

## *Homily for the Second Sunday of Easter*

There are, of course, two ways to look at Thomas.  
We know him as Doubting Thomas but in the Eastern Christian rites,  
he's known as Thomas the Believer - and rightly so.

There's no long string of gospel accounts of Thomas doubting things.  
He was an apostle, a close and faithful follower of Jesus.

Think back to just a few weeks ago when Jesus was getting ready  
to head to Bethany where his friend Lazarus lay dying.  
Some of the apostles were reluctant to go  
for fear they'd run into trouble there  
but it was Thomas who said, "Let us also go to die with him..."  
that is, go to die with Christ.

Thomas was a believer before he was a doubter  
and he was a strong and brave believer in Christ.

So what happened?  
What caused Thomas to doubt?  
What happened was the painful, inglorious death of Jesus,  
crucified as a common criminal.  
*It wasn't supposed to come to this.*  
*It wasn't supposed to end like this.*

So the other disciples' reporting that Jesus had risen  
did little to kindle faith and trust anew in Thomas' heart.

I can't help but wonder if there aren't many, today, who, like Thomas,  
have a history of strong faith and belief  
but who, like Thomas, find themselves saying,  
for one reason or another,  
*It wasn't supposed to come to this.*  
*It wasn't supposed to end like this.*

Perhaps it's the death of a loved one, a young one, a good one;  
someone prayed for, for a long time, and by so many.

Perhaps it's the death of a dream, a plan, a hope:  
*It wasn't supposed to come to this.*  
*It wasn't supposed to end like this.*

Or perhaps it's the death of a promise, a pledge, a word given, a marriage.  
Or maybe it's the passing of a parish structure or the selling of a church,  
or the death of trust in those whose pedestals crumbled in scandal.  
*It wasn't supposed to come to this.*  
*It wasn't supposed to end like this.*

Thomas' stance that he would not believe without seeing and touching Jesus' wounds may have been as much his expression of anger, hurt and disappointment as it was a demand for tangible proof.

In fact, although when he appears to Thomas Jesus offers his side for probing and his wounds for touching, the gospel doesn't tell us whether or not Thomas accepted the offer.

We do know that upon seeing Jesus and hearing his voice, Thomas lets go his grief, his hurt, his sadness, his disbelief and says, "My Lord and my God!"

What Thomas did and what Jesus helped him do was to confront the death-dealing wounds and the pierced side, to look at his loss, to accept his loss and to see that *even if it wasn't supposed to have come to this, even if it wasn't supposed to have ended like this*, there is, indeed, life, again - even after death.

What are the deaths, the losses, the hurts, the disappointments that weaken the strength of our faith - yours and mine?

If we persist in our anger and hurt, in our doubt and disappointment, what comes of that?

If we cease to trust, to hope, what deeper losses will eventually be ours?

Do we need to look into the wounds of our own hearts pierced by what we thought would never come, and there, in the loss, watch for the presence of Jesus and listen for his voice, calling us to believe, to trust again in him, with a faith stronger than death itself?

As surely as Jesus returned to strengthen Thomas in faith so he comes looking for each of us, too, to strengthen us when our faith fails.

This very morning, at this altar, Jesus comes and stands among us and sits at our table, offering his divine mercy.

He invites us not just to reach and touch his body and blood, his wounded, sacrificed self, but rather to receive, to take into ourselves his gift of life-stronger-than-death, the gift of his life and mercy

offered to all who will believe in him,  
who see him and say,  
"My Lord and my God!"

- *Rev. Austin H. Fleming*