

## Once When a Certain..., Easter 2 (C) - 2004

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[RCL: Acts 5:27-32; Psalm 118:14-29 or Psalm 150; Revelation 1:4-8; John 20:19-31](#)

[Ken Kesselus](#)

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Once when a certain preacher launched into a children's sermon, she was confronted by a visiting child, an eight-year-old friend of a regular member. The boy was new to this church, but was a regular attendee at another congregation that did not have children's sermons.

Nevertheless, the visitor tried his best to follow the line of the preacher's effort to connect with the children. Attempting to hook the children with something familiar before making her point, the priest asked the children to identify what she would describe. "What is fuzzy and has a long tail?" • No response. "What has big teeth and climbs in trees?" • Still no response. After she asked, "What jumps around a lot and gathers nuts and hides them?" • the visiting boy could stand the silence no longer. He blurted out, "Look, lady, I know the answer is supposed to be ~ Jesus," but it sure sounds like a squirrel to me. •

Isn't it natural for humans to want to give the right answer? We church members want to please those in religious authority. Most often, we don't want to doubt or challenge leaders or stand in the way of accepted norms. So, when we have our doubts, we tend to keep them to ourselves. That is the safe way.

The eight-year-old in this story had more courage than we usually do. Sure, he referenced what he considered the accepted norm, but he also found a way to show how much he doubted it.

Today's Gospel reveals to us St. Thomas "who was put in a situation similar to that of the boy at the children's sermon. Thomas was the one who had not seen the risen Jesus when he first appeared to the disciples. The others told him they had seen the Lord, but he was skeptical. He doubted. Still, Thomas must have wanted to fit in. He might have said, "Look, friends, I know the answer is supposed to be that I acknowledge that you saw Jesus, but it sure sounds like a ghost to me. •

Jesus wasn't a ghost, of course. He was the risen Christ, as Thomas later found out when he had the chance to see for himself. Still, Thomas' questioning and doubting must have been as difficult for him as it was for the little boy trying to understand a preacher's illustration about a squirrel. And it had to have been as difficult as life is for us when we struggle with matters that seem clearer to others or seem to vary from accepted norms.

The story of Thomas' honesty and forthrightness gives us hope and empowers us in our moments of doubt. We don't have to accept mindlessly whatever seems the expected or accepted answer or view. Here, in company with others in the body of Christ, it is OK to be confused and bewildered and afraid and doubtful...

Since doubt and fear are bound to come upon us, we do well by facing the truth of these feelings, like the little boy in church and like Thomas of old. Let us remember that both were in a good and safe places to question and then to see and learn. We are here because this is a place where we can encounter the risen Christ, patiently and lovingly leading us into all truth, just as he led St. Thomas.

If we are willing to work through our fear and our doubts, we will find the other side of today's Gospel that teaches us also about faith. If we are honest in our relationships with one another, we can experience mutual support in learning to believe what we cannot easily see.

Based on our life with God in the body of Christ, we can recognize the power of the Holy Spirit

at work among us, providing new possibilities that can move us beyond doubt and fear and anxiety and psychological paralysis. We will learn that through the power of God, miracles happen— that which we would doubt possible can come to reality. Dreams can be fulfilled, forgiveness offered, obstacles overcome, pain relieved, sickness healed, hunger fed, spiritual longings relieved, good brought from evil, love experienced in all the Easter glory of the risen Christ.

For us, Easter means moving from doubt to faith— from fear to joy— from death to life. The passage from what has been brought down to what God has raised up is the passage Thomas made through his honest questioning. It is the passage we, too, are empowered to travel as we join Thomas before the risen Christ, saying with him, “My Lord and my God.” •