



breadfortheworld
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

April 11, 2010
Second Sunday of Easter
Mary Newbern-Williams

RCL: Acts 5:27-32; Psalm 118:14-29 or Psalm 150; Revelation 1:4-8;
John 20:19-31

LM: Acts 5:12-16; Psalm 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24; Revelation 1:9-11a,
12-13, 17-19; John 20:19-31

Have you ever doubted that what you do makes a difference? In a world with so many hungry and impoverished people, it is natural to wonder if what we do really matters. However, deep down inside, we know that we do make a difference, and we often (perhaps unknowingly) inspire others to serve. I experienced this feeling while working at an office that served homeless people. At this center we assisted people who had difficulty paying their rent and utility bills and who needed food or shelter.

One morning a young woman who had two children came to the office. The family had been living in a basement with no heat, no toilet, and no facilities for bathing. She had been saving for an apartment but needed an additional \$400 for the deposit, along with the remainder of the last month's rent. Through our organization we were able to help her with the deposit, as well as the first and the last month's rent. She purchased food, toiletries, and other needed items for her family's new home.

Three weeks later, when I was overwhelmed with people whose needs I never thought we could meet, the young woman stopped by the office. She walked over to my desk and said, "Pastor, I just wanted to let you know that we love our new apartment. My children made this for you. Thanks." She handed me a finger painting they had done in day care at a church. I learned that for those we served, we had made a difference.

We can make powerful, positive changes in the lives of those who live in poverty through advocacy, assistance, and affirmation. Jesus made this difference in his teaching, preaching, and serving. His model demonstrates a strong love for humanity as he fed the hungry, healed the sick, and accepted society's outcasts. His acts of love led him to the cross and to ultimate victory, conquering death as he was raised to life. When we follow Jesus' model and demonstrate his love, we serve in a way that can touch hearts and minds and make powerful differences.

In today's gospel passage from John, we find Thomas, one of Jesus' committed disciples. He is the kind of person who needs firsthand experience in order to believe. The story



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tells us that he was not with the other disciples when Jesus appeared, but later Jesus does appear to him. Sometimes the strongest advocates for others are those who experience certain events firsthand and don't just read or hear about them. Thomas is that kind of person. For him to believe that Jesus has appeared, he needs to see Jesus and touch him. Jesus grants him that wish. Jesus meets Thomas where he is in spirit and in emotion. He does the same for all of us—meets us where we are in spirit and invites us to do the same for others.

The apostles in Acts know that their actions have long-lasting effects and that their works make a difference in the lives of the people to whom they minister. They know that feeding, healing, preaching, and teaching win souls for Christ. They continue to spread the Good News despite resistance, government threats, and imprisonment. While facing the council, Peter and the apostles say, “We must obey God rather than any human authority” (v. 29). The result is that many are converted and the hunger for God's word continues! That spiritual hunger remains today, as many people around the world seek the spiritual fulfillment that comes from knowing Christ's saving grace. The longlasting results of the apostles' work remain with us today.

For those of us who serve through Bread for the World and other organizations committed to helping people with a variety of needs, we have firsthand experiences. These experiences help us to see others as God's creation and to use our gifts and talents to make life better for all. In certain instances—perhaps because of the heaviness of the call—we may not know what difference our help makes in the lives of people we serve. So naturally we wonder if what we do matters to others. Just when we think it doesn't matter, it does. The beauty of Christ's call is that everyone matters, and our efforts, even small ones, have lasting effects.

Children's Time [Larry Hollar]

Talk today about saying “thank you.” Mary Newbern-Williams' story of the grateful woman who got financial help reminds us that sometimes we don't know how much of an impact we're having on people's lives until they thank us. Maybe we do a small favor, but it is a big boost to the person receiving the help. Perhaps we're surprised when they thank us, because it seemed like a small thing. When we're grateful to people for what they do, we should always say thank you. And since God is so kind and loving, we should constantly thank God. End with a thank-filled prayer, inviting the children to mention things for which they are thankful to God and to other people.



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Musical Suggestions [Larry Hollar]

We Meet You, O Christ—*Chalice Hymnal* 183

Not with Naked Eye, Not with Human Sense—*The New Century Hymnal* 406

These Things Did Thomas Count— *The New Century Hymnal* 254

Womb of Life, and Source of Being— *The New Century Hymnal* 274

Christ Has Risen—*Gather Comprehensive* 451

Reflection from Hunger for the Word, Year C
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