

JESUS IS MERCY INCARNATE

How do you think you would feel if your friends or those who you try to take care of or those for whom you sacrifice most of the things you cherish for their good or welfare, turned back to hurt you or pay you back with ill-treatments to the extent of killing you? What do you think you would do towards these ungrateful people if God restores your life or gives you another chance to live? Most of us may distance ourselves from people who hurt us. Some of us may seek revenge. Others may encourage us not to associate with such people either through words or actions. Only a few of us may mingle with such people again. Throughout the period of the Holy Week, we were presented with the stories of how Jesus was betrayed, humiliated, abandoned, denied, and killed by the people whose spiritual and physical welfare He cared for. In today's Gospel reading (John 20:19-31), Jesus came back to the same people who abandoned Him or denied Him despite His love and care for them. Jesus came back to them in peace and with love. Jesus gave them the most precious gift, the Holy Spirit, and the power to forgive sins. These people or apostles were sinners like us. Their leader, Simon Peter, even denied knowing Jesus three times thereby committing the sin of lying but sought God's mercy by weeping bitterly over his sin. **WE PRIESTS ARE SINNERS LIKE THE APOSTLES BUT GOD, OUT OF HIS LOVE AND MERCY, CHOSE US AND EMPOWERED US WITH HIS SPIRIT TO DO HIS WORK.** The efficacy of the work lies in the delegated power or the grace of God and not in the ability of the person chosen to do the work. **God always extends his love and mercy to us despite our sinfulness.** The Apostles must have been ashamed of themselves in the presence of Jesus after disappointing Him with their uncharitable attitudes or acts. I wonder how Peter felt seeing Jesus after denying Him three times. When Thomas was told about Jesus' visit to them after resurrecting, he doubted Jesus' resurrection and His visit to the Apostles. Thomas may have thought like us that Jesus would not visit them after abandoning Him or denying Him. Remember that all Jesus' Apostles deserted Him when He was arrested at Gethsemane. **JESUS GAVE THOMAS A SECOND CHANCE BY VISITING THE APOSTLES FOR THE SECOND TIME TO MAKE HIM BELIEVE THAT HE RESURRECTED AND THAT HE VISITED THEM.** Jesus' visit to them is to tell them that He will never abandon them. **God can never abandon those who believe in Him. His mercy is always in abundance for those who have faith in Him.** Remember that Jesus, in pain, forgave those who treated Him unkindly or unjustly and killed Him. The Apostles were among those whom Jesus forgave. **WHEN GOD FORGIVES YOU, HE WILL NEVER USE YOUR SINS AGAINST YOU.** This second visit of Jesus is to clarify Thomas's doubt and it made him profess his faith in Jesus by calling Jesus "My Lord and My God." Thomas pointed out that Jesus was his Lord, that is, his master or teacher or model. **WE NEED TO ALLOW JESUS TO BE OUR TEACHER OR MASTER OR LORD.** If we allow Jesus to teach us about God's will and allow the Holy Spirit to assist us in understanding God's will for us, our understanding of life will keep changing. Thomas, through his profession of faith, pointed out that Jesus is his God in human form. God always comes to us in different forms, ways, and means to make us feel His love, mercy, and peace. Jesus showed Thomas His wounds for him to believe. In the same way, Jesus allows us to have spiritual experiences to believe in Him. There are people whose faith in the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist is due to their personal experience with the Eucharistic Jesus. Thomas needed to see and feel Jesus' wounds before believing but Jesus encouraged him to believe without seeing. Jesus said to Thomas, "Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed" (John 20:29). "Thomas, at first,

thought that faith must be substantiated by concrete proof, or touch-he discovered he was wrong" (Fr Jerry). It is pertinent for us to know that "faith is about things unseen or not witnessed" (Fr Jerry). WE DO NOT NEED TO SEE OR EXPERIENCE THINGS PERTAINING TO GOD BEFORE BELIEVING. If we easily believe in what our doctors tell us or in what we were told about our ancestors, why can't we easily believe in the spiritual realities without looking for proof like Thomas? MAY GOD HELP US TO BELIEVE IN HIS MERCY AND TRY TO EXTEND HIS MERCY TO OTHERS. LET US PRAY-"I BELIEVE, HELP MY UNBELIEF" AMEN.