

**Acts of the Apostles 4:32-35**

**Psalms 118**

**1 John 5:1-6**

**John 20:19-31**

**Homilist: Deacon Mike Mocek**

**April 8, 2018**

Have you ever been told something that sounded too good to be true? You feel both excitement and trepidation at the same time. You want to believe, but something deep down inside is holding you back. Like when we used to get those big envelopes in the mail from Publishers' Clearinghouse that said on the outside, "You may have won \$1,000,000." but contained nothing but advertisements on the inside. Or like the time our family farm was leased for oil exploration. I envisioned us becoming rich, but at the same time I suspected it would never happen. Three dry holes later and my suspicions were confirmed. A few experiences like that and, unfortunately, we tend to become cynics, doubting any optimistic predictions. But sometimes, things that sound too good to be true come true after all. The Cubs won the World Series in 2016. After 108 years, many thought that hopeful season was too good to be true. But the Cubs won it all. So, yes, there is hope even for the Rangers. And, remember the Blue Bell ice cream recall and shutdown in 2015? Many thought they would never recover – that it would be too good to be true – but Blue Bell made it back into our freezers that same year, thanks be to God. The Chicago Cubs and Blue Bell Creameries beat the odds and achieved success through perseverance, and that gives them something in common with the Apostle Thomas.

Thomas was a dedicated follower of Jesus. When Jesus told his disciples that he would go to Judea because his friend Lazarus was ill, Thomas alone argued that they should all go with him despite the danger they would face there. But in our common interpretation of today's Gospel, Thomas sometimes gets a bad rap. He comes across as unbelieving. Thomas's

doubts and fears were likely no greater than any of the rest of the Apostles. They had all abandoned Jesus in his time of greatest need. But Thomas had not seen the risen Jesus, and perhaps more importantly, had not heard Jesus accept them back with his offer of peace. So, the news of Jesus' resurrection, second-hand to Thomas, was too good to be true. Pay attention, however, to what Thomas did and did not do next. He remained with his community. He did not run away. He did not give up. He kept searching for Jesus. And when Jesus returned the following week, again offering peace, Thomas responded with the most profound expression of faith of all time when he said, "My Lord and my God!"

This is what faith is all about. Pushing through our doubts and constantly reaching out to God. That is how our second reading today, from the first letter of John, perceives faith – as a process of growth rather than the simple acceptance of a creed or dogma. Thomas is not the only person ever to have had doubts about faith. We all do. Some just admit their doubts more readily than others; like Mother Teresa, known now as Saint Teresa of Calcutta. How did she deal with her doubts? She said her secret was simple, "I pray."

Something else in today's Scripture readings sounds too good to be true. In our first reading, from the Acts of the Apostles, the evangelist Luke describes the early church as, "... a community of believers of one heart and mind ... they held everything in common ... there was no needy person among them." Does that sound like any church you know? The story may very well have been embellished a bit. We tend to do that when talking or writing about the "good old days." But Luke's point is that early Christians witnessed the resurrection of Jesus by the way they lived their lives and cared for one another. It is in stark contrast to Luke's characterization of Jesus' followers before the resurrection. In his first volume, the Gospel of Luke, they were often shown to be competitive, argumentative, vindictive, and jealous. That

sounds more like our society and even our churches today. We may never achieve the ideal described by Luke in that first reading. It may very well be too good to be true. But like the first century Christians, we too are called to witness the resurrection of Jesus by the way we live our lives and care for one another. This reading at least gives us a sense of direction. We can do better at setting aside our differences and trying to understand the perspectives of others. We can do better at sharing our gifts with those who have less. And we can do better at reaching out to help those who are hurting.