

## **St Thomas, Apostle**

On this day when the Church celebrates St Thomas, Apostle, I invite you to meditate with me on the limits of reason. To Thomas, who wanted to understand everything by his reason, Jesus said: “Doubt no longer but believe.” There are things which we understand better by faith than by reason. Not surprisingly, Saint Paul says: “We walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor 5: 7).

During this mass let us ask the Lord our God to grant us the grace of humility so that we may learn to trust our brothers and sisters guided by the Spirit of truth and the fear of God. For our lack of trust and faith, Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.

**Meditation on: Ephesians 2: 19-22; John 20: 24-29**

### **The limits of reason**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, history reveals that in our societies there are different movements of thought and members of each movement claim to have made a good choice. Allow me to mention here some schools of thought. We have the empiricism school which holds that the only reliable source of human knowledge is experience, especially perception by means of the physical senses. We have the rationalism school which upholds that only the reason is a source of knowledge; this school argues that the fundamental method for problem solving is through reason and experience rather than faith, inspiration, intuition and revelation.

In today's gospel Thomas seems to be an empiristic rational person. In fact an empiristic rational person wants to understand things and get them right. An empiristic rational person never denies things by denying; he uses what René Descartes called; “Doute méthotique” (methodic doubt). An empiristic rational person wants to make sure that what he or she knows is true; that is why he or she needs to check, to verify what he or she has heard or what he or she sees and then confirm that it is true.

The concern of an empiristic rational person is to find nothing but truth. You will understand why Thomas said; “Unless I see the holes that nails made in his hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe.” Thomas wanted to know whether the resurrection of Jesus Christ was true; he wanted to know whether his fellow disciples were telling the truth.

One may ask: “what is wrong in wanting to check and verify the truth of what has been said or what we see?” Anyway, we should not be naïve, we need to be prudent.

True, we should be prudent and not allow people to deceive us for there are false prophets. But we need also to nurture in us common sense and trust. And we should know that not everything is understood by reason. Blaise Pascal rightly said: “The heart has its reasons, which reason does not understand.”

Thomas missed the point when he wanted to understand by reason a reality, which calls for faith. There are realities which we can understand only by faith. One of these realities is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Unless we believe, we will never understand the resurrection. Blaise Pascal was right when he said: “It is the heart which experiences God, and not the reason. This, then, is faith: God felt by the heart, not by the reason.”

In this perspective, Cardinal Walter Kasper notes: “The individual arguments only become convincing within the overall perspective in the light of faith and with the eyes of faith.” The cardinal goes on to say: “Faith is not simply a ready-made answer for the question of humanity; rather, it is an invitation not to favour scepticism but hope and to risk one's life for hope.”

Thomas at the dark moment of his life seemed to lose hope. In his letter to the Romans, Saint Paul reminds us that “hope aims at that which we do not see” (Rom 8: 24). After being challenged by Jesus, Thomas came back to his faith and confessed it in saying: “My Lord and my God”. With this

## Reflection for Friday of Week 13 – St Thomas Apostle Fr Euloge Kasine

faith, Thomas refused to touch the hands and the side of the risen Lord but believed. In fact, Thomas came to his senses and realised that with faith one does not need to see or touch physically.

I agree with Blaise Pascal that “if we win with faith, we win everything; if we lose with it, we lose nothing. It is worth accepting the wager.” “Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe,” says Jesus Christ.

Remember “the heart has its reasons, which reason does not know.” Things which are for faith to understand let faith understand and things which are for reason to sort out let reason sort them out. Faith and reason should work in communion without confusion and distinction without separation for the well-being of humankind.