

# **Sermon on the 2nd Sunday of Easter time (B)** **(6<sup>th</sup> /7<sup>th</sup> April 2024)**

*Doubt, or: How you can deal with it*  
*John 20:19-31*

## **Gospel of the day;** **from the holy Gospel according to John:**

*On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, «Peace be with you.» When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. (Jesus) said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the holy Spirit.*

*Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained."*

*Thomas, called Didymus, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples said to him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nailmarks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." Now a week later his disciples were again inside and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, although the doors were locked, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe." Thomas answered and said to him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed." Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of (his) disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written that you may (come to) believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in his name.*

Hello, my name is Thomas. I am a doubter!

Dear brothers and sisters, you can certainly imagine that this Sunday's Gospel has a special sound when the name Thomas is given. This gospel has often been called the "story of unbelieving Thomas". Yet it is not a story of unbelief at all, but rather a story of doubt. And with doubt, this story from the Gospel of John has a theme that concerns all of us, the Thomas crowd, but probably almost every Christian at some point. Because there is this experience of hanging somewhere in between: in between, between trusting that there is resurrection, that God exists, that he means well with us, with you and me; and that all of this could not be true, not real, not real. We are caught in between: And it is doubt!

I believe there are many opportunities for doubt: not just doubt about God's existence. There can be doubt as to whether he means well with you. There can be doubt about a fellow human being, even if we try to love them. There can be doubt that life, our life, yours and mine, will turn out well - that tomorrow will bear fruit. There can be doubt as to whether or not I can cope with a situation, a task? Whether it will succeed or whether it will be a failure.

Doubt is probably a frequent companion in our lives. And that is why it is good that at the end of the Gospel of John, which is so much about faith and trust in Jesus the Christ, there is room for doubt in a story at the end. It is good that the Good News does not omit the experience of doubt, but makes it a theme. For all the Thomas's, for you and me, who perhaps sometimes doubt - in themselves, in others, in the future, in God.

Dear brothers and sisters, what did we hear?

It is the first day of the week - and the disciples, who are so insecure and afraid, have come together. And Jesus steps into their midst (cf. John 20:19). Jesus wants peace. Jesus identifies himself by the wounds in his hands and side. (cf. John 20:20) He sends the disciples and gives them the Spirit - as he has promised: By breathing on them (John 20:22). Breathing on them seems strange - but the evangelist

reminds his readers of two other biblical texts. Breathe on, breathe into: This is what the Creator God does when he breathes the breath of life into living beings at the very beginning (Gen 2:7). And it is the vision of the prophet Ezekiel when new life is breathed into the slain (Ez 37:9). And Jesus is the one who breathes life here - in the Holy Spirit. Breathing in - ἐνεφύσησεν in Greek - contains the root φύω: to rise, to grow. Jesus gives his disciples the opportunity to grow with the Holy Spirit. He places a potential in them - and he has also placed it in you and me with baptism. So that we, you and I, can grow on our journey through life, so that we can survive in so many uncertain situations that are so doubtful. Jesus also gives you the strength to do this.

Thomas, however, was not so fortunate that morning. He was in the wrong place at the right time. Thomas did not have the gift of an encounter with the Risen Lord, the gift of the Spirit. This is what connects this Thomas with us - because, like Thomas, we are dependent on others telling us: "We have seen the Lord." (John 20:25) And Thomas is so honest that he says that he could not believe if he could not touch the wounds. Thomas wants to convince himself: don't we all want that somehow?

Thomas needs his encounter with the Risen Lord - his own encounter, the encounter that suits him. After all, Thomas has obviously always been someone who has questioned things. And the Risen One makes himself accessible to this Thomas. So that Thomas can also believe: My Lord and my God. (John 20:28). And just as he did for Thomas, the Risen One also wants to make himself accessible to you - just as you are: with your questions, with your doubts, with your faith. Just as you are!

For Thomas, this encounter will change his life. He too would carry the good news out - like the other apostles. Tradition tells us that he came as far as India to tell the Good News there. And today, the Christians in southern India - many of whom also come to the cathedral here on Sundays - go by the name "Thomas Christians" - Nasranikkal. They honor this Thomas, to whom they trace themselves back.

It is good that the Gospel of John contains this story. Because doubt is probably always a companion of our faith. But the Risen One wants to

hold you, he wants to breathe strength into you, he wants to make himself accessible to you. So that you can get through life well. Despite your discomfort and perhaps also despite your doubts.

I would like to suggest something to you: perhaps you have an Paschal candle or another candle at home. If you have time, sit in front of it and let the Risen One look at you. He looks lovingly at you and looks lovingly at your life. And let the power that he has breathed into you awaken in you: against all doubt.

By Deacon Thomas

**Contact:**

Deacon Dr Thomas Pogoda  
Mail: [thomas.pogoda@bistum-magdeburg.de](mailto:thomas.pogoda@bistum-magdeburg.de)  
Mobile: 01520/1897278

Sermons in English



Sermons as German podcast

