

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.

\ When evening had come... so Sunday evening after the Resurrection , a week ago , Christ appeared to his apostles, who saw Him die, and He gives them the Holy Spirit. He does not appear to them as a spirit, but in a human body. That was the body He had before His crucifixion, but with His Resurrection that body was changed, transformed. He had a body like Adam and Eve had a body before the Fall. The wounds on that body have healed but the scars are still visible. The apostles are stunned.

Apostle Thomas was not there and so he does not believe it. He has not seen it himself and therefore he cannot believe it. Only if he can perceive it with his own senses will he believe it. Thomas was not so different from the other apostles, only he was not present when Christ appeared and the others were. He reacts human ; “Only when I see it with my own eyes, then I believe it”. After spending years with Christ, he trusts only his own perception. And in that he reflects man, he reflects us. For we too, after spending years in church, usually only trust our own eyes, our own perceptions and our own reasoning.

What makes us believe without seeing it? The Holy Spirit . It exposes, revives, what is already present deep within us. And that is the knowledge of God , the knowing that God is there . The Holy Spirit will give us a different kind of perception that allows us to believe without having seen it with our bodily eyes. At a college lecture on orthodoxy by Fr. Serafim Rose, the audience commented that the way he talked about faith makes you think you need an extra sense to understand God and his answer was; "That's right, that sense is a loving heart."

But what does Christ do after Thomas' doubting? He appears again and makes Thomas feel and see that it really is Him. Not a spirit appearance but Christ on earth in a body, a transformed body. A supernatural body, but indeed a body of flesh and blood. And Thomas is convinced ; it is indeed the Lord! Then Christ says: Blessed are they that see not, and yet believe. Believing without having seen it is of a different order, that makes us rise above ourselves, that brings the Kingdom of Heaven.

Then Christ says: As the Father has sent me, so I send you. How did the Father send Christ? By the Virgin Mary He was born. From a pure heart, a pure soul comes Christ. Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. So the Father sent Christ. The new life of the disciples must come from a pure heart. Christ does not reject anyone who struggles to gain this, who struggles to believe but still clings to physical perception, like Thomas, but truly blessed will we be if we can let go of that physical perception. That is only possible with a pure heart, a heart that only wants Christ.

There is another aspect of this Gospel reading that I would like to highlight. Christ says to His disciples: “Receive the Holy Ghost, the sins which Thou forgivest which are forgiven.” With this He gives us confession. Every sin leaves a wound on the soul. But through confession and the associated forgiveness, that wound has been healed. The wound has healed but the scar remains as was the case with the body of Christ. Not really being able to believe that healing because the scar is still there is like scratching that wound that makes it open again. The healing of the wound takes place through the Holy Spirit. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.the