



April 27, 2025

The Second Sunday of Easter/Divine Mercy

Have you come to believe because you have seen me? John 20:29



Dear Friends;

Christ is risen!

Tomáš Halík is a priest, theologian, philosopher, author, and teaches sociology at the University of Prague in the Czech Republic. In his book *The Afternoon of Christianity, the Courage to Change*, Halík speaks about the dynamics of faith and lack of faith. He writes,

“Both faith and lack of faith reside in a much deeper dimension of the human person than the conscious and rational realm; they reside in the preconscious and unconscious structures of people’s mental lives...Belief and unbelief are not “objective realities” existing independently of the observer...the dialogue between belief and unbelief does not take place between two strictly separate groups but within the minds and hearts of individual people...”

What he is saying is that faith and unbelief are part of an internal dialogue. The change that the Gospel demands is not just a change of perspective, it is a new way of seeing. It is waking up in a new place and beginning a journey from a different starting point. With that new starting point comes questions. Faith is not about having all the answers but trusting in a new relationship with myself and the “Other” we name God.

Doubt can play an important role in our growth in faith. In this way the Apostle Thomas is an important mentor. Doubts can push us to a deeper faith. The faith that we had as a child of seven years old will not be appropriate when we are seventy. Today when we ask the question “*Do you believe or not in God?*” many people feel the need to add a “*but.*” For example, I would answer, “*I do—but maybe not in the God you have in mind.*”

I once had a conversation with someone who told me that he was an atheist and does not believe in God. I said, “*Tell me what you don’t believe in.*” The man responded, “*I don’t believe that there is an old, bearded man in the sky controlling everything.*” I told him, “*I don’t believe in that either, maybe I am an atheist too?*” There is the “*unbelief of believers*” where someone no longer holds onto certain ways of thinking of faith and God. There can be “*the belief of unbelievers*” (not that we are disrespecting their own self-understanding). But we can speak honestly of those seeking truth who conclude they have no belief.

In the Gospel of John, Thomas stands out among the disciples as a strong man willing to go with Jesus back into the hostile territory of Judea, even if it means that he will have to die with him (Jn 11:7). At the Last Supper, Thomas admits to a lack of understanding about the destiny of Jesus (Jn 14:5). He appears to join with the other disciples who abandon Jesus when they fled from the garden (Mark 14:59).

Today, Thomas exhibits a healthy skepticism when the other disciples tell him they saw the Risen Lord. In a culture where deception and lying are prevalent life strategies, Thomas is rightfully doubtful. Thomas, like each of us, is a complex character. He teaches us that doubt can open the door to a richer understanding of our faith. Doubt is a form of questioning. Faith is learning to live with questions. Faith is trusting in the one who calls us, even with our questions. The Risen Christ moves the heart of Thomas, and ours, to trust in the experience of God’s infinite love.

Peace,

Fr Ron

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