

Blessing Instead of Shaming

This Week's Readings at Mass

- Acts 2:42-47 • Communal life
- 1 Peter 1:3-9 • Thanksgiving
- John 20:19-31 • Appearance to the disciples; Thomas

The first reading from the Acts of the Apostles tells the story of the joyous, loving, and radical community that formed among believers after Jesus' resurrection. Their lives of love, generosity, and justice were so inspiring that they quickly attracted others to them. Their example of Christian community has inspired many others down through the ages who want to tap into that experience of unity and joy based on their faith in Jesus. If they could come together to lead such meaningful and fulfilling lives, can't we?

This Gospel reading, often called the "Doubting Thomas" story is an example of a common phenomenon that we still wonder about today. How is it that some people come to faith in Jesus/God so easily, while for others it is a struggle that requires some sort of "proof"? There is no good answer to this question, but according to this story, the experience isn't new.

The disciples who were present when Jesus appeared among them for the first time rejoice and receive the peace he offers as soon as he shows himself to them.

While they may have been surprised, a bit afraid, and confused at first, they move quickly to accept his presence and are eager to spread the news of his resurrection. On the other hand, Thomas—like many of us—wants proof, and he is not shy about laying out the specifics of what he needs to see before he will believe.

When Jesus appears to him in person a week later, he obliges and shows Thomas what he needs to believe. Jesus does not criticize Thomas for his doubts or



“Peace be with you.
...Do not be unbelieving, but believe.”

Sheepish Question:
How would you describe the peace you seek through your belief in Jesus?

ridicule him for wanting proof. Jesus doesn't belittle doubters. He *wants* them to believe, but he will not force it. Jesus knows that he will not walk the earth for much longer, and he anticipates that many will have to come to believe in him without ever seeing him. Jesus blesses those people (us included!) “Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed,” without shaming those like Thomas who just can't come to belief so easily.

Questions of the Week

- 1 Do you think of yourself more like Thomas or the other disciples in terms of how easily you lean toward belief in God's work?
- 2 Is there an area of your life now in which God might be inviting you to be more trusting?

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