

Mission Reflection

for the Season of Easter

Seafarers International House



Scripture

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.” Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.¹

Message

The joy and pageantry of Easter fill our senses. Alleluia! Alleluia! Of course, it helps to know how the story will end: *Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.*

One week after Easter, however, finds the disciples overcome with fear and confusion, hiding in a locked room, fearing the high priests and maybe Jesus himself. After all, they had failed him miserably – betrayals, denials and desertions.² They were not at all sure how the story would end. Then, the risen Christ appears through the locked doors,

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offers the greeting, “Peace be with you” and authenticates his identity with his wounds.

You really had to be there, and Thomas wasn’t; nor were we. Eventually, Thomas gets the opportunity to see and feel the wounds. He proclaims his belief, and Christ responds, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”

That would be us. Is our faith as strong as that of those disciples who were eye-witnesses to that first Easter and the weeks that followed? They faced some real threats and hunkered down behind locked doors. Arguably, their fear heightened their faith. If that premise is valid, then the tumultuous world in which we now live should offer all sorts of faith enhancements. The issue for us “blessed ones” is, will we be able to get past our fear to reach our faith?

Prayer

Lord, give us the courage to become your hope-filled, humble servants, responding to your call to serve those in need around the world, undeterred by doubts, fears, personal sacrifice or self-interest.

1. *John 20:19-31*
2. *Elizabeth Jhanson, Commentary on John 20:19-31, WORKING PREACHER, Lutheran Seminary, St. Paul MN, April 27, 2017.*

Postscript: It is ironic that seafarers and immigrants who are virtually invisible to most Americans are, nevertheless, widely feared by them. It is also a shame that, with “extreme vetting” and other Homeland Security practices, nearly seafarers and immigrants are fearful of Americans too. Fear is so destructive of humanity. Seafarers International House embraces all children of God, be them Christian, Muslim, Hindi, Buddhist or other faith expressions, and we invite you to do so as well. Join our “We Stand” Campaign. Advocate on behalf of seafarers, immigrants and all foreign travelers by writing to your Senators (www.senate.gov) and your representatives (www.house.gov). Pray for them and post your prayers on our We Stand Prayer Board (www.facebook.com/Seafarers-International House). For more information on how you can participate in our “We Stand” Campaign, log onto Seafarers International House’s website. (www.sihnyc.org).

Seafarers International House is the Lutheran response to the urgent needs of vulnerable seafarers and immigrants. We offer pastoral care, hospitality, social assistance, advocacy and prayer in the ports in Baltimore, Connecticut, New Jersey, New York and Philadelphia, and in an 84-room Guesthouse in Manhattan. The Guesthouse accommodates more than seafarers and immigrants. It’s available for church gatherings, civic groups and individuals in need of safe, affordable lodging. Our Guesthouse helps them accomplish their mission goals, and their patronage helps us accomplish ours. “Sleep Well By Doing Good.”

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