

Reflection April 6, 2013 by Rosemary Sherman, RSM on the Gospel of John 20:19-31

The call to believe is a hard one to follow. The call to not fear is even harder. The Gospel we just heard proves this in many ways. I always felt for Thomas in this reading because he has been stereotyped as being a doubter when in fact, in my mind, he was an active listener and a person of deep faith.

You see, I think Thomas needed not just the peace Jesus offered three times in this reading, but also space. Space away from the other disciples to just be and to reflect on all that happened. He needed a Holy Saturday if you will – time away from the community in order to return to the community. And it was in this time away that he could more clearly listen to his heart and begin to grasp all that had happened.

I suspect Thomas felt like peace was nowhere, but with space realized peace was now here. And if you look at the word nowhere, with a tiny space between the w and the h, you get now here. I believe Thomas realized there is no competition in the spiritual realm and that faith and forgiveness are graces of the heart, rich gifts from God and where we find the wonder of God. Thomas realized that forgiveness can happen at a distance, not just face to face.

The currency of transformation is seen in the small change. And when Thomas returned to the others, he was a changed person. **He believed, felt forgiven** and did not feel the need to ask for forgiveness but rather, he felt the need to witness to his faith. He had already been touched by God's Divine mercy.

Apparently, the others still were afraid and perhaps doubting since they were still in a locked room. Yet, as soon as Jesus appeared this second time, Thomas was ready to meet Jesus and to proclaim his faith: "my Lord and my God." You know, when I was a little girl, that phrase was what I was taught to say silently in my heart at the Consecration at Mass!

As witnesses today, that is our call as well – to be people of faith, to not be afraid and to follow the call to proclaim our Faith in simple words and acts throughout our day. Life is full of hard things, yet we know in our hearts that it is the hard things that draw us to God and call us forth into new life. We also know that in receiving God's Divine mercy, we find freedom and our faults miraculously gone like the morning mist.

We all have "Thomas moments" – moments when we're full of doubt and when we fear what lies ahead. Moments when we wonder where God is in our lives.

Example. My first day in First Grade.

Peace given and shared is a gift we all can bring to those we visit, care for and encounter on a daily basis. Extending that hand of friendship and hope might be the greatest way we, too, can in our own way extend God's mercy and say "peace be with you" to all we meet.