

IMPACT

Bring faith to life. Find life in faith.

OPEN YOURSELF TO NEW LIFE

from Thomas (whose story we hear this month and who is forever remembered as “doubting”). Thomas expressed his doubts to the people whom he trusted and listened to their expressions of faith; he took his doubts to Christ, who showed him the way to faith; he moved from doubt to belief, later spreading the Gospel as a missionary.

Confusion. The disciples had experienced Jesus’ arrest, witnessed his passion and crucifixion; knew he had died. Jesus had been brutally killed and he had been in the tomb for three days. Their faith was shaken; they were confused and perplexed. We are sometimes confused as well. Life is not always black and white; complex situations with no easy answers may leave us feeling unmoored, uncertain; we may question our faith or wonder about God and God’s ways.

Longing. Most of us have moments in which we go through the motions. We get up, go to work or school, work out, go out with friends, or enjoy quiet at home, and start the next day no different than the one before. Then, occasionally, something happens. We have a flash of insight, hear from a friend we haven’t seen in a long time, are struck by a moment of beauty, a difficult circumstance arises, or we simply find ourselves longing for more, aching for meaning, purpose, and impact.

Doubt. Is doubt a bad thing? Not necessarily. Our doubts show us the aspects of faith and discipleship we need to bring to prayer, explore, and grow beyond. We can learn

Amazement. It is easy to understand the astonishment of the disciples when they encountered the risen Jesus. He appeared before them offering his hands and his side - flesh and blood - as proof that it was really him and he was really alive. This month at Sunday Mass, we hear the stories of the early communities of believers and what took place after Jesus’ resurrection. The lives of the apostles and those who gathered with them were turned upside down by all that took

place in Jesus’ ministry, passion, death, and resurrection. They had to look at their lives differently as a result.

Peace. Jesus’ message to the disciples is more than a nice greeting. He understands their confusion and uneasiness. The peace of Christ does not mean our lives will be absent of fear, confusion, grief, or dismay. Rather, the gift of the Lord’s peace is the assurance that God holds us closely in

love and mercy in the midst of the most perplexing of times. With Christ’s peace in their hearts, Jesus entrusted his mission of forgiveness and love to disciples then and now.

New life. Filled with the Holy Spirit, the disciples opened their hearts and minds to the love of God in unexpected and powerful ways. In response, they shared with others: they told the stories of Jesus, gave their time and resources in care of those in need, and came together as people in community with one another. The same thing can happen to us: let us take this Easter season to open our minds and hearts to the love of God, and respond to this love by sharing: faith, time, prayer, talents, and resources, as Christ’s people together. How will you open yourself to new life this Easter season?

Our daily problems and worries can wrap us up in ourselves, in sadness and bitterness...and that is where death is. That is not the place to look for the one who is alive!

- Pope Francis



The Corporal Works of Mercy

- ✦ Feed the Hungry ✦ Give Drink to the Thirsty
- ✦ Clothe the Naked ✦ Shelter the Homeless
- ✦ Visit the Sick ✦ Visit the Imprisoned
- ✦ Bury the Dead

The Spiritual Works of Mercy

- ✦ Counsel the Doubtful
- ✦ Instruct the Ignorant ✦ Admonish Sinners
- ✦ Comfort the Afflicted ✦ Forgive Offenses
- ✦ Bear Wrongs Patiently
- ✦ Pray for the Living and the Dead

Stewards of God's mercy

When we think of stewardship, we often use the phrase, "**time, talent and treasure**" to express the understanding that we are called to be good stewards of all we are, have, and will be. Stewardship is more than checking things off a list, however. It is a way of life in which we learn to be grateful for our many blessings, and as a result, to be generous in giving to the point of sacrifice, as a reflection of the sacrificial love of Christ.

In applying this understanding of stewardship to mercy, let us think about the people who may only know God's love through us. We may show mercy to someone who is lonely or feels neglected by paying attention to him or her, "spending time" in order to express the love of God through our actions. This is good stewardship. We might be called to give of our talents in organizing or participating in a time of service, outreach, or care for others. This is good stewardship as well. Perhaps our material resources or money are needed to meet the needs of those who are in need. This, too, is good stewardship!

Go out of your way to be a good steward of God's mercy through the ways in which you offer your time, talent and treasure. Keep a journal or make a list of the ways you and all in your household show and share God's mercy. Become more attentive to the needs of others, and focus less on what you want. Be mindful instead of the many ways you are blessed. In doing so, your stewardship will impact your life and the life of all you touch, now and into the future.

Receive and give mercy this month

Think about the most powerful experience you have had of the love of God. Perhaps it was at Mass or the celebration of a sacrament, such as Confirmation or Baptism, your own or that of another. Maybe it was a particularly intimate moment with a spouse or good friend. Perhaps you were in a crisis, or you reached out to another in a time of need. Whatever the experience, at the heart of it all, was God's mercy. Let us reflect on this for a few moments: during the Mass, we tell the story of and celebrate God's mercy in many ways, from the readings we hear, to the prayers we pray, to the act of receiving Christ's Body and Blood in Holy Communion. Our sacraments draw us nearer to God in specific ways, through God's merciful action working through simple, earthly material such as water, oil, and human touch, not leaving us to our own devices, but declaring God's love for us, often in spite of our human weakness and failing. When we know the love of others, or when we reach out to those in need, we know and share God's mercy. The extent to which our human relationships mirror the love and mercy of God has direct bearing on the depth of love we experience with family, friends, in our parish communities, and in our service to others.

In this Easter season, we are reminded of a powerful aspect of our faith in Jesus Christ: God's love and mercy never fail! Whatever kind of death we experience — physical death, spiritual or emotional turmoil, grief over the death of a loved one, the loss of job or meaningful work, the breakup of a relationship — death does not have the last word. This is cause for us to say and sing "Alleluia!" Mercy is a sign of God's enduring love. Take time this month to notice and reflect upon the power of God's mercy, received and given.