"Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed." (John 20: 29b) If Thomas the Apostle is known for anything, it is his lack of faith in the resurrection of Jesus. He demanded proof and in this, we are like him, aren't we? Throughout His time of active ministry, Jesus was often confronted by those who demanded proof. To these demands, Jesus responds, "An evil and unfaithful generation seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it except the sign of Jonah the prophet. Just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights. (Matthew12: 39-40)

These words of Jesus get to the heart of the matter regarding faith and freedom. It is human to want assurance for something that demands our complete commitment and the total investment of our life. When it comes to faith, however, there is no proof. We either accept God's grace and the gift of faith or become members of the 'unfaithful generation.' If like Thomas and the other disciples, Jesus confronts us with the hard evidence of his wounded body, then we would have no other option, but to accept the reality of His resurrection. Faith would no longer be required because faith believes in something for which there is no proof. Our acceptance of the resurrection would be more a coercion than a free choice. At that point, could we even claim to love God? At that point, it would be clear that God was the only option for participation in a life beyond the grave. …and love without options is no love at all. Our motivation would be reduced to mere prudence or pragmatism.
The other profound takeaway from this experience in the upper room was the power of forgiveness that was bestowed on the disciples. I can imagine that there was much ill will within the followers of Jesus toward those who had plotted the false arrest, trial, sentencing, and execution of their beloved leader. Jesus knew that if this hate remained in their hearts it would end the good work He had already begun in them. Anger and hate for the perpetrators would fester and along with their fear, they would become the next target and the movement started by Jesus would come to a swift end.

Jesus did not stop the authorities from pursuing his followers, but he did invite his followers to change their response to this aggression. By encouraging forgiveness, Jesus knew that the hate in their hearts would be converted to love and understanding. Forgiveness freed his followers to continue to pursue the peaceable Kingdom of God rather than end up in a cycle of tit for tat violence against their opponents.

Let me digress a bit… In physics, Newton's third law is: For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. This statement means that in every interaction, there is a pair of forces acting on the two interacting objects. I believe that this is also true in spiritual matters. When we exercise violence against another it also damages us, and when we exercise forgiveness toward another it also frees us from the trap of hatred and frees us to love again. Today we have the sacrament of Reconciliation that is exercised by our priests and is an important source of grace. Recall also that both Apostles and disciples were gathered in the upper room and that all received the gift of the Holy Spirit to forgive sins. This gift is freely given so that we can be freed to love and to free others to love again. This forgiveness is what will continue the mission of Jesus Christ to build the Kingdom of God in our world, a kingdom based on faith and the freedom to love.