

2nd Sunday of Easter Sunday of Divine Mercy
Deacon John Chavez Sermon
Acts 2:42-47; 1 Peter 1:3-9, Gospel John 20:19-31

The Father knocks at my door, seeking a home for his Son:

- Rent is cheap, I say.
- *I don't want to rent, I want to buy, says God.*
- I'm not sure I want to sell, but you might come in and look around.
- *I think I will, says God.*
- I might let you have a room or two.
- *I like it, says God. I'll take the two. You might decide to give me more some day. I can wait, says God.*
- I'd like to give you more, but it's a bit difficult, I need some space for me.
- *I know, says God, but I'll wait. I like what I see.*
- Hm, may I can let you have another room. I don't really need that much.
- *Thanks, says God. I'll take it. I like what I see*
- I'd like to give you the whole house but I'm not sure –
- *Think on it, says God. I wouldn't put you out. Your house would be mine and my son would live in it. You'd have more space than you've ever had before.*
- I don't understand at all.
- *I know, says God. but I can't tell you all about that. You'll have to discover it for yourself. That can only happen if you let him have the whole house.*
- A bit risky, I say.
- *Yes, says God, but try me.*
- I'm not sure – I'll let you know.
- *I can wait, says God. I like what I see.*

God likes what he sees. // God likes what he sees – even when we doubt.

Today's Gospel is the same in each of the three yearly cycles, a fact that underlines its significance. It proclaims that the risen Christ, is often in our midst in ways that we do not expect.

Two resurrection appearances form a kind of diptych – imagine, for example, two wooden tablets hinged together. The hinge that connects them is the person of Thomas. Absent for the first event, he is the central character of the second. His absence is curious, since on both occasions the doors of the room where the disciples were gathered were securely locked for fear of those who opposed Jesus. Why had Thomas not gathered with the rest of the disciples? Was he not afraid? Or was he too afraid to be associated with them? The reason for his absence is never given. However, it does provide an occasion for another encounter with the risen Lord and the demonstrations of faith that arises.

Thomas represents the second generation of Christians, those who are called to believe on the testimony of others. The faith required of him is in a way more demanding than that required of those who actually encountered the risen Lord. Viewed in this way, his doubt is understandable. While we may judge Thomas harshly for his doubt, Jesus does not. Instead, he invites Thomas to touch him, an invitation not extended earlier to the other disciples. The story does not say Thomas actually touched the wounds, only that he cried out in faith: “My Lord and my God.” The other disciples recognized that the one in their midst was their Lord. Thomas declared that the risen Lord was God, a profession of faith that outstrips the others.

Thomas should be remembered *not* because he was absent or because he doubted but because, like us, he was called to believe on the word of others. And like Thomas, we know how difficult that is. Most of us are like Thomas, who looked for some tangible evidence of the resurrection. We may not be as straightforward in our demands as he was, but are frequently just as determined as Thomas. Sometimes, we do not find it any easier to live by faith than he did. We

are no more willing to listen to the good news that comes from others than he was. However, as stubborn as he first appeared, he was open to the power of the resurrection, and he ultimately entered into the depths of its mystery. Thomas *is* the model of those who come to the sacred mysteries through the words of others.

We search for tangible proof of the resurrection, and we are told to live by faith. Remarkably, when we do live by faith, we discover tangible proof. Much like the person in the opening story – the individual was searching for tangible proof of how, if they gave all their rooms for the Son, that they would have more room than ever before. How could that be? It's the same as when we live by faith, we get the proof we seek.

The proof we seek is in the Christian community itself. Here we find people devoted to the teaching of the apostles, living a communal life, breaking bread together, praying together. Because we are a microcosm of the Universal Church – it is here we find people sharing their possessions with others and living in peace. Here we find people dedicating their lives to the work of reconciliation of families, among races and nations. Here we find people involved in works of justice as well as charity. Here we find people feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the imprisoned, sheltering the homeless, visiting the sick, comforting those in sorrow. Here we find people devoted to issues of life and health and well-being. These are all tangible proofs of the resurrection.

Jesus extends his wounded hands to us as he did to Thomas, and we the community are invited to touch his wounds as we touch the wounds of our world. Today these wounds can be seen in the victims of war or racial violence, in those suffering devastating illness, in those people excluded from society, in the vulnerable who are abused, in the disadvantaged of those who are exploited. I've been blessed to be able to touch the wounds of the imprisoned young men I work closely with. And this week their wounds, our wounds have run deep. When they suffer, I suffer with them. God has given them to me so that I can experience

concrete examples of the resurrection. However, for all of us - the tangible proof of the resurrection can be seen in the ways our community reaches out to others in care and support. How blessed are we?

What better ways do we have to extend to others than by extending our hands out to others? Whose wounds is God asking us to touch? Our woundedness take us to God's Divine Mercy. The loving arms of Christ are always extended to us in invitation, waiting for us to ask Christ for his loving mercy and to be willing to accept that mercy. We have a beautiful reminder of that image in our narthex. When we take the time to stop and look at that painting let us realize that those loving arms are wanting and waiting for us to give all of who we are to God.

God is seeking a home for his Son in each one of us. Let's unlock our interior doors and let the Son occupy all of our rooms. Each doubt that we let go of opens up one more room for the Son. Mercifully God is patient with each of us because God likes what he sees. God likes what he sees...