

2Ea, 2017(notes)

Chippie the parakeet never saw it coming. One second he was peacefully perched in his cage. The next he was sucked in, washed up and blown over. What had happened is that Chippie's owner decided to clean his cage with a vacuum cleaner. She stuck the neck of the nose into the cage. Then the door bell rang and as she turned to let her friend Mary in, she heard a sssopp, as Chippie got sucked in.

Chippie's owner gasped, turned off the vacuum and opened the bag. There was Chippie—still alive, but stunned. Since the bird was covered with dust, she grabbed him and raced to the bathroom, turned on the faucet, and held Chippie under the cold running water. Then realizing that Chippie was soaked and shivering, she reached for her hair dryer and blasted the little bird with hot air. Poor Chippie never knew what hit him.

A few days after the trauma, Mary came over and asked how Chippie was recovering. "Well," her friend replied, "Chippie doesn't sing much anymore—he just sits and stares."

at some point in our lives, we all know how Chippie feels.
all of us have taken a body punch that has literally knocked the air out of our lungs:

the doctor who utters the word "cancer,"
the death of a spouse, a parent, a child,
the discovery of infidelity by someone you dearly love,
a divorce that you never thought would happen

learning that your child has given himself over to drugs
or losing your job and discovering that no one wants your services

it's enough to make us all want to just sit and stare
it's enough to take away our song

1. This is what the Apostles were facing when they were huddled in that upper room

And so today's gospel begins in an atmosphere of fear. It is Easter Sunday, two days after the death of Jesus. The disciples are inside a room, with the doors firmly locked, because they were terrified that, as companions of Jesus, they too would be liable to arrest and punishment. Jesus' predictions about his impending death and then rising again on the third day are all but forgotten.

not one of them expected it to end this way--so suddenly, so brutally

Jesus is dead; their dream maker is dead, and now they wonder: what is in store for them?

Furthermore they had to deal with their grief and their guilt in allowing their friend to die alone.

And then they had to face the disciples back home, what to tell them @ Jesus; As well as how to face their family, especially those who thought that they were crazy to follow Jesus in the first place...

the fear and confusion that existed in that locked up upper room was so thick that you could almost smell it

And then suddenly, Jesus appears to them and says: Peace be with you at the Last Supper, Jesus had shared his peace with them and told them to let go of their fear he had promised to return to them and now here he is!

he showed them the wound marks in his hands and side-- not to criticize their lack of loyalty, or to emphasize their cowardness, but to prove to them and to us that they weren't seeing a ghost; as it happened, Thomas was missing during this incredible reunion.

2. But in today's gospel, Thomas comes to center stage. a week later. And as it happens, Thomas is a favorite saint of mine. As someone who was born seeing the glass half empty, I regard Thomas as a fellow pessimist.

However before we gang up on Thomas, there are 2 things you should keep in mind:

1) When Jesus was determined to go to Jerusalem for the Passover and the other disciples expressed their reluctance to go because of the obvious danger, it was Thomas who said: Let us also go, that we may die with him—now, that took both loyalty and courage

And secondly, while everyone was hiding in the upper room, only Thomas had the courage to leave their hiding place... for whatever purpose, we do not know

perhaps to mourn the loss of his friend in private
perhaps to get away from the Apostles hysterical chatter about “what if’s” & “what nows”...
perhaps because he was the only one brave enough to go out and get some groceries

another thing that I like @ Thomas, he didn't just go along with the crowd--- if he didn't believe something, he said so, regardless of what his friends might think of him

there is an uncompromising honesty @ him
he would never still his doubts by pretending that they did not exist
he was not the kind of man who would rattle off a creed without understanding what it was all about

but Thomas had another great virtue and that was: once he was sure, he went all the way
there was no half hearted response in Thomas

And so now, Thomas yields completely to Jesus when he says: My Lord and my God. It is one of the most powerful acknowledgements of Jesus' real identity in the whole gospel and the only time anyone directly calls Jesus, God.

We have to understand that earlier Thomas was not airing his doubts just for the sake of mental acrobatics; he doubted in order to become sure, but once he was sure, his surrender was complete

- 3. Thomas is a very important figure for us as we seek to deepen our faith. He stands as a hinge between the first Christians, who physically saw Jesus after his Resurrection, and all the generations of us who came later--whose faith has to rely on the witness of the apostle's**

the contemporary form of doubting is questioning: however, we must distinguish between good questioning & bad questioning

good questioning involves an honest curiosity, a quest for facts and truth;

it embraces the attitude of wonder which is the capacity to see beneath the surface

good questioning is the soul of philosophy, science & scholarship

bad questioning is a veiled attack on cherished values and beliefs (while offering nothing to put into its' place).

it is a hidden agenda for cynicism & maliciously introduces doubt in the belief system of others

and it allows one the freedom to not do or to believe anything; it tears down rather than builds up

Dishonest questioners have their minds made up before ever a word escapes their lips

- 4. In many ways, today's readings are like those "before and after" commercials that are so prevalent on TV. Before I weighed 400 pounds, but after just 2 weeks of this weight loss program, I now weigh only 180**

here, the "before" stage is with the Apostles hidden away in the upper room but then Jesus arrives, shows himself and imparts his peace

we read about the "after" stage in today's first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, which shows the strength and courage of the Christian community after Pentecost--the fear is gone and is replaced with the peace of Christ

- 5. All this brings us back to Chippie & the trauma he endured--when we are dazed and don't know what to do, recall the bridge that has been built into our world by Jesus**

We are here on earth with a task much greater than simply putting Band-Aids on ourselves when we hurt.

Only when we look outside of ourselves will we be able to deal with our own fears

only then will we be open to receiving the peace of Christ, discovering as the Apostles did, that things aren't always as hopeless as they might appear.

Only then will a song return to our lips, as we move from the "before" episodes of our lives to the "after" times, where God's love & mercy are truly seen as part of our life experiences and expectations.

And so finally we are reminded that everything that is in the Gospel is to help us to come to that stage of faith by which we believe “that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God” and that, through this belief, we may find life

Untold numbers of people have tried this and found that it is altogether true. They have found in following Christ a meaning, a direction and a very special quality to their lives that cannot be found anywhere else.

Let it be, especially in this Easter Season, that such will be our experience as well...