

SUNDAY, APRIL 11, 2010

Those who have not seen and have believed...

**Homily for the Second Sunday of Easter**

(**Scriptures** for today's liturgy)

*Do not be afraid. I am the first and the last, the one who lives.*

*Once I was dead, but now I am alive forever and ever.*

- Revelation 1:17-18

**Thomas may have been the first but certainly not the last person to want some proof that Jesus had risen from the dead.**

**Every time there's a new article or documentary on the Shroud of Turin (the cloth in which some people believe Jesus was buried), every time there's a new proof or a fresh denial of its authenticity, I get emails with links and letters with copies of newspaper columns from friends sincerely making sure that I'm up to date on... well, on something that doesn't make an iota of difference to my faith.**

**My faith in Christ would be no stronger or deeper should the shroud be proved to be definitively authentic. Nor would my faith in Christ be any the less should the shroud be proved to be inauthentic. My faith is in Christ, not in burial wrappings or other physical "evidence."**

**Remember what we heard the angels at the tomb say, last week, to the women who came on the first Easter morning? The angels asked, "Why do you seek the living One among the dead?"**

**From day one, it seems, it's been easy for us to look for Jesus in all the wrong places. In the last couple of years, folks have claimed to find the image of Jesus in some very strange places:**

- on a grilled cheese sandwich**
- on the bottom of a scorched iron**
- in the swirls of a butterscotch candy**
- on a pierogi**
- and in mustard burned to a crust in a frying pan.**

**If such "discoveries" actually move to faith those who found these images, then that's all well and good.**

**But by “move them to faith,” I mean:**

**- move them to pray with Jesus  
in his body, the Church, gathered for worship,  
as we are right here;**

**- move them to hear Jesus speak,  
in his Word proclaimed in the scriptures,  
as we have heard him today;**

**- move them to this table to share in Jesus’ last supper,  
as we are doing;**

**- move them to touch the body of the Risen Jesus,  
to receive the risen Christ into their bellies and their souls  
as we will today, in Communion.**

**We don’t look for Jesus among the dead:**

**- we find him among the living, in one another in this gathering;**

**- we find him speaking to us now, today, in his Word,  
in our prayer and and in the praise we sing;**

**- and we find him present, alive,  
in the sacrament of this table  
where he enters not just a locked upper room  
but the deepest recesses of our hearts.**

**And *that* is how we come to believe that he is risen from the dead,  
we whom Jesus calls *blessed* because although we have not seen,  
yet, we have believed.**

**Blessed are we who, even with our own doubts,  
have come here today because we believe that Jesus is risen  
and that we will find him here.**

**Our doubts may be less about the resurrection of Jesus  
and more about those who have preached that message to us.**

**Thomas doubted his brother apostles  
when they told him they had seen Jesus.  
He was not willing to take them at their word.  
In our own times, with cause, we sometimes doubt the word  
of those who tell us of the risen Jesus  
and we may be slow to believe even those we once trusted  
freely and completely.**

**In such times, like Thomas,  
we wait for the One whom we can always trust:  
we wait for Jesus.**

**But we do not wait for him alone, individually,  
apart from the company of believers.  
We continue to gather in prayer with the assembly of the faithful  
and we wait, as did Thomas, even with those we do not trust.**

**We wait with the whole Church for Jesus to come and show us again  
the wounds of mercy in his hands and in his side,  
inviting us to lay aside our disbelief and to believe,  
to find in *him* the healing and forgiveness our Church needs  
and the righting of so many things gone so grievously wrong.**

**St. John tells us he wrote this story of Thomas  
“so that we might come to believe  
that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,  
that through him we might have life in his name.”**

**For us to come to that life,  
we need to allow our faith to be stronger than our doubts,  
our trust in what is *true* to be stronger  
than our mistrust of those who have failed us.**

**As surely as Jesus came a second time to that upper room  
where the apostles were gathered,  
so he comes to this room of our prayer this morning.**

**As surely as he invited Thomas to touch his wounds,  
so does he offer us his body and blood  
in the bread and cup of the Eucharist.**

**If you seek the living One among the living,  
you will find him here,  
as surely as he has come here  
to find each of us.**

*- Rev. Austin Fleming*