

2nd Sun. of Easter (B)
St. Athanasius and St. Francis Parishes
April 11, 12, 2015

(First Communion Sunday)

Today we have two very visual Scriptures: the one of the early Christian Community as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles reading, and the gospel account of Thomas needing some physical proof of Jesus resurrection. Of these two, the one about Thomas is the one that is most visual and memorable.

Today's second Scripture can also be considered visual in the sense that it speaks of blood and water, but it is actually a highly theological text. But then, what else can we expect from St. John? Essentially it teaches us that if we believe Jesus is the Christ, we are then ourselves begotten of God, just as Jesus is.

Because today is First Communion Sunday it seems easiest to spend just a bit of time with the gospel text ... the wonderful story of how Thomas came to believe that Jesus was risen, and not only that, but also how Thomas came to believe that Jesus was actually present to him in the room with all the other disciples gathered with him. Jesus came there in order to help them believe. Jesus wanted them all to know that even though He had died, that he was not gone from them.

(Here have children come forward and be seated)

Thomas found it very hard to believe that Jesus was risen, and especially that the other disciples had seen Jesus. But then maybe Thomas was mostly finding it hard to believe because he was hearing about it only from the other disciples. Remember that the first time Jesus came to them in their midst, Thomas was not present with them. So, he wasn't there when Jesus came. Maybe sometimes you find it hard to believe something that a friend tells you. Maybe you think they are kidding him, or playing a trick on you.

Did Thomas think they were kidding him?

Did Thomas think that they were trying to trick him?

Thomas said he needed to see for himself, that he even needed to put his fingers in Jesus' hand wounds, and put his hand into Jesus' side. Thomas said he 'needed to see in order to believe' that Jesus was alive.

So now children, let's see how this story of Thomas compares to what you are doing today, and what is being asked of you today at your First Holy Communion. Thomas said he needed to see, and even to touch. What you see here today and even touch looks like bread and wine. Yet what you are asked to believe is that what you see and touch, and then receive, is far more than what you see. You are asked to believe that what you receive is the Body and the Blood of Jesus. I cannot show you this. I can only ask you to believe. But I think I can help you believe. I think I can help you know in your young hearts, that even when you see bread and wine, it is more than that that it

is the Body and Blood of Jesus. I will try to help you know this through a song a song that I hope can help you believe. You know the song; actually, we have sung it together before. But I think it really fits today when we are asking you to believe something very deep and mysterious. You see, in order to believe that the bread and wine is really not bread and wine, but the Body and Blood of Jesus, you need the help of Jesus and others to do that. You need Jesus himself to open your eyes, and your ears, and your hearts. You probably now can even guess the song: Open My Eyes, Lord.

Let's read it together

Now can we even sing it together and maybe then your families can join us.

You need to really want this faith. You need to really want this openness to Jesus. I cannot just give it to you. But if you ask sincerely through this song and praying to Jesus, he will give you this openness. He will help you believe. He did this for Thomas, and he will do this for you. I know this, because Jesus loves you, and because Jesus wants very much to be part of your life. He wants to be your food and your drink.

And then maybe today when you receive your First Holy Communion you can say just as Thomas did, "My Lord and My God".

(send children back to their places)

Maybe people can sing the song again as children return to their pews.