

Most people title the story that we just read from the Gospel of John as “Doubting Thomas”. But I think we miss the point of what is happening throughout the story. It’s not about Thomas’s doubt and skepticism, but it’s about the abundant grace of Jesus who meets Thomas’s demands point by point in order to move him to faith. The Risen Lord meets Thomas where he is in his faith walk without judgement.

When Jesus appeared to the disciples in the locked room, He said, ‘Peace be with you’ and right after this he showed them his hands and his side.

It was then that they recognized Him as the Lord. Then, He breathes the life and power of the Holy Spirit on them and gives the commission to go out into the world and continue His work of forgiveness, mercy, acceptance and love.

They had the physical proof that Thomas asks for later in the story; the proof that Mary Magdalene had experienced in the garden outside the tomb. Thomas wants that firsthand experience of Jesus’ presence.

And a week later Jesus appears again through shut doors and offers Thomas the peace that He had given the others.

He offers to Thomas precisely what he had asked for and what the others were given before. But Thomas doesn't touch the wounds of Jesus, Thomas drops to his knees and proclaims, "My Lord and my God".

This is the most powerful confession of Jesus' identity in the Gospel, Thomas sees God fully revealed in Jesus and is the first to proclaim it.

The appearance to the disciples in the locked room and the appearance to Thomas a week later that occur on the "first day of the week" reminds us of the special presence of Christ with us on our day of worship. Here in the midst of the community gathered for both prayer and a meal we celebrate the Eucharist as we come together to profess Jesus as our Lord and our God.

Through this special time of listening to God's word and receiving Him in Holy Communion, we are fed and nourished and then sent out into the world to bring others to the forgiveness, mercy, acceptance and love of Christ just as Jesus did the apostles.

Just as He came back a week later for Thomas, Jesus keeps coming back week after week among his gathered disciples, among us and will continue to come in the word, the water, the

bread, and the wine as long as our hearts are open to receive Him.

Jesus continues to breathe His peace on us and to empower us with the breath of the Holy Spirit to proclaim as Thomas did, 'My Lord and my God'.

In a few moments we will welcome Layla, Cece and JoJo into the family of God through the Sacrament of Baptism. At that time, we will renew our own baptismal promises. When we answer the part where it says, "Will you continue in the apostles teaching', the breaking of the bread and the prayers?", this is what we are talking about.

Right here, right now, we are following the teachings of Jesus that He taught His apostles and they have passed on to us. We will promise to support these little girls in their life in Christ.

Today as we welcome Layla, Cece and Jojo into the family of God and at every baptism we pass on the teachings of Jesus. We stand as witnesses of the most powerful love in the world. The love that surpasses all understanding; the love that sustains our very lives; the love of a God who will be with us and hold us, no matter how many times we run from Him or how far we go. He is ever faithful and will not fail us. And with that knowledge of the

sustaining love of Christ we go out into the world sharing this beautiful gift.

On this Lord's Day, as we come together to proclaim the Living One, the First and the Last, the Alpha and the Omega, who was dead, but now is alive forever; let us open our hearts to the Spirit Jesus breathes on us and ask the Lord to help us to believe ever more fervently and to share the Spirit's new life of forgiveness, love and peace. Amen.