

EASTER SUNDAY YEAR A (VIRTUAL) HOMILY 2020

DOUBTING THOMAS IS HONEST THOMAS!

Mt 28.1-19.42 Is 52.13-52 Heb 4.14-5.9

Welcome once again, to all, as we move forward in the current crisis, in these uncertain and anxious times, the likes of which we have never experienced before in our lifetimes, no matter how old we are!

But let's be thankful and appreciative for what we do have, and in normal times, whatever that means for each of us, tend to take for granted. Let's sum some of it up: A solid roof over our heads, cold and hot running water (with a flushing loo), electricity, gas, food in the fridge, supplies in the pantry (including toilet paper, despite the insane early rush!), money in the bank (hopefully), internet access, social media, *WhatsApp, FaceTime, FaceBook, Zoom, iTunes and/or Spotify, Netflix or Foxtel, TV, radio, DVD's and CD's, not to forget the fundamentals, an infinite number of books to read!*

Yet, most importantly, don't we still have family, friends and neighbours, who love us and care for us, with whom we can keep in touch and in tune, young and old, near and far?

Even if you or I live solo, particularly those of us who are on our lonesome, like me, as I look out the window here, in semi-eremitical isolation, with my solitary self to talk to (*At least I don't have to put in my hearing aids to talk to myself, or my false teeth when no-one is looking!*), and permissible walk to go on, around the neighbourhood, and to the river and back, keeping in mind the need for physical (*a preferable term to social*) isolation.

The brilliant, poetic, philosophical and insightful Michael Leunig sums up our present situation well in a recent cartoon. The worried anxious little man is talking to the calm and wise duck:

Little Man: *The world is changing.*

Says the duck: *It's always changing.*

Says he: *Our lives are in danger. We're in lockdown.*

Says the duck: *Life is always dangerous. We were never free.*

Says he: *Many of us could die.*

Says the duck: *We all get our turn.*

Says he: *Nobody knows what's going to happen.*

Responds the duck: *Nobody ever knows. This makes life interesting.*

Says the man: *We don't know what to believe any more.*

(Maybe this fits our theme well today, with Doubting or Honest Thomas leading the way!)

Responds the duck: *Keep an open mind. This also makes life interesting.*

Says the man: *We're living in strange times.*

Responds the duck: *When were we not living in strange times?*

Think about the wisdom and truth to ponder here. Whilst we tend naturally not to like change or uncertainty, just look at our own lives and experiences along the way, from birth to death, and in our resurrection faith, to fullness of life in God.

Well, we are in these times, and there's no escaping the situation, except to accept and act upon the wise advice from those who know, from scientific and statistical knowledge and research, that we need to keep our heads down and stay at home where we can, in order to minimize risk of infection to ourselves and to others, particularly the most vulnerable in our community.

At the same time, we need to acknowledge those in the front line of response to essential services, from medical care to truck drivers to transport operators to those in service industries providing the necessities of life. And those too, whose livelihoods are threatened in the meantime. We can be appreciative of the essential response of our governments, too, to responding to the crisis, in providing some sort of safety net for those deprived of employment and opportunity.

And now, for the faith dimension, as we continue to celebrate the Easter season, we find the uncertain and frightened apostles (now *The Eleven*, minus poor silly Judas) back together in Jerusalem, but holed up in a locked room, out of *'fear of the Jews'*, remembering that John is identifying these as the hostile religious leaders who thought they had eliminated the threat of Jesus on Good Friday (*and not the Jewish people in general*). They have reappeared together, after their flight into darkness, as they gather in Jerusalem, in preparation to to proclaim their Easter faith, that *"Jesus is alive. God has raised him"*. *"The conviction is unanimous and unassailable"*, says Spanish scripture scholar, Jose Pagola.

As he puts it: *"Why (did this unjust atrocity occur)? Where is God (in all this disaster)? Won't he react to what they did to Jesus? Isn't he the defender of innocent victims?... We can never fully measure the impact of Jesus' execution on his followers. We know only that his disciples fled to Galilee. Why? Did their loyalty to Jesus collapse? Did their faith die with Jesus on the cross? Or did they return to Galilee simply to save their own lives? We don't know for sure. Only that the rapid execution of Jesus has plunged them, if not into total despair, at least into a radical crisis. Probably rather than losing faith they become desolate followers escaping danger, disconcerted by what has happened."* No surprises there, as where would you or I be in such a crisis?

But then, something has changed, as, just as suddenly, they have returned to Jerusalem, a dangerous place for them, as it was for Jesus, such that further questions arise: “*Who has pulled them out of the cowardice and confusion? Where have they suddenly gotten all this audacity and conviction? Why do they come back together in the name of the one they abandoned when they saw him being condemned to death?... The resurrection is not a return to his earlier life on Earth. Jesus does not return to the biological life as we know it... He enters definitively into the life of God. A liberated life where death has no power over him... It is certainly Jesus, but in a new existence.*” The post-Resurrection appearances of Jesus in the Gospels indicate initial failure to recognize Jesus as himself, as something about him is radically different.

We also need to consider dear old ***Doubting Tom*** (and he’s in our secular lexicon in somewhat pejorative terms) or ***Honest Tom*** (as I prefer to call him), in all of this. He’s the one who comes to the fore as audacious enough to ask the questions the others are thinking but not game to ask, both at the Last Supper and now post-Good Friday. But then he takes the leap of faith, as you and I do, accepting Jesus as “***My Lord and My God***”, with his assurance he’ll always be with us, accompanying us along our life journeys in living our faith, strengthened by his gifts of the Spirit, peace and forgiveness.

Meanwhile, our mission is to continue to live this life well, in trying times at present, but following the way of Jesus in word and action, facing up to our crosses with a spirit of enthusiasm and faith that he walks with us, again challenged to sharing his peace and living in his love.

AN ONGOING HAPPY, SAFE AND HEALTHY EASTER TO ALL ONCE MORE

john hannon

19th April 2020