



Reflection from Ben Babaran

This year's Easter Triduum and Easter weekend were very special to me. I cannot capture all the experiences in this reflection. So, I will share what I can following the flow of John's Gospel as it is proclaimed this Sunday, the Feast of Divine Mercy.

In Sunday's Gospel, we read the last section of Chapter 20 of the Gospel of John. I see three parts in the section:

1. John 20: 19-23 – Here we read the appearance of the Risen Christ to his apostles. Jesus greeted his disciples, "Peace be with you." It was more of a reassurance to calm their fearful hearts, change their doubting minds and evoke the faith of the disciples in the reality of the Resurrection. This was a communitarian experience of the Resurrection. As part of that encounter, the disciples were commissioned - sent out to be Good News bearers of forgiveness. However, they were not alone in the mission. The Risen Lord breathed on them the Holy Spirit. In a similar way, three of Jo's classmates, Necy, Tess and Nanette, had a communitarian experience of the resurrection at the Easter Vigil through the Community of St. James. Like most Filipinos, these three had not experienced Easter Vigil. Their experience at St. James deepened their faith in the Risen Christ.
2. John 20:20-29 - This is about how Thomas had a personal experience of the Risen Lord. Thomas did not want a secondhand experience. "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nailmarks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." We do prefer firsthand experiences! However, there is nothing wrong with secondhand experiences. Trust me – as a co-founder of Troost39 Thrift Store, I encounter Christ daily in my co-founders: Chuck, Toni, and my beloved, Jo. I feel the love of Christ through the hard-working employees, the excitement of the volunteers, and the care of donors as well as the smiles of customers. First of all, any firsthand, personal experience of the Risen Lord is in the context of the community. Last Holy Thursday, I had a personal experience of Jesus - the Way, the Truth, and the Life. I had a vehicular accident where the impact caused the air bags to deploy, my car spinning 360 degrees, and my rear, left wheel disengaged from my car and rolled in front of me. After getting my bearings and with the help of the Holy Spirit, I went to the other driver (who had an expired driver's license and NO insurance), gave him a hug and asking if he was fine – as I was commissioned to give forgiveness. Christ is risen! Jesus is alive! So am I because of His Divine Mercy! And, I did not miss a beat of the Easter Triduum and Easter Vigil at St. James.
3. John 20:30-31 – Here, John tells us of the purpose of our faith in Jesus. "...that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in his name." Our faith in the Risen Lord gives us LIFE.

We believe... because we do know it is in faith in Jesus that we have LIFE. "Like the apostle Thomas, let us accept mercy, the salvation of the world. And let us show mercy to those who are most vulnerable; for only in this way will we build a new world." (Pope Francis)

*Peace,
Ben*