

## II Easter 4-8-18

Someone told me once that St. Thomas the Apostle was from Missouri. I looked at him skeptically, and he replied, “That’s why Missouri is nicknamed the Show-Me State!”

Many of us probably experience the longing Thomas expressed in today’s Gospel - if not to literally put our fingers in the nail marks of Jesus’ hands, at least to have some sort of concrete, undeniable proof that Jesus is risen. It is difficult, even unfair, to be expected to believe what we have not seen. Thomas is our twin (his other nickname *didymus* in faith, for sure. But he also got the nickname “Doubting”...perhaps unfairly.

Though Jesus rebukes Thomas for not believing **before** he has seen, but he also gives Thomas a second chance by offering him the proof that he requested. Thomas didn’t waste time believing as he uttered “MY LORD AND MY GOD.”

First, Thomas missed the appearance of Jesus on Easter, but **he stays with the community** and is there – good reason for always being at Mass on Sunday – when he appears again a week later. Second, Thomas clearly stated what helped him believe – he wanted to see. Don’t we all? Thomas is forgiven and doesn’t take up Jesus’ offer to touch his wounds. What do we need to be make our faith stronger? How can we believe without physically seeing? Christ is with us. Finally, tradition has it that Thomas totally changed his life and became a martyr because he preached the good news that Christ is risen.

An art museum in New York recently displayed a sketch by the French artist Henri Matisse. It’s a drawing in pencil of a mother holding her little boy – elegant in its simplicity, typical of Matisse.

But, if you look closely you see that Matisse sketched the scene over and over again. He didn’t erase his scribbles. You can envision the artist drawing the same line, the same curve, the same detail again and again until he got it just right.

In art, this is called *pentimento*, Italian for “repent” – to regret, to change one’s mind. Many of the works of the great masters – da Vinci, Rembrandt, Titian, Caravaggio – reveal *pentimento* in their work: rethinking and reworking details and ideas.

In this particular pencil sketch, the master Matisse left his erased false starts and stumbles for us to see, and the ghosts of his mistakes inspire us not for perfection, but for creation.

(Faith Salie, **CBS Sunday Morning**, December 31, 2017)

Our lives are like that, filled with such “erasures”: lines we redraw until we get them right. Those erased but still visible marks are the struggles and pain and “deaths” we have endured that make us more sensitive and sensible, more loving and compassionate, more aware and attentive. You might say these *pentimento* are our own “nail marks”: the scars from our own Good Fridays that remain despite our small resurrections. God heals our nail marks and scars in our own Easter experiences of compassion, forgiveness and justice. God is good...all the time. Let us keep working on being the same, aware of the Divine Mercy...so we can bear the nickname Catholic Christian.