Introduction: A Mystery That Touches the Heart

Two Gospel scenes move us deeply during the Easter season: Mary Magdalene at the empty tomb, and the Apostle Thomas confronting his doubt. In both, the risen Jesus appears unexpectedly, and in both, a mystery unfolds: **to Mary, Jesus says, “Do not touch me” (John 20:17), and to Thomas, He says, “Put your finger here and see my hands… put your hand into my side” (John 20:27).**

Why this apparent contradiction? Why is a woman full of love denied physical contact, while a doubter is invited to touch the sacred? Within these two seemingly opposite moments lies a profound and timely message for each of us: **the way the risen Jesus allows Himself to be encountered is not uniform, but personalized, pedagogical, and spiritual.** Today, in a society fragmented by doubt, wounds, and searching, these words of Christ still resound powerfully for you and me.

This article aims to explore that mystery with theological depth and pastoral simplicity. We’ll unpack the context, the meaning, and how it can transform the way we live our faith, draw near to God, and touch—or allow ourselves to be touched—by the Risen One.

I. Mary Magdalene’s Encounter: Tears, Love, and a “Do Not Touch Me”

The Scripture

> *“Jesus said to her, ‘Do not touch me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” (John 20:17)*

Mary Magdalene, known as **the apostle to the apostles**, was the first to see the Risen Lord. She who had loved so deeply, wept so bitterly, and waited so faithfully… now sees Jesus and wants to embrace Him, to hold on to Him. But Jesus says, “**Do not touch me**”—in Greek *mē mou haptou*, literally “stop clinging to me.”

This “do not touch” is not rejection or coldness. It is a teaching moment.

The Theological Meaning

Jesus is saying to Mary: *“You can no longer relate to me as before. I have risen. The relationship must now be new: no longer physical, but spiritual, Eucharistic, ecclesial.”*

In other words, Mary cannot “hold on” to Jesus as if she could possess Him. Her love needs to be purified, matured. No longer is it enough to have a human kind of closeness to Jesus. Now He is **the glorified Christ, present in a sacramental and universal way**.

This passage teaches us that many times **we cling to images of God that no longer serve us**. We want God to act the way He used to, to comfort us as He did before. But **God invites us into a deeper faith, a freer and more trusting relationship.**

II. The Encounter with Thomas: Doubt, Wounds, and a “Touch Me”

The Scripture

> *“Then He said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.’” (John 20:27)*

Eight days later, Jesus appears again. This time Thomas is present—the apostle who had refused to believe without evidence. Jesus doesn’t rebuke him, but **meets him in his weakness**. He offers him exactly what he asked for: to touch, to see, to verify.

The Theological Meaning

In Thomas we see **modern faith—rational, skeptical, demanding of proof, resistant to the invisible**. Jesus doesn’t condemn him, but shows him that true blessedness lies not in touching, but in believing without seeing: *“Blessed are those who have not seen and have*

believed” (John 20:29).

Jesus allows Thomas to touch Him because He knows that for some wounded or doubtful souls, **the path to faith requires a closer, more tangible contact**. The Lord becomes vulnerable, showing His glorious wounds, because **He wants to be touched in His wounded humanity—precisely where many today need proof of His love.**

III. Two Divine Pedagogies, One Intention: To Transform Us

In these two scenes, Jesus acts in opposite ways but with the same intention: **to guide the human heart to mature faith.**

- To **Mary**, who loves—but with a still too-human love—He teaches how to ascend.
- To **Thomas**, who doubts, He shows that faith can be born from wounds.

This is a great lesson for us: **God does not reveal Himself to everyone in the same way.** Some find Him in consolation; others in silence. Some feel His presence; others seek Him in apparent absence. Sometimes Jesus says to us, “Do not touch me”—when He wants us to walk by faith and not by feelings. Other times, He says, “Touch me”—when He knows we need comfort, confirmation, nearness.

IV. Practical Applications: How to Live This Today

1. **Discern Your Spiritual Season**

Ask yourself: Am I in a moment where Jesus says “do not touch me,” calling me to grow in faith without emotional support? Or is He saying “touch me,” inviting me to discover Him in His wounded humanity?

Practical Exercise: Make a spiritual examination of conscience. Am I clinging to a past image of God? Am I open to new ways of encountering Him—adoration, silence, service, community?

2. **Seek Christ in His New Modes of Presence**

The risen Jesus is no longer physically walking through Palestine. **Today He allows Himself to be found in the Eucharist, in the Word, and in the suffering brother or sister.**

> *“Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.” (Matthew 25:40)*

Practical Guide:

- **Eucharist**: How do I participate? With faith or out of routine?
- **Prayerful reading of Scripture (Lectio Divina)**: Do I allow Him to speak to me through His Word?
- **Service to others**: Do I recognize His wounds in the poor, the sick, the sorrowful?

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3. **Accept God’s Pedagogy: Growing Faith**

Like Mary and Thomas, we must **accept that God educates us in faith.** Sometimes He withdraws His felt presence so we grow. Other times He shows us His wounds so we may be healed.

> *“For we walk by faith, not by sight.” (2 Corinthians 5:7)*

Pastoral Advice: Do not despair if you do not “feel” God. Faith is not a feeling but a choice. Remain faithful. The Risen One reveals Himself when we least expect it.

V. The Spiritual Journey Between Mary and Thomas

Mary: A Love That Needs Purification

Thomas: A Doubt That Becomes Mature Faith

Both moved **from a physical relationship with Jesus to a spiritual and ecclesial one.** That is also our journey. Today we cannot touch Jesus with our hands, but **we can touch Him with faith, with our hearts, with obedience, with love.**

Conclusion: “Blessed Are Those Who Believe Without Seeing”

Jesus’ words to Mary and Thomas are not contradictory: **they are complementary.** He calls us to a living, deep, personal faith. A faith that does not cling to the old, nor drown in doubt, but **allows itself to be transformed by Easter.**

Today, the risen Christ says to you:

- *“Do not touch me… I have more to show you.”*
- *“Touch me… because I am also in your wounds.”*

This Easter and beyond, let us allow the Lord to guide us, like Mary and Thomas, **from nostalgia to adoration, from doubt to surrender, from seeking to finding.**

Final Prayer

> *Risen Lord Jesus,*
> *teach me to touch You with faith,*
> *not to cling to what once was,*
> *and to recognize Your living presence in my story.*
> *Like Mary, may my love be purified.*

> *Like Thomas, may my doubt be transformed.*
> *Amen.*