

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER: C

A CASE FOR THOMAS

Today I just have a case for Thomas.

In today's Gospel reading Thomas encounters the Risen Christ the week after the initial resurrection appearance.

He has been called 'Doubting Thomas' even though the word doubt does not appear in the story.

DESIGNATION: DOUBTING THOMAS

I have never been a fan of the "*Doubting Thomas*" designation.

- I believe the designation makes light of a very real spiritual and emotional confusion in which Thomas found himself after the death of Jesus, for which reason we should refrain from attaching labels to countless people who are sceptical in matters of faith in our times today.

As it stands, the label "*Doubting Thomas*" can lead one into two unfortunate assumptions:

- a) Firstly that Thomas must have been a "**second-rate**" disciple if not even **something worse**.

But Thomas was not a second-rate disciple.

- We shouldn't overlook that he was a deeply wounded man.
- Someone who had been hurt by the death of Jesus.
- We need to understand him.

The amount of the **violence** and **injustice** inflicted on Jesus was too much for him to come around and cheaply accept that he was alive.

- It is that hurt that drove him to a "**show me scepticism**"

- "*Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my fingers into the nail marks and put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe*" (Jn 20:27).

A lot of our people today who refuse to believe have hidden hurts or issues.

- ❖ We need to understand them and be slow to attach labels.

Thomas was not a second-rate disciple because once he had encountered the Risen Christ he made such a proclamation of faith that none of the disciples ever made: '*My Lord, and My God*'

Historians tell us that the emperor Domitian later gave himself the title, '*Dominus et Deus*' = Lord and God

Thomas is a point of reference undermining the imperial claim, showing that Jesus is the true Lord and God..

- b) The other assumption we can be led into with the designation "*Doubting Thomas*" is that people who refuse loyalty to Group-Faith are necessarily **evil** or **bad** people.

On the contrary Thomas was **not being arrogant** but **honest** and honesty is more important than giving in to 'group-think' or 'group loyalty.'

Even if, as per his words, he conditioned his belief on physically inspecting the risen Christ, the Gospel does not say that when given the opportunity Thomas actually probed the nail marks or put his hand in Jesus's side as depicted by so many famous paintings.

Beautiful as they are these paintings are a misrepresentation of Thomas.

CONCLUSION

Finally, I find it interesting that in the end Jesus does not correct Thomas with **developed arguments** or a **theological lesson**.

- ❖ Jesus simply shows his wounds – depicting what he had gone through – to answer the non-creed of Thomas.

Bl. Paul VI noted that our contemporary world cherishes **witnesses** over **teachers**.

- ❖ For us as well, we are not going to win the 'non-creeds' of our age with the persuasion of our teachings but with what they see us go through.
- ❖ Something of our personal life can enable someone to say: ***My Lord and my God!***