

Homily based on the readings from July 29, 2025 (Exodus 24.3-8; John 11.19-27)

As some of you may be aware, there are two choices for today's Gospel reading: one from the Gospel of John, which is what was just read, and one from the Gospel of Luke. We actually just heard the passage from Saint Luke's Gospel nine days ago, on the Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time. To refresh your memory, it is the account of Martha being "burdened with much serving." There is absolutely nothing wrong with that reading, but the option we used today, from Saint John's Gospel, is one of my favorite passages in the entire New Testament – partially due to some personal associations, but mainly because it contains one of the most important conversations in any of the four Gospels.

Each of the Gospels is designed to emphasize a particular set of themes or ideas. The Gospel of John focuses more than any other on the divine nature of Jesus – on his being an eternal person of the Holy Trinity. The prologue of the Gospel, as you probably know, presents a soaring

description of Christ's existence from "the beginning" and his role in the creation of the universe. Within the main body of the Gospel, by my count, there are five specific characters who – in their own particular way – proclaim the divinity of Jesus. Each of these individuals serves an important role in the narrative, affirming and enhancing the overall message of this Gospel. The first three, in order, are: John the Baptist ("Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world"), Nathanael ("Rabbi, you are the Son of God"), and Simon Peter ("you are the Holy One of God"). The fourth and fifth are perhaps somewhat surprising: Martha and Thomas. As we just heard in today's Gospel, Martha declares:

I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God,
the one who is coming into the world.

Of *all* the people who appear in the Gospel of John, the only one who actually acknowledges the *fullness* of Christ's divinity is the Apostle Thomas. After Jesus invites him to feel the mark of the nails and to

touch his wounded side, Thomas simply responds “My Lord and my God.”

It is intriguing that Martha and Thomas are both somewhat maligned by modern readers – Martha for complaining about her sister not doing enough work and Thomas for doubting the testimony of the other Apostles. Nevertheless, these two followers of Jesus provide the clearest and the boldest witness of Christ’s divine nature. Despite their various imperfections, they are the ones who actually “get it” – who understand who it is that is standing in front of them. They recognize that they are beholding the glory of the Word made flesh, the Only-Begotten Son of the Father.

It is no accident that it was to Martha that Jesus first revealed his mastery over death – first in word and then in deed:

I am the resurrection and the life;
whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live,
and anyone who lives and believes in me will never die.

Jesus offers resurrection and life to all his disciples – to all his children –
but first we need to open our hearts to recognize him for who he truly is.