

WORD FOR SUNDAY



Fr. Albert Shamon

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Jn. 10:19-31. (R1) Acts 2:42-47. (R2) 1 Pt. 1:3-9.

Sunday's readings focus on faith (believing in Christ) and the joy that comes from believing. "Blest are they who have not seen and have believed." (R3) "Those who believed with exultant and sincere hearts took their meals in common..." (R1) "Without seeing, you now believe in him, and rejoice with inexpressible joy." (R2)

The gospel story is of Thomas, much maligned with the sobriquet of "The Doubter," who journeyed from doubt to the certainty and joy of faith.

Thomas appears three times in the gospel. Each time, he betrays a touch of the pessimistic. When news of Lazarus's death came to Jesus, our Lord decided to go to Bethany. The disciples remonstrated. Twice the Jews had sought to kill Him. To go now would be suicidal. As the disciples wavered about following Him, Thomas courageously rallied them with "Let us go along"; but his gloom showed itself, "to die with him." (Jn 11:16) Thomas conjured up the worst.

After the Last Supper, our Lord talked about leaving the disciples — "You know the way that leads where I go." Thomas was befuddled; all this talk about going somewhere bewildered him. He blurted out, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?"

"I am the way," explained Jesus. (Jn. 14:4-6)

If the possibility of Jesus' death had plunged poor Thomas into despondency,

we can well imagine what Jesus' actual death did to him. All he could think of was the dead body of Jesus; he talked of nothing else but the nail prints, the wounded side. Only by these would he recognize the Lord — not by his flowing hair and flashing eyes.

As a noble animal, wounded, crawls to some hidden spot to nurse its hurt alone, so Thomas wanted to be alone in his misery. So he absented himself from his friends, and missed Christ.

The following week Thomas was with his friends. Perhaps he only half doubted now, after all their testimonies about having seen the Lord. The Lord appeared under the exact same circumstances as the week before — through closed doors. And He said to Thomas the words, "Peace be with you." Speaking on, He used the very words Thomas had uttered to his friends. Jesus had not been visibly present then. No one had reported these words to Him. Yet he knew all that Thomas had said. He had heard everything. This omniscience astounded Thomas. It was proof enough. He believed — "My Lord and my God."

Glorious as was Thomas's confession, our Lord promised a greater blessedness to those whose belief did not rest on sight. What a consolation to us! The heart of our faith is the Holy Eucharist, which celebrates an unseen presence, a hidden God, a mystery of faith.

In the Old Testament, when the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies, he had little bells on his robes. (Lev. 28:33-35) The people couldn't see him, but they could hear the tinkling of the bells as he prayed for them.

At Mass, the bell tinkles at the consecration. The tongues of the bells tell us that our High Priest is truly present on our altars, though hidden. He is there to bring our prayers and sacrifices into the true Holy of Holies, the right hand of the Father, and to bring back from there that which makes us doubly blest — His spirit of love and His sacrament of love.



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For the initial listing of a Catholic charismatic prayer group, or for a subsequent change, persons are

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