



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

REGINA CAELI

Saint Peter's Square
Sunday, 16 April 2023

[Multimedia]

Dear brothers and sisters, *buongiorno!*

Today, Divine Mercy Sunday, the Gospel recounts two apparitions of the Risen Jesus to his disciples, and in particular, to Thomas, the “doubting Apostle” (cf. *Jn* 20:24-29).

In reality, Thomas is not the only one who struggles to believe. In fact, he represents all of us a little bit. Indeed, it is not always easy to believe, especially when, as in his case, one has suffered a tremendous disappointment. After a huge disappoint, it is difficult to believe. He had followed Jesus for years, running risks and enduring discomforts. But the Teacher was put on a cross like a criminal, and no one freed him. No one did anything! He is dead and everyone is afraid. How can he trust again? How can he trust the news saying He is alive? There was doubt inside him.

Thomas, however, shows that he is courageous. While the others are closed up inside the Upper Room out of fear, he goes out, running the risk that someone might recognize, report and arrest him. We could even think that, with his courage, he would have deserved more than the others to meet the Risen Lord. Instead, precisely because he is away, Thomas is not there when Jesus appears to the disciples for the first time, on Easter evening, thus missing that opportunity. He had distanced himself from the community. How could he get [the opportunity] back? Only by going back to the others, returning there, to that family he had left behind, scared and sad. When he does so, when he returns, they tell him that Jesus had come, but he struggles to believe. He wants to see his wounds. And Jesus satisfies him: eight days later, he appears again in the midst of his

disciples and shows them his wounds, his hands, his feet, these wounds that are the proof of his love, that are the ever-open channels of his mercy.

Let us reflect on these facts. In order to believe, Thomas wants an extraordinary sign — to touch the wounds. Jesus shows them to him, but *in an ordinary way*, coming in front of everyone, in the community, not outside. As if saying to him: if you want to meet me, do not search far away; remain in the community, with the others, and don't go away. Pray with them. Break bread with them. And he says this to us as well. That is where you will find me; that is where I will show you the signs of the wounds impressed on my body: the signs of the Love that overcomes hatred, of the Pardon that disarms revenge, the signs of the Life that conquers death. It is there, in the community, that you will discover my face, as you share moments of doubt and fear with your brothers and sisters, clinging even more strongly to them. Without the community, it is difficult to find Jesus.

Dear brothers and sisters, the invitation given to Thomas is valid for us as well. We, where do we seek the Risen One? In some special event, in some spectacular or amazing religious manifestation, only in our emotions and feelings? Or rather in the community, in the Church, accepting the challenge of staying there, even though she (the Church) is not perfect? Despite all of her limitations and failures, which are our limitations and failings, our Mother Church is the Body of Christ. And it is there, in the Body of Christ, that, still now and forever, the greatest signs of his love can be found impressed. Let us ask ourselves, however, if in the name of this love, in the name of Jesus' wounds, we are willing to open our arms to those who are wounded by life, excluding no one from God's mercy but welcoming everyone, each person like a brother, like a sister. God welcomes everyone. God welcomes everyone.

May Mary, *the Mother of Mercy*, help us to love the Church and to make her a welcoming home for everyone.

After the Regina Caeli

I want to express my closeness to all our brothers and sisters who, especially in the East, are celebrating Easter today: Dear brothers and sisters, may the Risen Lord be with you and fill all of you with his Holy Spirit! Happy Easter to all of you!

And unfortunately, in stark contrast with the Easter message, wars continue, and they continue to sow death in horrific ways. Let us grieve over these atrocities and let us pray for their victims, asking God that the world might never more have to experience the shock of violent death by the human hand, but the awe of the life that He gives and renews with his grace!

I am following with concern the events unfolding in Sudan. I am close to the Sudanese people, already so tried, and I invite you to pray so that arms might be laid down and dialogue prevail, in order to return together to the path of peace and harmony.

And I am thinking of our brothers and sisters both in Russia and in Ukraine who are celebrating Easter today. May the Lord be near to them and help them to make peace!

I greet all of you, people from Rome and pilgrims, especially the prayer groups who cultivate the spirituality of the Divine Mercy, gathered today in the Shrine of the Holy Spirit in Sassia. And, certain of interpreting the feelings of the faithful throughout the world, I direct a grateful thought to the memory of Saint John Paul II, the object of offensive and unfounded inferences these past few days.

I greet the groups who have come from France, from Brazil, from Spain, from Poland, from Lithuania; the children from Saint-Jean de Passy College from Paris, with their teachers and their families. I greet the faithful from Pescara, the students from the Scuola Santa Maria ad Nives of Genoa, and the children from Marcheno, Brescia.

I greet the Firefighters from various European countries, gathered in Rome for a large demonstration open to the public. Thank you for your service! And I want to tell you something: when I pray for you, I ask for a grace: that you don't have work!

I wish everyone a happy Sunday. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch.
Arrivederci!