

2nd Sunday of Easter

Every Christmas and every Easter, like clockwork, the major weekly magazines feature Christian themes on the cover and as the lead article. Three fourths of the articles raise new theories that debunk traditional Christianity along with beautiful pictures, boxed quotes to catch the eye, attractive layout, and lots of coverage of new ideas, followed at the very end by the usual statement, "Of course, some noted theologians and scripture scholars disagree." But the impression by that time has been made and doubts sown.

There has been great todo about Pope Pius XII and the Jews, the gospels of Thomas and Mary Magdalene, and the enormous popularity of movies like *The DaVinci Code*."

People in general, and especially Catholics, are puzzled and confused, since so many of the books and TV fare are about the Catholic Church. Worse, most Catholics have not only read those books and articles, but many half believe them, just as they read and half believed the best selling *Left Behind* books. They all sound so plausible, who could contest them?

Many Catholics suffer from what has been called *The Thomas Syndrome*. It is what we find in today's gospel. "Thomas, called Didymus, one of the twelve was not with them when Jesus came." *The Thomas Syndrome* means the Thomas Absence. He was absent when the risen Jesus came and so did not get to see him or hear him or his message, and so, not knowing, he had no defense against false information or false rumors about Jesus, and so his faith wavered.

Sometimes we are absent Thomases, not seeing or hearing Jesus or knowing about him. We see and hear everyone else and have no way of knowing whether what they say is true or not. Not knowing the church traditions about Jesus, not knowing what his message or his mission was, we have no comeback, nothing to draw on to critique what is being said. We have, in short, no tools to measure the absurd or ridiculous, the false from the true.

Most Catholic's faith is at the sixth grade level. If we were mechanics using the tools and knowledge people had while working on the Model T trying to figure out the electronic hybrid car, we'd be lost. Imagine a doctor or teacher or tax assessor or lawyer working without having upgraded themselves! The point is that we seem to keep up with everything except our faith. We all know that Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie got engaged and Angelina got a diamond to match her hair.

Today's gospel is a wake up call. When was the last time we read a book or even a newspaper article about our faith? When was the last time we went to hear a talk by someone grounded in our faith? When as the last time we went on a retreat or even a night of reflection? When was the last time we listened to a religious tape while driving to work? These are the things which help us to know Jesus so that when he comes to us in any way we won't miss it. And let me assure you, Jesus is constantly knocking on our doors. When we learn, when we respond to Jesus we can say with Thomas "My Lord and my God."