

2nd Sunday of Easter/Divine Mercy, Solemnity 2008

(Deacon Pat Hall)

Homilies are aids to encountering the living Word.

First, please read the scripture passages that inform this homily.

Acts 2:42-47; Psalms 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24; 1 Peter 1:3-9; John 20:19-31

These readings can be found at: <http://www.usccb.org/nab/readings/033008.shtml>

My Lord and my God.

What does it take to be able to say that with all your heart, with all your mind and with all your being?

Can we seize that gift of faith, or do we need to be open to it as gift?

Faith and belief flirt with the oxymoron: that which is ultimate truth is beyond all understanding.

A little over a year ago a Western professor from Turkey dropped by our little St. Tom's on Monroe curious about our Catholic Student Parish. He was Muslim.

We started talking about our faiths in the manner of the highest tradition of interfaith dialogue: being curious about each other.

He shared some insight about main line Islam and contrasted it with the fanatical wing which seems to get all the press.

I shared that Christianity was really monotheistic with a Triune God.

As I tried to explain the whole three persons, one God dogma, he would say, "Oh, you mean just like God has three aspects in how he relates to us."

You can see the guy is really working here to get it.

I said "No, not quite".

I told him it was mystery, that not only can't we explain it now, but that it is ultimately unexplainable on this side of eternity.

If ever in his grasping of the idea he thought he got it, he really didn't.

Any understanding only serves further prayer and pondering.

Up to now he thought he was talking to a rational American Christian.

Just the look on his face was, "Am I to take you seriously?"

I don't think he's ready for Fr. Ken's famous Trinity Sunday homily about the retriever puppies in loving action and relationship with each other.

This offers an insight into the matter of faith.

Regarding our appearance story today, St. Gregory commented:

"How after the Resurrection was the Lord's Body a true body, since it entered in among the Disciples 'with the doors being shut'?"

But we must know that if the divine action can be understood by the mind, then it is no matter of wonder;

and neither would our faith have any merit if human reason could provide the truth of it.”

We can't have faith in anything if nothing is presented to our senses. Jesus presented himself to the disciples showing his crucifixion wounds. God presents himself to us in so many ways. Doubters ask me to show them miracles. I ask them to open their eyes to the miracles that are being showered upon them every day.

I define miracle as that intervention of God that transcends our understanding of natural law.

One of the aspects of believing a miraculous act is that there is always available the choice of a rational answer contrary to an answer of faith: it was coincidental; something else happened that you didn't quite get.

One of my favorite newspaper cartoons is the *Family Circus*. This is a cartoon about a family with four kids under the age of 10. In this particular cartoon it had an oversize frame of all the kids running around for the day.

There were dotted paths that showed all of them separately going from one play event to another.

These events were all fraught with danger: walking along fence tops, riding your tricycle into the street, hanging from tree limbs by your heels.

Also, this picture showed a guardian angel at every step: with balancing hands on the fence walk, stopping traffic in front of the tricycle, hanging on to the ankles of the boy hanging from the tree limb.

The next frame showed all our darling little kids snoozing happily under the covers for the night.

The last frame showed the bedraggled and exhausted platoon of guardian angels shuffling back to their cloud.

In your life, where is Jesus manifesting his presence to you, showing you his wounds?

A couple of months ago, Jan and I were driving home on I-94. We were in the right lane of traffic by ourselves.

As we followed the curve to our right, all of a sudden, another car approached us in the left lane, going the wrong way on the one way!

Now people approach and pass cars like that way all the time on our 2 lane highways. There is something scarily different about it happening on your 2-lane stretch of one-way.

Was our guardian angel protecting us?

One can supply a rational answer.

There is no doubt in Jan's and my mind that God was all over that one.

If these kinds of incidents happened now and then, I could chalk them up to chance.

The sobering reality is that, these kinds of incidents are happening to me at a rate that far exceeds the law of probability.

(Imagine an Irish brogue for this story)

Me cousin, Paddy was comin' fr'm Ireland to meet me at St. Paddy's Cathedral. He was drivin' arou'n 'n' aroun' with nary a parkin' spot to be found.

He turned to God and said, "Help me find a parkin' spot, please. I promise t'be good to me sister, Bridget. And I'll go t'Mass ev'ry Sunday, but please find me spot."

And POOF, a parkin' spot appeared right in front of the Cathedral.

Paddy turned his gaze to heaven and said, "Never mind, God, I found one."

This is truer about me than my cousin, Paddy.

Too often I am oblivious of God's shower of miracles, grace and presence.

I doubt more than I embrace.

We attach the nickname "Doubting" to our good friend St. Thomas.

St. Gregory was kinder to Thomas' reputation:

"But he saw one thing and believed another.

The Godhead could not be seen by mortal man.

And so seeing man, he confesses God, saying 'My Lord and my God'.

Seeing then he believed;

he who as he carefully scrutinizes a true man,

exclaims that He is the God, Whom he could not see."

We often start our mass with the offer of finding the presence of Jesus in his Word, at his altar, in our priest and in each other. Can you see one thing and believe another?

My Lord and my God.