

My God Be Merciful to Me

Acts 5: 12-16; Ps. 118; Rev. 1: 9-11a, 12-13, 17-19; Jn. 20: 19-31

‘Seeing is believing’ is an often-used phrase. Most of us don’t like to rely on stories from other people. We tend to trust only what we see with our own eyes.

Many years ago when I was working in Northern Ontario, it was a few days before the opening of the moose hunting season. Some friends and I were sitting around chatting when, all of a sudden, someone burst into the room announcing that he had seen a gigantic moose; perhaps of record size. Although he was an experienced hunter and a trustworthy person, he was met with skepticism and the phrase: ‘Seeing is believing’.

Thomas took the same approach. He was not there when Jesus first appeared to the disciples so, when they told him that they had met Jesus, he said that he would not believe until he had seen for himself.

A week later, Jesus appeared to the disciples again when Thomas was with them. Knowing that Thomas was struggling to believe in the Resurrection, Jesus came to him. Not only that, but He invited Thomas to touch His wounds so he could get over his unbelief. Immediately, Thomas uttered those famous words: ‘My Lord and my God!’ This was a great example of the mercy and love of God. Because he was struggling with his faith, Jesus allowed Thomas to touch Him even though He had not allowed Mary Magdalene and the others to do so.

This Sunday has been designated Divine Mercy Sunday, a day when we reflect on the mercy that God has extended to each of us and to the whole world. We realize that we are more in need of God’s mercy than ever before because of the things we have done or neglected to do. We have caused wars, genocides, starvation, climate change, and extinction of animals to name a few things. In our families, we have had deep disagreements and feuds. We have given God ample reason to be disappointed in us and to punish us. But, instead, he continues to be merciful and to reveal Himself to us in our times of need, even in everyday situations.

About ten years ago just before Christmas, I came into the office and saw a young woman crying in her cubicle. Jean told me that she had been planning to visit her brother in the Netherlands. It was two days before her flight and she had just been told that her visa application had not been approved.

To make a long story short, the Dutch embassy told Jean that her application had been transferred to the embassy office in the Netherlands for further investigation and that nothing more could be done from Canada. Because of the Christmas vacation period, it would likely be two or three weeks before her application would be approved; too late for her trip.

I told her that if she had done everything humanly possible, then all we could do was pray for God’s merciful intervention. About three hours later, I saw Jean again and she seemed much happier. She told me that a supervisor at the embassy had called and said: ‘Families should be together at Christmas. Your visa application has been approved.’

Jesus said: “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” St. Augustine put it this way: ‘The faith of such believers is highly meritorious, for it springs from a devoted heart rather than from an exploring hand.’ Out of His infinite compassion and mercy, Jesus appeared to Thomas to conquer his unbelief. Even though we do not see Him, He continues to intervene in our lives, when we need Him the most, so that we too may be granted the faith to say: ‘My Lord and my God’ as we accept His Divine Mercy.