

Third Sunday of Easter  
Fr. Chad S. Green  
Holy Family Catholic Church  
Kirkland, Washington  
05 May 2019

Acts 5:27-32, 40b-41  
Psalm 30  
Revelation 5:11-14  
("Christ is risen...") John 21:1-19

*Living Experience of Resurrection*

Last Sunday, on Divine Mercy Sunday, I preached about—quoting the words of Pope Saint John Paul II—the importance of having a *living experience* of God’s Mercy.<sup>1</sup> As we heard in last week’s Gospel, for Thomas, that meant touching the wounds of Christ. In that moment, when he put his finger into the nailmarks, and his hand into Jesus’ side, Thomas changed from *unbelieving* to *believing*.<sup>2</sup> The wounds of Christ were transformed from a sign of our sin to a sign of Jesus’ Mercy.<sup>3</sup> The *living experience* of God’s Mercy—the *living experience* of Jesus’ Resurrection—changed everything for Thomas.

In today’s Gospel, we see how a *living experience* of God’s Mercy—the *living experience* of Jesus’ Resurrection—also changed everything for Peter. After the moving breakfast scene at the seashore, Jesus took a walk with Peter. Three times, He asked Peter: “*Do you love me?*” Three times, Peter replied: “*Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.*”<sup>4</sup>

Peter’s threefold confession just days after Jesus’ Resurrection, counteracted his threefold denial just hours before Jesus’ Crucifixion.<sup>5</sup> It was Peter’s *living experience* of God’s Mercy—*living experience* of Jesus’ Resurrection—having breakfast with Jesus; walking the seashore with Jesus—that changed everything for Peter.

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Throughout these first weeks of the Easter Season, the power of a *living experience* of Jesus’ Resurrection is being presented to us. We see it clearly in the First Reading of the Acts of the Apostles. The high priest gave the Apostles strict orders “to stop teaching in [Jesus’] name.”<sup>6</sup>

Yet Peter and the Apostles continued to fill Jerusalem with testimony of what had happened. Namely, that, yes, Jesus had been put to Death, but—more importantly—He had been Resurrected.<sup>7</sup>

It wasn't just that they believed this to be true—they couldn't stop talking about it. Even more, they *rejoiced* in the suffering, dishonor, and persecution that they experienced at the hands of the authorities that came to them *because* they couldn't stop talking about it.<sup>8</sup>

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Do you ever wonder: What changed Thomas from a doubter to—one week later—a believer? What changed Peter from a coward in hiding to—one week later—a preacher all over Jerusalem? What enabled the first disciples to not only *persevere*, but to even *rejoice* in their persecutions and sufferings?

Maybe you don't wonder too much, because the answer is somewhat obvious: Jesus' Resurrection! It's the obvious answer, but it's one that we can't contemplate enough. That we shouldn't stop wondering about.

The *living experience* of Jesus' Resurrection changed everything for Mary Magdalene, Thomas, Peter—all the first disciples. Jesus had preached to them about His Death and Resurrection before He was Crucified. But they resisted the idea. They didn't understand.

Before He appeared to them, they didn't believe. And when He *did* appear to them, they didn't recognize Him. When it was merely an idea that Jesus had preached about, it had minimal effect on the disciples. When it became a *living experience* for the disciples, it changed everything.<sup>9</sup>

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But it's not only the first disciples that have been affected by Jesus' Resurrection. All the saints since then—known and unknown—have also been affected by Jesus' Resurrection. This is why it's so important for us—future saints—to get to know the saints. To become friends with the saints. To not only be inspired by their example, but to learn from them how to have a *living experience* of God's Mercy and Jesus' Resurrection.

This coming Saturday, May 11<sup>th</sup>, we will have the opportunity to be in the presence of two modern saints: the relics of Saint Damien and Saint Marianne of Moloka'i, Hawai'i. These two saints lived in the late 1800's and early 1900's, and ministered to the people of Moloka'i who were banished there because they were afflicted with Hansen's disease—also known as leprosy.

What helped Father Damien and Mother Marianne to *persevere* and even *rejoice* in this difficult ministry—amidst so much suffering? The answer has to be that through their ministry they had countless *living experiences* of God's Mercy and Jesus' Resurrection. This is what changed everything for them—and for the people of Moloka'i.

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It's so important to our faith to expose ourselves as much as possible to *living experiences* of God's Mercy and Jesus' Resurrection. There's nothing else can change our lives. I encourage you to please come this Saturday to morning Mass at 8:40 a.m.; to stay after Mass to hear Sister Cheryl from Honolulu preach to us about what made these disciples into saints; and to be in the presence of the holy relics of these saints. To have a *living experience* of God's Mercy and Jesus' Resurrection.

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<sup>1</sup> John Paul II, *Homily of the Holy Father from Mass in St. Peter's Square for the Canonization of Sr Maria Faustina Kowalska*, 30 April 2000, par. 8: "...help us to have a living experience of [divine mercy] and to bear witness to it among our brothers and sisters."

<sup>2</sup> John 20:25, 27-29

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<sup>3</sup> Francis, *Homily for Second Sunday of Easter (or Divine Mercy Sunday)*, Saint Peter's Basilica, Vatican, 12 April 2015: "To us also, on this Sunday which Saint John Paul II wished to dedicate to Divine Mercy, the Lord shows us, through the Gospel, his wounds. They are *wounds of mercy*. It is true: the wounds of Jesus are wounds of mercy. 'With his stripes we are healed' (Isaiah 53:5)."

<sup>4</sup> John 21:15-17

<sup>5</sup> From [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org) note for John 21:15-17: "The threefold confession of Peter is meant to counteract his earlier threefold denial (Jn 18:17, 25, 27)."

<sup>6</sup> Acts 5:28

<sup>7</sup> Acts 5:29-32

<sup>8</sup> Acts 5:40-42

<sup>9</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* 644: "Even when faced with the reality of the risen Jesus the disciples are still doubtful, so impossible did the thing seem: they thought they were seeing a ghost. 'In their joy they were still disbelieving and still wondering' (Lk 24:38-41). Thomas will also experience the test of doubt and St. Matthew relates that during the risen Lord's last appearance in Galilee 'some doubted' (Mt 28:17; Jn 20:24-27). Therefore the hypothesis that the Resurrection was produced by the apostles' faith (or credulity) will not hold up. On the contrary their faith in the Resurrection was born, under the action of divine grace, from their direct experience of the reality of the risen Jesus."