

Wicker Park Lutheran Church

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Thomas walked slowly through the streets. His eyes were fixed on the ground and his thoughts kept circling back to the events of the last few days. Thomas was sad. But he was also anxious and disappointed. This was not how he had imagined it would be.

It had all started so well. They had found him, the Messiah, Jesus, the Savior. But now he was dead. Thomas was sad. He had believed that Jesus was the Savior. He had trusted Jesus. But now he had been disappointed. Everything was over. Thomas needed some rest first. That's why he hadn't gone to the meeting of the other disciples. He wanted to be alone first. No one understood him anyway.

Jesus had always understood Thomas. Jesus had known him, and Thomas could tell Jesus everything. Jesus is the Son of God, that's why he knows us. He knows us very well. He even knows our thoughts and our feelings. Jesus knows what you are thinking, even if you are sad and anxious, like Thomas was now.

In the end, Thomas was drawn to his friends. At least he could talk to them about his doubts. They would understand him. After all, they had experienced just as much with Jesus as he had. So, he went to the house where the disciples were meeting. But when Thomas saw the others, he was almost frightened. They looked so happy, so enthusiastic. Were they not mourning Jesus at all?

"Thomas," one of the disciples immediately addressed him excitedly, "where have you been? You should have been here. He was here. He is alive. We have seen him." Thomas didn't understand. Who was here? "Jesus is alive!" Jesus was here? That can still be, Jesus is dead. When everyone had calmed down a bit, they calmly told Thomas what had happened: "We were all together, everyone except you. The doors were firmly locked. We were all afraid of getting caught."

But then he suddenly stood in the middle of the room. Jesus showed us his wounds on his hands. It really was him." Thomas shook his head, "No, that can't be true," he replied. "I don't believe that." "But we saw him!" the other disciples affirmed. "I don't believe it," said Thomas again. "I'll only believe it when I've seen Jesus myself and when I've felt the wounds in his hands with my fingers and the wound in his side with my hand."

Youth Lesson, as we all know it.

However, ever since I was able to think for myself one tradition about him used to disturb me constantly: The Apostle is called the "Doubting Thomas" – all through the Christian era he is almost always referred to by this dishonorable attribute. How could an apostle who travelled the farthest (India), braving the violent seas, having lived through diverse and strange cultures, having endured the pain of linguistic barriers, etc., for his faith in the Risen Lord could be dubbed a disbeliever in the very same Resurrection?

WHICH of the disciples have the most quotes in the GOSPEL?

Always curious about disciples and Thomas is after Simon peter, most often speaking.

The context of the first intervention was two days after the death of Lazarus in Bethany. Jesus and His disciples were quite away from Bethany, and they had to walk the distance to reach the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. The frightened disciples pleaded with Jesus and said: “It is not long since the Jews there were wanting to stone you. Are you going there again?” (John 11:8). It is at this moment the courageous words of Thomas came: “Let us also go, that we may die with Him” (John 11:16). This statement speaks for itself. Nobody can see a doubtful or hesitating person, but a daring Apostle!

Thomas’ fourth intervention has become a classic example of genuine Christian faith in Jesus Christ: “My Lord and My God” (Jn 20:28). Jesus appeared to the Apostles again exactly one week later when Thomas also was present. This time He addressed Thomas directly and asked him to verify the reality of His Resurrection for himself. It is important to note that, unlike at the other time when Jesus rebuked the Apostles for their incredulity to believe the testimony of the women disciples, He did not fault Thomas, at least directly. The response of Thomas was equally touching. There was no attempt to justify himself; no rationalization, no blaming anyone – just a simple surrender in love, faith, humility, repentance and joy!

“My Lord and My God!” this short little sentence said it all – it came from deep within the heart and so was pregnant with deep feeling and meaning, full of resonances and overtones. It was an expression of deep and unflinching faith in the divinity of Jesus. It was an expression of unconditional commitment to the person and mission of Jesus. Indeed, for Thomas, unlike the other 10 Apostles, this personal encounter with the Risen Lord was a profound transforming experience. Many scholars consider this response of Thomas the paradigm, the best expression, of the “Profession of Faith.”

Now we discussed Thomas as doubtful Scientist or very tough and faithful.

Today I wanted to add another aspect:

Thomas through a therapeutical Lens.

We do not know why Thomas is not with the disciples. Either scared, or brave to not hide away. Maybe even introverted, like a scientist.

For sure we might call crucifixion collective trauma for the disciples. Including betrayal of Judas (one of them)

The other 11, 10 disciples (no Judas) chose a group therapeutical approach, sharing grief and fear together.

I do not want to discuss self-psychology by Kohut. Just let me point out Jesus' way of showing his scars. Resurrected with scars and wounds, no need to be a perfect undamaged body.

Let the disciples touch his scars and wounds is not scientific proof, it could and can be understood as a healing therapeutical connection.

Sharing the wounds with the shock and trauma of the disciples.

This is another of the many aspects of Thomas' story. Let us be grateful and remember this connection during the passing of the peace and communion together.

AMEN.