

Great (day – evening)

Welcome to guests here to celebrate 1st Communion. (Makes me a bit nervous)

Today's Gospel is one we are familiar with. So much so that the idiom "Doubting Thomas" has been used to describe anyone who refuses to believe, and this applies to things of both God and man.

As I've probably said before, I think Thomas gets a bad rap. I think, to his credit, he was at least entirely honest.

What he doubted, the bodily resurrection of Jesus was thought to be impossible before He appeared to the other disciples. People simply did not walk away from crucifixion and they certainly did not rise from the dead.

Remember that the women who saw the empty tomb and the disciples who ran to the empty tomb did not understand why or how the tomb became empty. They were huddled in a locked room in fear, and up until Jesus appeared to them that Easter evening, all doubted the resurrection. Thomas gave voice to what every apostle might have said just two seconds before Jesus actually appeared. So I tend to cut Thomas some slack.

And when Jesus appeared the following week, Thomas proclaims Jesus as Lord and God. This event is the, confession of Thomas, acts as the great exclamation point to the whole of John's Gospel!

And what is it that Jesus brings to the Apostles? "Peace, mercy and faith"

"Peace be with you, "whose sins you forgive are forgiven" "Blessed are those who believe"

This year we celebrate first communion on a special day in the Church – Divine Mercy Sunday. This Feast of Divine Mercy is pretty new to the Church. It was put on the calendar in the year 2000 by Blessed Pope John Paul II on the occasion of the canonization of St. Sr. Faustina, a simple Polish nun and visionary who wrote of Gods revelations of the depths of His mercy. This day is meant to remind us of God's mercy, and frankly, we need that reminder.

There are some here today who are struggling with belief, and are searching for answers. I say to you, the answers will come. There are people here today that need to be set at peace, to them I say, peace will come.

But when it comes to the **mercy** of God, most of us can be placed in the role of Thomas. We believe in God, we have been given moments or periods of peace. Where we all occasionally falter and doubt is with God's mercy. We struggle with the depths of our sins. We often see ourselves as unforgivable. What we have done is too much, too sinful to be forgiven. And I get that, I sometimes fall into the same pattern of my favorite sins and after awhile I start to see them as unforgivable. I know this is the Devil's lie, but I still fall for it, and most all of us do the same.

But if we stop to really look at the history of our salvation from Adam's sin to the this moment in gathering us here, everything God has done have been acts of mercy, most especially in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus which is recalled, remembered and re-presented here.

Sr. Faustina elaborated on what was already revealed in scripture – that God is merciful, and that mercy is an action of love. The teachings of Jesus, His suffering and Death were actions of obedience to the Father, out of love to bring mercy. His resurrection from the dead is the consummate act of mercy. Without it death wins and we have no real reason for hope. In His love and mercy, God provided, PROVIDES that hope.

The Eucharist is a Sacrament of Mercy. To receive the Body and Blood of Jesus is to grow in confidence of the Mercy of God. That Jesus would entrust to us so great a gift should bring us to trust in Him and in His tender mercies.

The message of mercy is that God loves us — all of us — no matter how great our sins. He wants us to recognize that His mercy is greater than our sins, so that we will call upon Him with trust, receive His mercy, and let it flow through us to others. Thus, all will come to share His joy and His mercy.

It is a message we can call to mind simply by remembering A-B-C.

A — Ask for His Mercy. God wants us to approach Him in prayer constantly, repenting of our sins and asking Him to pour His mercy out upon us and upon the whole world.

B — Be merciful. . We will soon pray together “forgive us our trespasses and we forgive others.” God wants us to extend His love and forgiveness to others just as He does to us

C — Completely trust in Jesus. God wants us to know that the graces of His mercy are dependent upon our trust. The more we trust in Jesus, the more we will receive.

Whether today will be your first Communion or your thousandth, strive to believe and to accept that God loves you. Trust in the love of Jesus. Seek forgiveness and Mercy in prayer and by frequent celebration of the Sacrament of Confession and accept the tender love and mercies of this Sacrament we receive at this altar today.