

Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, Jul 3rd 2024

Touching the Body of the Lord

Many years ago, on the occasion of the Feast of St Thomas the Apostle, Pope Francis spoke about the significance of placing our hands in the wounds of Jesus. He mentioned that the disciples had different reactions when Jesus appeared after the Resurrection. While some were joyful, others were hesitant. However, the Lord appeared to Thomas eight days later as he insisted on seeing and touching the wounds on Jesus's body to believe in him.

“He was stubborn! But the Lord wanted such a stubborn man in order to explain something greater. Starting with his disbelief, the Lord led him to profess not only his belief in the Resurrection but, above all, his belief in the divinity of the Lord.

Pope Francis further explains that “We cannot see the wounds of Jesus as Thomas saw them. However, we find them in doing works of mercy to the physical needs, to the flesh of our injured brethren, for they are hungry, thirsty, naked, humiliated, slaves, in prison and in hospital. These are the wounds of Jesus in our day”.

The Gospel recounts Jesus appearing to his disciples eight days after the Easter. This is a reference to the disciples gathering on the Lord's Day for the 'Breaking of the Bread'. Jesus greets them with "Peace be with you," which is also the words spoken by the priest at the start of the Eucharistic celebration on the Lord's Day. Despite the disciples' fears causing them to close the doors, Jesus is among them as they gather on the Lord's Day.

On the Lord's Day, when we present ourselves with all our weaknesses, the Lord does not rebuke us. Instead, he greets us with peace. "I give you peace."

His next words to Thomas are indeed an invitation to everyone gathered on the Lord's Day. He says, "Look at my wounds and touch my hands; reach out and touch my side." As we go to the Mass, Jesus invites us to do the same: It is by recognising the wounds in the sufferings and pains of people around us that we proclaim, "My Lord and my God."

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