

EASTER: A TIME TO REJOICE

Second Sunday of Easter

March 30, 2008

Acts 2:14a, 22-32

Psalm 16

1 Peter 1:3-9

John 20:19-31

Moving Beyond Doubt

The incredulity of Thomas the Twin (John 20:24, 25) always seems pretty amazing to me. Thomas was one of the twelve disciples of Jesus. He had been present during Jesus' ministry, had listened to his sermons, seen his anger, witnessed his miracles, and above all, heard his prophesies.

Just a week earlier he had seen Jesus submit to God's will, making himself a sacrificial lamb, taking on the sins of the world through his torture, humiliation, and death. Finally, Thomas must have heard of the empty tomb, of Jesus' triumph over death itself, and of Jesus' appearance to Mary Magdalene (John 20:14-18). Thomas had seen and heard of prophesies fulfilled, yet he still did not believe.

Jesus had said, "In a little while you will not see me any more, and then a little while later you will see me," (John 16:16, *GNT*). From our perspective, we cannot understand why, having been witness to all that he had seen and heard, Thomas would be so unconvinced that Jesus had done what he promised he would do.

While Thomas had firsthand experience of Jesus' ministry, he also experienced the horror of the Passion. By Saturday morning, the leader of the movement was dead and the disciples were in hiding, in fear of the authorities for having been a part of that movement. The mighty were still mighty and life was back to business as usual.

Is Thomas really that different from us, though? Just one week ago we were experiencing the joy of Easter. We were certain of our salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is now a week later, just as it was for Thomas, and we are experiencing what many churches refer to as "low Sunday." Churches are less crowded and spirits seem to be deflated from last week's joy after a week of business as usual. We seem to be crying out, "Show me the wounds and let me touch them. Then I will believe."

We are all "Doubting Thomases" at some point or another. Whether it is on "low Sunday" or during a low point in our lives, we demand physical evidence to justify our Easter celebration. Thomas' story justifies our celebration. Through it and our faith we,

too, see the wounds and touch them, and are assured of God's love. And Jesus says, "How happy are those who believe without seeing me!" (John 20:29b, *GNT*)

This week's Reflection was prepared by James Harvey, MA, a graduate of Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, IL who serves as Lay Leader at the Park Slope United Methodist Church in Brooklyn, NY.

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This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: Jordan –

With thanks to God for the 40 book fairs held over the past two years, and with prayers for opportunities to serve all the churches, and for reaching young people, expatriate laborers, and servants with the Word of God, and with prayers for the 12th Amman International Book Fair to be held in September; **Gulf States** – With thanks to God for the development of Bible work in Qatar and for the development of the Arabic Scripture program in Kuwait and other Gulf countries, and with prayers for the development of the Bible Center in the Catholic church compound in Qatar and for a Bible Center in Abu Dhabi; **Iraq** – With thanks to God for his protection and that Bible work continues despite the indescribably difficult situation, and with thanks to God for the publication of new Scripture Portions in Kurdish Surani for northern Kurdistan, which has paved the way for the official registration of the Bible Society there, and with prayers for the safety of Christians and the Church's ministry, and for special relief and Scripture programs in schools, churches, and villages.

Activity Corner: "Show of Hands"

Supplies needed: Bible; 8-1/2" x 11" construction paper (assorted colors); pens or pencils; scissors.

Fold a sheet of construction paper in half so that it measures 8-1/2" x 5-1/2" and trace your hand, keeping your wrist against the fold. Cut out the hand, keeping the part against the fold intact. On the front, write, "Stop doubting and believe." Inside, on the left-hand side, list things that you may be worried or concerned about or struggling with; on the right-hand side, write a prayer, asking for God's guidance and help. Keep your "folded hands" with your Bible, and offer your prayer each day throughout the week. Conclude your devotion time by reading Psalm 16. At the end of the week, turn to the back side of your folded hands, and list the ways you believe God has helped you and answered your prayers.