



THE VOICE OF SAINT MARK

Podcast of the Coptic Orthodox Tradition

Parish of Saint John the Theologian – Dijon

Episode:

The Incredulity of Thomas

Gospel of John 20:19–31 | Sunday of Thomas

Coptic Orthodox Tradition

Episode Presentation

Welcome to *The Voice of Saint Mark*

Without seeking to conceal what the Resurrection of Christ may have that is unsettling, the Gospel presents it to us in full daylight. On this first Sunday after Easter, the Apostle Thomas doubts, refusing to believe without seeing.

But behind this demand for proof, a decisive question is at stake. As Paul of Tarsus reminds us: *“If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile.”*

So how can doubt become faith? And why can this encounter with the Risen Lord still transform our lives today?

Let us now listen to the Word of the Lord.

Gospel of John 20:19–31

In those days:

19 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!”

20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

21 Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”

22 And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.

23 If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

24 Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came.

25 So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”

26 A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!”

27 Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”

28 Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”

29 Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

30 Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.

31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Homily

✠ In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, one God, Amen. ✠

Christ is risen — and Thomas says to Him: “My Lord and my God.” It is not rare in the Gospel to read the solemn profession of a soul that recognises Christ, that recognises in Christ its Lord and its God. We heard it during the weeks of Lent, we heard it in the Samaritan woman, we heard it in the man born blind.

So many faces that pass little by little from encounter to faith, and from faith to confession. For more than three years, Christ progressively unveils to his disciples the mystery of his person. He is truly God, man come to save the world.

And this revelation reaches its summit when Peter, at Caesarea Philippi, speaking in the name of all the disciples, proclaims: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And yet, at the moment of the Passion, these same disciples waver. Peter even goes so far as to deny Christ, while the other disciples take flight.

For you see, to know Christ according to the flesh is not yet enough to enter into the mystery. This is why the first act of the Risen Lord is decisive: he breathes on them and gives them the Holy Spirit.

The Word became man so that man might become a partaker of divine life. This Holy Spirit comes to seal within us this participation. He accomplishes in us what Christ achieved through his cross and his resurrection.

He opens the eyes of the heart and brings one from exterior vision to interior understanding. It is as though, during those years, the apostles, still attached to the visible, struggled to grasp the invisible. And it is in this context that we must understand Thomas.

Thomas, who was not there when Christ appeared, says therefore: “If I do not see, if I do not touch, I will not believe.” His reaction is not a revolt, but a poverty. It is not a refusal, but a waiting.

Thomas has not yet received the Spirit. He is still in the night before Easter. And yet his love is real. Was it not he who had said: “Let us also go, that we may die with him!”

Moreover, as Saint John Chrysostom points out, the doubt of Thomas has been more useful to our faith than the faith of the other disciples. For in touching his wounds, Thomas heals our own wounds of unbelief.

And when Christ says to him: “Blessed are those who will believe without having seen,” he does not condemn him. But he opens a path toward a new life, toward a new future. And he already speaks of us. He speaks of us, members of the Church. He speaks of the Church born of Pentecost. He speaks of that faith which no longer rests on sight, but on communion with the Spirit.

Notice again: after the resurrection, Christ no longer manifests himself as Messiah. He manifests himself as the Risen One in the flesh. “Look at my hands and my feet, touch me, eat with me.” This is not an idea, not a vision — it is the flesh glorified, transfigured, vivified by the Holy Spirit.

And the Apostle John says to us: “That which our eyes have seen, which our hands have touched, concerning the Word of life.” And with Thomas, we fall to our knees and we cry out to him: “My Lord and my God.”

For Saint Cyril of Alexandria, in confessing Christ as God, Thomas healed the unbelief of the world. This is why Saint John Chrysostom tells us: the doubt of Thomas has been more useful to our faith than the faith of the disciples.

During these forty days that follow the resurrection, Christ forms his disciples. He opens the Scriptures to them, he reveals to them the mysteries of the Kingdom, he inscribes within them a new certainty. They are henceforth bearers of eternal life. And this life is not a distant promise — it is already within them, sealed by the Holy Spirit.

“The heart that has received the Spirit becomes wholly light and wholly life,” says Saint Macarius of Egypt.

This teaching, we do not merely hear — we live it. The entire Paschal season is a school of resurrection. And each Sunday, Christ reveals to us a particular aspect of this divine union. And each Sunday, he leads us more deeply into his mystery — into that mystery which resides in the formulation “I AM.”

“I AM”: this is the divine Name, the one given to Moses in the burning bush. And each of the Sundays we are about to live, throughout this entire Paschal season, is a development of this “I AM.” Next Sunday, Christ will tell us: *“I am the Bread of Life.”* He will then say: *“I am the Light of the world.”* He will say again: *“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”*

And little by little, we too pass from seeing to believing, from believing to loving, from loving to becoming partakers of his life.

Strengthened then by this teaching, illumined by the Holy Spirit whom we shall receive at Pentecost, we will be able to enter into that beatitude: to believe without having seen, to love without having touched, and to confess from the very depths of our heart: “My Lord and my God.”

✠ To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen. ✠

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