

Sunday, April 11, 2021, the Second Sunday of Easter (Year B)  
Blind Faith

**John 20:19-31**

<sup>19</sup>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." <sup>20</sup>After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup>Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." <sup>22</sup>When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup>If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

<sup>24</sup>But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup>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."

<sup>26</sup>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." <sup>27</sup>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." <sup>28</sup>Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" <sup>29</sup>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."

<sup>30</sup>Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. <sup>31</sup>But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

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Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God**

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I have a soft spot in my heart for Thomas, doubting Thomas. He is the occasion for answering some important questions. The Bible can be maddening when it doesn't answer our questions. It only answers the questions they asked back then. While these are important and very helpful we can't make them ask what we want to know. Did Jesus have a favorite color? Was he right or left handed? Did Adam have a belly button? Without these questions being asked back then we are faced with doubt, but we aren't supposed to doubt; are we? Well, thank you Thomas whose doubts led to some important answers. When Jesus came back from the dead he was not an ethereal ghost he was a physical presence. His resurrect body did not forget his treatment at the hands of those intent on making him suffer. The automatic gone one minute here the next

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wasn't the result of a clever use of mirrors. Finally, he was really back, not just imagined to be back.

People often think that questioning is a sign of disloyalty. They whistle in the dark as if walking through a graveyard afraid to see something disturbing. I have news for us all. Our God is a very disturbing God. Belief is out in front for sure. To believe in God is the first step in understanding. If you don't believe there's nothing to question, no relationship to explore. Once we embrace the great "I Am" the job of questioning and wrestling and arguing with God has begun. To the name "I Am" we are right to ask, "Who are you?"

In each stage of life the question should arise, "Who are you?" because the answer will change as we mature and our understanding deepens. Sadly many Christian communities are threatened by that question. Their response is, "God is who I say God is." Any further question is discouraged. Many of you have come from other Christian communities to find a home here. Some of you moved and found the kind of nurture you thought you left behind. Others have outgrown communities that can no longer journey with you. Faith does not ask the question, "does God exist?" Faith asks, "what is God like?" Some confuse the two and produce a commitment to blind faith that will not grow and has no room for "others." They are saying, "Those who do not believe in what I think God is do not believe in God."

As long as you agree with the limited definition your place in the community is assured. I suspect that for many, especially question filled young people, this cut off has made them reject the church. I've said it before, the idea that younger folks don't come to church because church is boring amuses me because church has always been

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boring, but church has had enough good people not to send me away because of unsettling questions or faith experience that don't quite fit the orthodoxy of the day. By the way, today's heresy often becomes orthodoxy in a generation or two.

Thomas is a hero of mine because he asked questions. Jesus' answers give some shape to God's nature that came about because Thomas asked.

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