

SUNDAY PLUS

No blame game

After woundedness: new life

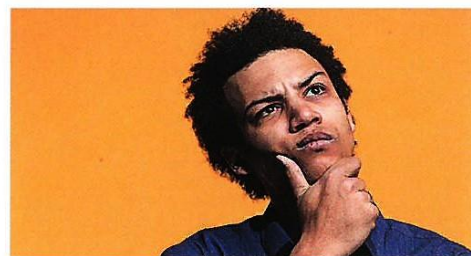
By Paul Higginson

We should never beat ourselves up if we have doubts and we shouldn't think badly of those who struggle with faith or can't believe.

In today's Gospel even though the disciples had fled in fear when Jesus was arrested and taken away, there is no criticism or blame from Jesus for their lack of faith, just a gentle "Peace be with you", and a command: "As the Father

sent me, so am I sending you". When Thomas returns Jesus asks him to put his hands in his wounds. Interestingly, even after his resurrection Christ's wounds are still visible. It's almost as if he is saying to Thomas, "We are all wounded, we are all hurt, but the resurrection is here for everyone – it's here for you too!" After woundedness comes new life.

Perhaps the disciples needed to experience a period of doubt and brokenness before they could embrace their new mission to go out and spread the Gospel? The loss and sense of failure and disappointment that followed the death of Jesus leads to something deeper and better. Like the disciples, we need something to shake us out of our complacency and force us to seek out something bigger and better. For many of us, especially as we get older, certainty often gives



way to doubt. Doubt can lead us back to a calm acceptance and an appreciation of our mission and vocation. For Thomas and for us, doubt can become our teacher and the springboard to a deeper friendship with God.

Following decades in the classroom and as a parish catechist, Paul Higginson is finding that retirement gives him even more opportunities to support his parish.


There was no blame game with Jesus

By Sr Mary Burke FMDM

Thomas finds love, not judgement when, having lost faith in Jesus and in the promise of the resurrection, he doubts in the depths of his being. Jesus does not dismiss Thomas' doubts or blame him for his lack of faith. In contrast, Jesus offers Thomas the gift of peace. Jesus listens, allowing Thomas to speak from the heart about his doubts. Jesus allows Thomas to touch him, even placing Thomas hand in his side. Thomas is brought to belief, not by long terse arguments or erudite theological debate, but by gentle understanding and deep love. As Jesus listened to Thomas' uncertainty and touched his fear, love was Jesus' only response.

Doubt can visit us all at times, but we can learn today that we need only to express our doubts honestly for Jesus to love us into faith as he did Thomas. And there can be no doubt about that!

Sr Mary Burke is a Franciscan Missionary of the Divine Motherhood.

Loving Lord, instead of criticising the disciples for running away when you most needed them, you greeted them with peace. Teach me to follow your example. Teach me to be merciful and forgiving.  Amen.

"In God's mercy, all of our infirmities find healing. His mercy, in fact, does not keep a distance: it seeks to encounter all forms of poverty and to free this world of so many types of slavery. Mercy desires to reach the wounds of all, to heal them. Being apostles of mercy means touching and soothing the wounds that today afflict the bodies and souls of many of our brothers and sisters."

Pope Francis

Today: Acts 5:12-16 Apocalypse 1:9-13, 17-19 John 20:19-31	Monday: 1 Peter 5:5-14 Mark 16:15-20	Tuesday: Acts 4:32-37 John 3:7-15	(E) St George (Solemnity): Apocalypse 12:10-12 John 15:18-21 or 15:1-8	Wednesday: Acts 5:17-26 John 3:16-21	Thursday: Acts 5:27-33 John 3:31-36	Friday: Acts 5:34-42 John 6:1-15	Saturday: Acts 6:1-7 John 6:16-21	Next Sunday: Acts 5:27-32, 40-41 Apocalypse 5:11-14 John 21:1-19
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