

At the Battle of Fort Donelson in the American Civil War, General Grant of the Union Army stated that “no terms except unconditional and immediate surrender can be accepted” to the Confederate General.

When word of this reached Washington D.C., the newspapers came up with the nickname for Ulysses S. Grant ... they said that the “U. S.” stood for “Unconditional Surrender.”

Unconditional surrender was also demanded of the Axis Powers by the Allies in the Second World War.

Unconditional surrender is, of course, only appropriate when used against a weaker party.

In the excerpt of the first letter of Saint John, which we heard in today’s second reading, we hear:

*Who indeed is the victor over the world
but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*

In the Gospel, we hear the familiar story of ‘doubting Thomas.’

Now, in Thomas’ defense, what was he to believe? He had seen Jesus beaten, scourged, and crucified. It was well-known all over Jerusalem that Jesus had died on the cross.

And now THIS?

How can anyone believe THIS? Resurrection from the dead?

And so, Thomas sets down his conditions.

*Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands
and put my finger into the nail marks
and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.*

And what happens? Not only does Jesus appear to Thomas, but he encourages him to fulfill those conditions, in order to dispel Thomas’ unbelief.

Thomas was unable to believe by his own power. But with supernatural help, he was brought to belief.

And we, too, have received the supernatural help, the supernatural virtues of Faith, Hope, and Love in our own Baptism.

John reminds his readers, and us as well, that our faith in Jesus Christ, in his victory over death, is “*the victory that conquers the world.*”

Thomas wasn't a random pagan off the streets. He had heard Jesus' teaching and lived with Jesus for three years. He had seen the miracles, the healings, the raising of Lazarus.

Yet he still had his conditions.

So what does that mean for us?

What are our "conditions" for belief?

Where are we 'doubting' that the victory of Jesus Christ can enter into our lives?

Are there relationships where we 'doubt' the salvific power of Jesus can make an impact?

The answer is in our own 'unconditional surrender' to God the Father. Our own 'unconditional surrender' to our Savior Jesus Christ. Our "unconditional surrender" to the power of the Holy Spirit.

Let us pray to be open to the saving grace – the healing power – of Jesus Christ's victory over death ... and allow God's grace, the movement of the Holy Spirit to touch those areas of our life where we may be "unbelieving."

Ask God to show you any places where you may have doubted his saving power, and receive the grace to allow Him into those places ... to bring His salvation into any places where you may not have been fully surrendered.

Let us "unconditionally surrender" to the "great power" of that saving grace so that with the Apostles ... and in the Spirit ... we can be bold witnesses to the Truth that is the person of Jesus Christ ... whose victory we celebrate in this Easter Season – which culminates in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.