

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." ²² When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." ²⁴ But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe." ²⁶ A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." ²⁸ Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

Last Sunday (April 7) was youth Sunday and two of our youth, Cortney Esposito , and Meghan Chemidlin gave the sermon on this Gospel Lesson, So I have enclosed their messages as the "thought" for that Sunday. Pr. John Van Haneghan.

Doubting Thomas Sermon

By: Cortney Esposito

In our society today certain concepts are often overlooked. Most of these concepts are due to technological advancements. Think about how much less physical communication is used, especially by kids today. Next, think about these few legitimate conversations and how many phrases such as "I don't believe you" or "You're lying" are used. My point is to show that people today are not good with trusting others. An example of this is a short story about a trial.

"A defense attorney was cross-examining a police officer during a felony trial -it went like this: Q: Officer, did you see my client fleeing the scene?

The officer answered: No sir, but my fellow officer observed a person matching the description of the offender running several blocks away.

The attorney responded: A fellow officer provided the description of this so-called offender. Do you trust your fellow officers?

Officer quickly answered: Yes sir, with my life.

The attorney exclaimed: WITH YOUR LIFE? Let me ask you this then officer-do you have a locker room in the police station-a room where you change your clothes in preparation for your daily duties?

The Officer responded: Yes sir, we do.

Attorney added: And do you have a locker in that room? A locker with a lock on it, I assume?

Then the officer restated: Yes sir, I do.

Finally the attorney answered: Now why is it, officer, IF YOU TRUST YOUR FELLOW OFFICERS WITH YOUR LIFE, that you find it necessary to lock your locker in a room you share with those same officers?"

Trust is essential, especially when regarding human interaction and communication. You need trust to survive. For example, Thomas from the bible insisted in witnessing Jesus' body after his resurrection in order to believe he rose from the dead. Faith is important to this story. Jesus stressed the importance to Thomas that seeing isn't always believing. Personally, I have a very trust based life. I depend on my parents to support me. Although, I can't be with them constantly, I have faith and trust in them. Also, I am co-captain of my school's science fair team and teacher of our church's fifth and sixth grade Sunday school class. My peers and students depend on me to help and guide them the same way I receive help from my parents. I need them to have confidence in me to supply them with accurate knowledge even if they are clueless with the subject.

Some more examples of trust in my life include my two jobs; both of which require inordinate amounts of trust. I am a Veterinary technician at an Animal Hospital and a Jui Jitsu instructor to children. People trust me with their pets and children. Although, I am a stranger to these individuals, they have faith in me to carry out the duties of my job responsibly and properly. This brings me back to my main point that seeing isn't always believing. You need confidence, faith and trust in others. Life is not meant to be independent. That's why we have family and friends in our lives to help us along the way. Thomas' distrust in Jesus' resurrection gave him his common title of Doubting Thomas. The significance of this bible story is to have

faith. Have faith, especially in the things you can't see. It's easy to believe in the visible things. But, sometimes the most important faith is in the invisible. My faith is important to me because without it, I would be just another Doubting Thomas.

Meghan Chemidlin

Close your eyes and imagine. What would you do? You are one of Jesus' 12 disciples. Your loyal friend and leader has just been tortured and put to death for doing absolutely nothing wrong. He was your leader and you were a devoted follower for years. People are talking about this everywhere. What do you do after he has passed away? You hear they may be targeting any of his followers. Does life just move right along? You sit there scared and frightened looking at each other worried about your future. Would someone take over? Who would be the leader? How could that proceed? When all of the sudden three women, also dedicated followers of Jesus, come running in seeming very confused. They had just been doing some preparations when an angel appeared to them. They tell you that Jesus has risen from the dead. Could this even possibly be happening right now? What do they believe?

It is the second Sunday of Easter, and a week ago we celebrated the resurrection. Jesus has risen from the dead! Yet, when Mary Magdalene announces "I have seen the Lord" The disciples are gathered in the house and the doors are locked with fear. There couldn't be a more amazing message! Jesus, their teacher and friend has conquered death. Jesus' tomb is open but the disciples' house is closed and the doors are locked tight. Jesus stands among his friends and says "Peace be with you!" He walks into the midst of their fears and offers them peace. He does not respond with an expression of vengeance for those who killed him or denied him, rather his first response is peace. The disciples remain there speechless. I know I would be! Some were having trouble believing, especially Thomas. He wanted to see and feel the marks of nails on Jesus' body. Once again, instead of Jesus addressing Thomas with judgment or disappointment, he responds with understanding and compassion. There are not many people who can be like that when they know their friends were doubting them in such a difficult time. Jesus once again

shows us how wonderful he really is. Many times in our lives we are faced with similar struggles. Doubt is so common in peoples everyday lives. But we are graciously given the strength and power to push through this just like Jesus. He shows us that no matter what we go through and how much we are in disbelief that we can always push through and have faith. So how does Jesus respond to the doubt of Thomas, just as all of those who have been skeptical about him throughout the Gospel and our lives? Jesus responds with compassion to Thomas and everyone. He holds his arms wide open to anyone no matter what they have done or what they may or may not believe. Everyone receives assurance that our savior will always react with peace.