

Sunday Homily

2ND SUNDAY OF EASTER

11 APRIL 2021

YEAR B

DIVINE OFFICE WEEK II

“Doubt no longer but believe.”

Illustration

Several years before he became Pope Benedict XVI, Joseph Ratzinger wrote a book on the Creed. In it he recounts a story, first told by the great Jewish philosopher Martin Buber, which shows us that doubt can afflict both the believer and the atheist. One day, a very clever atheist went to argue with a famous rabbi, to attempt to show him that his faith was groundless. But as he entered the room he saw the rabbi pacing up and down, engrossed in a book that he held in his hands. Then the rabbi looked up and said, “But perhaps it is true after all.”

The atheist was shaken by these words, but the rabbi said to him, “My son, the great scholars with whom you have argued wasted their words on you; as you departed you laughed at them. They were unable to lay God and his kingdom on the table before you and nor can I. But think, my son, perhaps it is true.” The atheist left the rabbi’s presence with doubts in his own beliefs, or lack of them. In fact this powerful “perhaps” broke down his resistance and he eventually came to faith.

The future Pope points out in the same book that even the great saints like St Thérèse of Lisieux were assailed by doubts about their faith. Faith inevitably includes an element of doubt, whether you are a believer or an atheist.

Gospel Teaching

In the first part of St John’s Gospel we are given several examples of how different people make the journey to faith in Jesus: Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, the man born blind, Martha and Mary. Some achieve a deeper faith, but for all it is a gradual journey.

How do Jesus’ close disciples come to faith in the resurrection? On Easter Sunday, the greatest day of the Christian year, perhaps it’s easy to be dazzled by the message that Christ is risen. We may get carried away by the sheer joy of the good news that Christ has conquered death. How could you not believe?

Now today, a week later, on what is sometimes called Low Sunday, we come down to earth and see that faith in the resurrection may be more challenging than we thought. St John tells us that when Jesus came to the disciples they were locked in a room by fear. It was only once he had shown them that it really was him, that they were filled with joy. But we are told that Thomas was not present and