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## **Meditations: Sunday of the Second Week of Easter (Year B)**

Some reflections that can guide our prayer on this Second Sunday of Easter, which is also called Divine Mercy Sunday. The topics are: Thomas wants to touch Jesus' wounds; God's mercy enkindles our faith; the

wounds of the Risen Christ are a proof of his love.

- Thomas wants to touch Jesus' wounds
- God's mercy rekindles our faith
- The wounds of the Risen Christ lead us to his Love

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THE GOSPEL for today's Mass, after recounting the Risen Lord's first appearance to the disciples, focuses on the figure of the apostle Thomas, who wasn't present there. When the others, overflowing with joy, tell him that they have seen our Lord, Thomas refuses to believe them. Neither the insistence of the other ten apostles, nor the testimony of the holy women, nor the account of what happened to the two disciples at Emmaus, can make him change his

mind. Indeed, he reaffirms his disbelief: “Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe” (*Jn 20:25*).

We can imagine the feelings that warred in Thomas’s heart. He was a determined, generous man who sincerely loved our Lord. When Jesus decided to go to Bethany to raise Lazarus, even though He risked being captured and condemned to death, Thomas exhorted the other apostles: “Let us also go and die with him” (*Jn 11:16*). At the Last Supper, when Jesus told the disciples about the heaven that awaited them if they followed in his footsteps, Thomas said with great simplicity that he didn’t understand: “Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?” (*Jn 14:4-5*).

Thomas was happy alongside Jesus; he longed to follow Him and declared himself ready to share in his fate. But he had not fully understood all that his mission entailed. After Christ's death, he fell into a deep personal crisis. But his sincere desire to follow our Lord enabled his heart to welcome the light of faith. "Despite his lack of faith, we should be grateful to Thomas, because he was not content to hear from others that Jesus was alive, or merely to see him in the flesh. He wanted to see more deeply, to touch with his hand the Lord's wounds, the signs of his love. We need to see Jesus by 'touching his love.' Only thus can we go to the heart of the faith and, like the disciples, find peace and joy beyond all doubt."<sup>[1]</sup> —

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EIGHT DAYS later, Jesus appears to the disciples again. And this time Thomas is present. After the initial greeting, our Lord addresses him directly: “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side” (Jn 20:27). Thomas is filled with amazement, and his heart overflows with joy. He gives voice to “the most splendid profession of faith in the New Testament”: *my Lord and my God!* (Jn 20:28).<sup>[2]</sup> On this Divine Mercy Sunday, we contemplate how great is God’s mercy shown to Thomas and, in him, to each one of us. Jesus was eager to comfort, and in such a marvelous way, that disciple who, by not believing, had suffered so much.

Thomas feels understood. Our Lord’s words are like an embrace that frees him from the fear and insecurity that had led him to take refuge in disbelief. Deep in his heart, there had

always been an ember of hope, although Thomas had avoided enkindling it for fear of deceiving himself. Suddenly he realizes how worthy Jesus is of faith because of his deeds, his miracles, his teachings, his boundless love and mercy. He recalls his life alongside Christ and is amazed that he had understood so little.

After expressing his faith and adoration in such a brief yet beautiful way, “My Lord and my God,” Thomas accepts Jesus’ affectionate rebuke: “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe” (*Jn 20:29*). It is completely true, he thinks. And therefore he will dedicate the rest of his life – even to the point of martyrdom – to spreading the faith that has shone forth above all his doubts. Although other moments of uncertainty may come, Thomas has

learned to trust in God and to live in the light-filled darkness of faith.

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THY WOUNDS, as Thomas saw, I do not see; Yet Thee confess my Lord and God to be.”<sup>[3]</sup> We are asked to believe without having seen, without having shared in Jesus’ life on this earth, or having been direct witnesses of his resurrection. But our faith is the same as that professed by Thomas and the other apostles; and, like them, we are called to evangelize the whole world. To achieve this, we count on our Lord’s closeness and mercy. The same Christ who appeared to the unbelieving apostle and showed him his wounds offers Himself to us. “He is the author of the universe and of every creature, but he does not lord it over us. He begs us to give him a little love, as he silently shows us his wounds.”<sup>[4]</sup>

Jesus wanted to leave open the sources of his Life so that we might share in it. For Thomas and the other apostles, our Lord's wounds were a sign of his love. Seeing them did not fill them with grief, which would have been quite understandable, but rather with great peace. These marks of Christ – which He wanted to preserve – are a seal of his mercy. Contemplating them enables us to avoid, in advance, the doubts that could assail us when we see our own cold response. Jesus' wounds are proof that his love is steadfast and always open to us.

“The wounds of Jesus are a scandal for faith, but also the proof of faith. That is why on the body of the Risen Christ the wounds never pass away: they remain, for those wounds are the enduring sign of God's love for us. They are essential for believing in God. Not for believing that God exists, but for believing that God is

love, mercy and faithfulness. Saint Peter, quoting Isaiah, writes to Christians: ‘by his wounds you have been healed’ (1 Pet 2:24).”<sup>[5]</sup> Let us ask Mary Most Holy, “perfect icon of faith.”<sup>[6]</sup> to teach us to “touch” the wounds of Jesus as Thomas did.

<sup>[1]</sup> Francis, Homily, 8 April 2018.

<sup>[2]</sup> Benedict XVI, Audience, 27 September 2006.

<sup>[3]</sup> Eucharistic Hymn *Adore Te Devote*.

<sup>[4]</sup> St. Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 179.

<sup>[5]</sup> Francis, Homily, 27 April 2014.

<sup>[6]</sup> Francis, *Lumen fidei*, no. 58.

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