

2nd Sunday Easter A (John 20:19-31)

Promises, promises, promises! I'm often overwhelmed by promises as I thumb through the ads in our national magazines and our daily newspapers and watch the TV ads. The promise of happiness and fulfillment can be found in a Sprint cell phone, where there's no metering and no worries; or if we switch to a Discover card there are cash rewards. And then the secret to a happy marriage can be found in a diamond ring from the Shane Company. And then we can live for greatness with our Rolex watch. And with the right card on the right airline we can even rack up a lot of frequent flier miles to transport us to all the earthly paradises, as we pass through increased airport security checks. Promises, promises, promises!

What really promises us happiness and fulfillment? What truly fulfills our dreams of a better life, without worry and anxiety? In today's Gospel, Thomas has the answer, faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ. This faith comes not through seeing and touching, but rather through hearing, through hearing the saving, life-giving message of Jesus Christ, and committing ourselves to him through baptism in the community of fellow believers.

Thomas is very much like ourselves. He fails to understand what he hears and he needs to be shown something. Seeing is believing for Thomas. Fittingly, the name Thomas means "twin," and we are indeed his twin, you and I, for his skepticism is our skepticism, and his doubting is our doubting. The other disciples kept telling him, "We have seen the Lord." And Thomas' typical skeptical response was "I'll never believe it without probing the nail prints in his hands, without putting my finger in the nail marks and my hand into his side." However, when Jesus appeared the second time to the disciples with Thomas present, Jesus gave Thomas three commands: "Take your finger and examine my hands. Put your hand into my side. Don't persist in your unbelief but believe." In the power of Jesus' presence, Thomas leaped over the first two commands and proclaimed: "My Lord and my God."

We too who are Thomas' twins know his confusion and his struggle to believe, in our wrestling and searching about the meaning of life. There are times when we may struggle in our confusion about broken relationships and perhaps divorce, about personal insecurity and self doubt, about illness, and unemployment, and poverty, and ultimately, death. Yet in the power of the risen Lord Jesus and his Spirit, we can leap over the obstacles to faith and cry out with Thomas, "My Lord and my God." Faith comes not through seeing and touching but through hearing, hearing the life-giving Word of God proclaimed in the midst of the Church, and in the way we live our lives in relation to each other, in our sharing and our loving.

As Church, we are a people listening in faith to the teaching handed down to us by the apostles, hearing of the astounding, healing love of our Lord and brother, Jesus. We are one in fellowship, caring compassionately for each other's needs, and reaching out beyond our Church to the world as healers and life givers for others. Dissatisfied with promises, promises, promises, at the Eucharist, we gather regularly to share in the body and blood of the Lord which sustains the life of our community and nourishes the spirit that God has placed within each one of us. Let us give thanks.

Al Grosskopf, S.J.