



## Things to Ponder

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### Seeing, Hearing, Believing and Doing

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By Rev. Msgr. Kevin T. Hart

Ours is a time when, even within the confines of our homes, we are met with a barrage of advertising from television, radio, newspapers, e-mail or snail mail. We are subjected to the intrusion of advertisers as they attempt to make us believe that their product or service will greatly enhance our quality of life. There are some consumers for whom seeing is believing—seeing and hearing an ad is evidence enough to seal the deal. For most of us, however, when it comes to sales and marketing, seeing is *not* believing. We want to be convinced through firsthand experience, or the experience of others we trust, that a given product will indeed enhance our quality of life. A *doubtful* consumer is a *wise* consumer.

But is a doubtful disciple a wise disciple? Today's Gospel (John 20:19-31) highlights the figure of Thomas who wasn't present that first Easter evening when Jesus appeared to the other eleven disciples. History has dubbed him the “Doubting Thomas” because he could not believe the firsthand experience of the other disciples that Jesus had risen from the dead. Thomas must have been something of a loner. Why was he absent from that first appearance of Jesus? What could have so preoccupied him that he was not with the rest of the disciples, if only for the security of being with friends after the tragic events of Good Friday? We will never know.

However, we do know that Thomas was not alone in his doubts about the risen Christ. When Christ first appeared to Mary Magdalene she then hastened to where the apostles had gathered and told them, “I have seen the Lord.” Their reaction? They did not believe her. Her message was the firsthand experience of a fellow disciple. Even so, we see the disciples cowering in fear behind locked doors. Thomas was not physically present, but his doubts were very much present in the minds of the other apostles.

The message for us in today's Gospel is that initial doubts can lead to deeper faith. The disciples first *heard* Mary Magdalene say that Jesus had risen, but until they had *seen* they were unable to give testimony. Thomas *heard* the disciples say, “We have seen the Lord!” but he needed to *see* for himself. So it is with all of us. None of us comes to faith without *hearing* and *seeing* the witness of another, be it a parent or spouse, friend or teacher. It is only then that we can come to *believe*.

We can spend all our time professing with eloquence and enthusiasm, “Jesus is risen!

Alleluia!” But our words will have little effect—no more effect than an advertiser’s shallow sales pitch—if our actions do not speak the same message of the Risen Jesus. And that message is “Peace be with you!” Jesus says those words three times in today’s Gospel. It is a message of forgiveness as well. If our words and our actions speak that same message of peace and forgiveness, people will want to hear and see more of us and in doing so will be led from doubt to faith.

Today we have *heard* the Lord in Scripture. Through the eyes of faith we *see* the Lord under the sign of bread and wine in the Eucharist. Through this *hearing* and *seeing* we too come to deeper faith. And as we hear in the final words of Mass today, “Go in Peace.” We need to let that faith blossom into being peace-filled and forgiving people. Alleluia! Christ is risen! No doubt about it!

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