.  
Religious cults thrive on this

Still, all this heavy handed certainty appeals and comforts many  
I suppose it's a lot easier to be told what to think  
rather than struggling with questions and doubts yourself

Perhaps that's why fundamentalist churches are so successful today

Unlike them, we don't ask you to *check your brains at the door*

We encourage you to struggle with your doubts

Yes, sitting with doubt is often unnerving

but how can we expect our faith to grow up if it is never challenged?

How can the holy Spirit expose our idols if we refuse to question or doubt?

We must acknowledge our doubts

They won't go away if we ignore or deny them

Doubts are not the enemy

Often they are the means by which we are transformed

Thomas risked the scorn of his fellow disciples;  
but without taking that risk, he would never have been transformed-

by the spine tingling revelation,

that the wounds he touched were the wounds of Christ.

Thomas knew what he needed to see and do in order to believe,  
and he was bold enough to say it out loud.

That's faith, not doubt.