

Second Sunday of Easter/Divine Mercy Sunday – Cycle C
Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception – April 28, 2019
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Apparently the hundreds of television channels have not been working hard enough to ensure that everyone has their 15 minutes of fame. Fame is the God-given right of every American, is it not? So many work so hard to achieve it and have been falling woefully short. You see, every time that a real housewife or a Big Brother competitor stretch their 15 minutes to 30 and their 30 minutes to 45, someone else gets shut out. Well, not any more. To the rescue of the celebrity-deprived population comes “YouTube.” You’re familiar with “YouTube,” the website where you can watch any number of television clips, commercials, obscene or profane images, and, most frequently, homemade videos. In years past, only your family, your neighbors and friends knew that you were an idiot. They may have whispered about it, but it is not like they could prove it. Now, thanks to YouTube, the entire world can watch you make a fool of yourself when you post your video on the web. The entire world can see you try to stuff 25 golf balls in your mouth or do the Texas two step on a greased cookie sheet or bungee jump from Ferris wheel – without a bungee cord. Yes, in years past, people may have thought to themselves that you were strange, but the right clip posted on YouTube will remove any doubt. After all, seeing is believing.

That was certainly the philosophy that Thomas was following. His fellow apostles were exuberantly telling him that they had seen Jesus – the crucified – risen from the dead. He had been there in the Upper Room. He had eaten with them. But Thomas wasn’t falling for it. After all, he hadn’t been there when Jesus supposedly appeared. His brother disciples could have been pulling his leg. They might have gotten together to pull an elaborate practical joke on Thomas. Maybe he was being “punk’d.” So Thomas told them he needed to see real evidence – he needed to see the marks of the nails, the wound from the soldier’s lance. If he was going to believe something so incredible, he had to see it for himself.

And see it he did. Jesus came back the following week and Thomas was there. Jesus invited him to see, to touch, to believe. Thomas was able to put his fingers in the nail marks, to put his hand in Jesus’ side. I suspect that when most of us hear this gospel, we have two reactions. First, of course, when we hear Jesus praising those who do not see and yet believe, and we feel just a little self-important. That’s us he’s talking about. I wasn’t in the Upper Room. I didn’t see the risen Christ walking and talking, and yet I believe. Yes, when we hear this gospel, we feel a little pride. But we feel a little envious as well.

Faith in the resurrection, faith in Jesus Christ would be easier, wouldn't it, if we could have placed our fingers into the nail marks of his hands, if we could have probed his side, if we had seen him appear in the Upper Room. We try to make ourselves feel superior to "Doubting Thomas," but we sometimes share his doubts – and we long for the assurance, the physical proof that he received. Maybe that's why our church is a little more empty this week than it was last. Everyone can believe in the resurrection – at least in theory – on Easter Sunday. Continuing that faith beyond Easter Sunday is more of a challenge. That's when we long for proof. That's when we want to see and believe. That's when we wish that Jesus had left a video of his resurrection on YouTube. Then, we tell ourselves, then we could really believe.

Alas, Jesus left us no video. There are a few eyewitness accounts of his life, death and resurrection, but Jesus himself wrote no book. Jesus left us nothing – nothing but the Spirit of the living God, nothing but his body and blood as our nourishment, nothing but a faith that has – in two millennia – spread to every corner of the world. If seeing is believing, then we must open our eyes. Our society has all but abandoned God and look at the results – poverty, crime, racism, war, and every form of immoral behavior. When God looks at our world, at our nation, at our city, he cannot be pleased with the level of violence, with the climate of personal attacks, with the political corruption that seems to be everywhere. If seeing is believing, then look as well at those who truly believe – see the peace, the consolation, the joy that Christ has brought them. Even in the midst of suffering, even in the midst of pain, those who truly believe feel God's presence – his love, his mercy. As we continue to celebrate Easter, as we continue to meditate on his paschal mystery, open your eyes to Christ, and open your hearts as well. See and believe. He is truly risen. Alleluia!