



Christian Education

A series of Sermons and Occasional Papers
From the clergy and members
of Holy Trinity Church
Forbes Park, Makati

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Title: **"You're Gonna Love Tomorrow"**
Comment: Insert Comment here
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Readings for this Sunday:

First Reading Acts 5: 12a; 17-22; 25-29
Second Reading Revelation 1: 9-19
Gospel John 20: 19-31

The first Sunday after Easter Day always has as its theme the story about Thomas. This is natural, since the Gospel tells us that this episode happened on Easter and then seven days later. Thomas is, of course, also known as "Doubting Thomas" because of his skeptical reaction to the rest of the apostles' belief that Jesus had been raised from the dead. Thankfully, most preachers today give him a second change, and comment that most of the people we most respect and trust are more like Thomas in their demand for hard, fast proof, and less like those who will believe just anything.

However, believing "just anything" is part and parcel of the Easter experience. Indeed, we are asked, or even expected to believe one of the most preposterous, outrageous and potentially ridiculous stories ever told- that a man had come back from the dead! I hope you realize that this is what is at stake in the Easter story, and that all the other Easter things like Spring (where there is spring) and new life and (God help us!) bunnies and eggs are miss-matched attempts to paganize the most basically Christian doctrine of all.

We are asked to believe the unbelievable. No wonder people identify with Thomas and his demand for proof.

But believing, or even thinking, is not always the result of our own intellectual process. We'd like to say that we are independent, mature and unbiased beings who can make up our own minds, but there are a lot of things, like germs and evolution, that we accept not because we've done the research but because someone or some agency whom we trust has told us so. It would take all of our conscious hours and even more for us to try to prove even half of what we accept as scientific fact. We do the next best thing by accepting the word of experts...or those whom we believe to be experts. You see: there's a whole lot of "believing" going on outside of church, too!

We are going to baptize three children today. The rite of baptism doesn't make a differentiation between infants and adults anymore, so they are being treated as if they really knew what was happening to them today. In fact, they won't. They won't really have a clue until they are older. There's even another fact that is just as disturbing: many of the adults involved in these baptisms won't have a clue either. I'm not trying to be mean or condescending- just stating the facts. We continue to baptize people of all ages in the church not because they have completed advanced courses in theology, but because they want (or they want their children) to be part of the Christian Church and to join it the way that Christians always have. We continue to reproduce this ceremony time and again because we have inherited this tradition. We try to understand it, and I hope that those who are taking the vows for the children today take seriously what they're going to say they agree to. But it all gets down to faith- faith that this is what God wants us to do in order for his family here on earth to grow. He wants it to be conscious and on purpose, of course- God doesn't want this to be a sham or a game. But neither can we think that it is our brain power or even the force of our personal faith that makes baptism real. It is God's doing that these children will be baptized here today- not ours.

In this way we are accepting on faith something that we can't see: new Christian beings being born again here today. We do this by participating in a tradition that stretches back to the beginning of our Faith. We do this not only because we believe, but also because others have believed before us and we want to be part of that phenomenon. And what we say about baptism is also what we say about Christ's

Resurrection that the Church celebrates throughout this Easter season. We believe that also because others have believed it before us and their lives were changed. We didn't need to see the empty tomb or the Risen Lord in person, because we saw the changed lives and the risen spirits of those who have been his followers and originally *did* see Jesus in His risen form. That is what tradition (in the best sense of the word) is all about.

Whenever I phone or e-mail my family or friends in the U.S. there is always an exchange about the time and the day. "What time is it there? What day is it?" You are aware of how many hours ahead of any of the American time zones we are here in East Asia. I have been known to say to my friends, "You're going to love tomorrow- it's great." Faith is a little like that- believing that tomorrow is going to be fine because our friends have us who are already there. And we have others, too, who already live on the other side of the international date line of eternal life and can tell us what it's like. We trust them and we affirm their experience by living on: trusting in the tomorrow that is already theirs and will be ours, too.

So don't be afraid of faith. It's not as irrational as you may think. It is, in fact, the way we all live. What is different for the Christian is that we believe that there is a whole new experience ahead, and we get there through baptism and becoming part of Christ's family in the here and now. "Blessed are they who have not seen and yet believe." But blessed, too, are those who join the company of faith being passed on through the centuries, for they will be supported by a vast cloud of witnesses...and friends, who are already living in Tomorrow.