

Easter 2 - B - April 8, 2018

When does Easter end? When the last jelly bean is scarfed down? When the rabbit's chocolate ear is all that is left of the one pound chocolate mass of bunny? Or perhaps Easter ends when the last of the relatives or guests leave, and the normal household routine can be re-established?

Well, from a Church perspective, Easter is never really over. The Easter season officially ends on Pentecost. But really every Sunday celebration, every celebration of the Eucharist, recalls the celebration of Easter. Easter lives on in the Church because Easter celebrates Christ's victory of death, Christ's restoration of humanity to its original state of grace. Easter celebrates God's mercy towards us because this restoration of our humanity and of our relationship with God is remembered and celebrated. Easter calls for unparalleled joy.

But Easter joy can wane, for human emotions can radiate imperfection because we are imperfect. As imperfect beings we cannot fully grasp the power of the empty tomb. Perhaps one of the greatest enemies to our joy comes in the form of doubt. We can develop doubts about relationships, the future, God, and sometimes ourselves. We have a difficult time placing our trust in God's promises. We can find ourselves like Thomas in this week's Gospel. We sometimes feel we need proof of his promises or his presence in our lives.

In today's gospel we see two major themes joined with one another: our need for truth, our need for mercy.

Thomas has been and continues to be called "doubting Thomas," but, in a way, that is a misnomer. Thomas expresses his doubt to the other disciples, but he does not try to disprove the resurrection. Rather, he says that he wants to believe just as much as the other disciples, and, for that to happen, he needs to experience what they experienced: seeing Jesus, touching Jesus. True, his desire for belief manifests itself as doubt, but his doubt is really a pathway to full belief. After all, at the end, he expresses his faith with those simple words: "My Lord, and my God." Thomas doubted in order to become sure. Jesus' presence allowed Thomas to overcome his disbelief and led him to believe.

Sometimes, we might think, "wouldn't it be great if Jesus popped in every now and then so that we could be like Thomas and have all of our

doubts solved in one fell swoop!” Well, I doubt if that will happen, but what will happen and has happened for centuries is fulfilled in Jesus’s words: “Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.” Here, Jesus is talking about you and me.

Jesus continues to be present among us through the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, through his words, in our gatherings in his name. Jesus is also eminently with us in his mercy towards us, especially in the forgiveness of our sins as Jesus promised in today’s passage. God’s mercy is a means to resolve our doubts because in this mercy we experience the saving work of Jesus. The mercy given to us is, so to speak, a reenactment of God’s love towards us, another moment to experience Easter joy.

So, even though the jelly beans are gone, even though the tulips are only beginning to push up from an extended winter, and even though March mud month has extended into April, our loving God reaches out to us, removes our doubts, and extends his mercy. May you always be willing to accept his mercy and find true faith in him.