



FROM FR. RASO

My father (the one on Earth) loved being a Catholic. He loved going to Mass on Sundays and passed on that exuberance to his two sons (He didn't have to pass that exuberance to my mother, because she was on the same page as him on this subject). When the parish announced that they needed Lectors for the first time, he was the first one to volunteer. When a little later, it was announced that it needed people to serve as Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist, he was also the first one to volunteer. So, in other words, he was very happy to be a Roman Catholic. Subsequently, whenever, rare indeed, he said something that sounded a wee bit critical on a religious subject, you had to remember that it was coming from the biggest fan that the parish had.

Whenever the Second Sunday of Easter came, he happily would announce that it was "Calabrese-Head Sunday", which sounded pretty negative, especially from him. What he meant by that startling statement was that the Calabrese section of Italy, of which he was a descendant (so are his sons, both of them, very much including the older one who now resides in the rectory of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish), consists of people who are profoundly hard-headed: Once they get a thought up there above the eyebrows, it would require a nuclear device to remove it. On the Second Sunday of Easter, the Gospel relates the story of Thomas, who announces that, until he personally touched the hands of Jesus and puts his hand into His wounded side, that he will NEVER believe that Jesus had risen from the dead, no matter what such unreliable and neurotic people like Peter and John and Mary Magdalene were saying. He sympathizes with them. He really likes them a lot. He wishes it all were so, but... This is what led my father to conclude that, while it appeared that Thomas was from Palestine, his parents must have immigrated from Calabria.

When Jesus appears again the next Sunday, one notices that He is very kind and understanding toward Thomas. As far as Jesus is concerned, there is no reason to forgive him for anything: Thomas, hard-headed or not, proclaims that Jesus is surely his Lord and his God, but as blessed as that statement is, more blessed yet, Thomas, as those who have not seen and yet believe. Seeing and believing is 100 percent but believing by faith is one hundred and one percent, and Christians have to go out there into the world and proclaim their faith one hundred and one percent - then and now.

Thomas got the message that day and remembered it every day until the day he offered his life for his Lord and God and took his place in Heaven. However, the message of our Lord is also, of course, meant for us today no less than it was meant for Thomas on that day long ago. We live in what is devastatingly but accurately called the "post-Christian age". In the days of Thomas, people had never heard of Christ. Today, people have forgotten Him or, in the case of many of their children and grandchildren, have not been told about Him by their families. Too many children nowadays are just not as lucky as my brother and I were to have exuberantly Catholic fathers and deeply devoted mothers. That leaves a sad gap in their lives and it is up to us to fill in that gap with the example we set, the Faith we show, and the love of Christ we proclaim.

Today is the day we ought to promise Jesus to be the Thomases of the world today. We must always be good and exuberant Catholics. If we are, we and all whose lives we touch will be on our way to Heaven (If not, we will just be a bunch of Calabrese-heads !)