

“My Lord and My God”

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Once upon a time, a doctor, who specializes in hand surgery, wrote in a national publication that, at some point, in every operation, he stops and says: **“My Lord and my God.”**

The story behind this unusual practice dates back to when he was in Vietnam.

One night, fresh out of medical school, the surgeon was called to remove a bullet from a soldier’s hand. Moreover, he had to do it by flashlight. That operation moved him so deeply that, after the war, he decided to specialize in ‘hand’ surgery.

Because of his specialty, the surgeon has a deep appreciation of the terrible pain caused by something, like a bullet, ripping through the bones, muscles, and nerves of the human hand.

He says he winces every time he thinks about the excruciating pain Jesus endured when his hands were nailed to the cross. Referring to today’s Gospel, the surgeon thinks Thomas’s cry:

“My Lord and my God,”

was more than a profession of faith. He thinks it was also a cry of shock ...at seeing how torn and mangled the hands of Jesus were.

*Only **then** did Thomas fully realize what Jesus had suffered on the cross.
And that discovery for Thomas, says the surgeon,*

“...was almost too much to bear.”

The surgeon ends his moving article with this testimony:

“Every time I operate and look beneath the skin of a human hand, I am reminded that Christ gave up his perfect hands for me. And I whisper with Thomas, ‘My Lord and my God.’ ”

I like that story because it makes a point about our faith... we tend to forget.

The point is this:

*It’s **OUR** faith. Each one of us must come to our **own, personal** faith in Jesus. This is an important and integral part of our relationship with God. You see --we can’t ‘believe’ just because some of our friends do ...because our mothers or grandmothers do. Oh, no doubt, their faith helps us. It ‘points the way.’ But, **‘their faith’** is not **‘our faith.’** It’s just ...not ...enough. We must arrive at our **own, personal** faith in Jesus, just as the surgeon did in our opening story, just as Thomas did in the John’s Gospel story, which I just read to you.*

*I will now share with you, briefly, some examples of how some people, much like us, came to their own, **personal faith** in Jesus.*

Author, Robert Cleath, was moved to faith by meditating on the incredible transformation that took place in the followers of Jesus after Easter:

BEFORE Easter, they were disillusioned and defeated.

AFTER Easter, they were amazingly transformed.

They, this uneducated band of anglers, even experienced the power to work miracles—after having betrayed, denied, and abandoned him.

Cleath says:

“No reasonable explanation has ever been given to account for their transformed lives, except their own -----they had seen ...Jesus ...alive!”

Blaise Pascal, the mathematical genius, was moved to faith by meditating on the fact that no threat of death could stop the disciples of Jesus from shouting to the world that he was risen.

Pascal said that he readily believed people, who were willing to **“get their throats cut”** for what they preached.

And, finally, there are the prisoners in the camp on the River Kwai. They were moved to faith through their own experience of the power of Jesus at work in their lives. Recall how the prisoners were forced to work bareheaded and barefooted in the blazing, tropical sun. Husky men became walking skeletons in weeks. Morale dipped to zero. Something had to be done.

It was at this point that two prisoners organized the others into Bible study groups. From their study of the Bible, the prisoners learned that Jesus was risen and in their midst. All they had to do was reach out to him.

When they did, they experienced an amazing transformation in their personal lives. It was this experience that enabled them to fall on their knees and say to Jesus: **“My Lord and my God.”**

This brings me back to each person in this church. We, too, must come to a personal faith in Jesus. We, too, must find our own, personal reason ...that will enable us to fall to our knees and say to Jesus, **“My Lord and my God.”**

Unfortunately, we can't hop on a time machine & fly back 2,000 years to that 1st Easter. We can't place our fingers into his side or the nail-prints. We can't see, first-hand, the rope-burns that must have been on his wrists, witness the whip-marks on his back, the scar of the thorns on his brow. We can't operate on a human hand & learn how much Jesus suffered, as did the surgeon.

“What, then, can we do?” you ask. Well ...I am glad you asked that question!

We can do what the prisoners on the River Kwai did. We can believe in the Gospel, as they did. We can reach out in faith to Jesus; open our hearts to the grace he won for us on that cross! We can discover, from our own experience, that Jesus is risen, is in our midst, and is ready to help us, just as he did the prisoners.

This is the invitation today's Gospel holds out to each of us.

It's the invitation Jesus held out to Thomas, when he said:

**“Have you come to believe because you have seen me?
Blessed are those who have not seen... and have believed.” Jn. 20:29**

*Please realize that, when Jesus said that to Thomas, he was talking about us!
He was saying to all the millions and millions of Christians down through history:*

“Blessed are you --if you believe in the Gospel. Blessed are you --if you reach out to me in faith. Blessed are you, indeed, for you will discover what the prisoners did. You will discover that I am risen, that I am alive, that I am in your midst right now, ready to help you.”

I now close with a poem written for people like us, who, in time of great trial & weakness, are tempted to doubt our God.

**“Oh you, who could not put one star in motion, who could not build one mountain out of earth, or trace the pattern of a single snowflake, or understand the miracle of birth....
Presumptuous mortal, who cannot alter the universe in any way, or fashion one small bud,
release one raindrop, or toss one cloud into a sunny day,
Oh earthling, who could never make the sun to set or cause one dawn to shine.
Oh puny man, who cannot create a single miracle --how dare you doubt ...the One who can!”**

*May that very God, our Abba, bless you...
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*