

**March 30, 2008 – Second Sunday of Easter
“Divine Mercy Sunday”**

Readings: Acts 2:42-47; First Peter 1:3-9; John 20:19-31

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Today’s first reading from the Acts of the Apostles tells us that after the resurrection of Jesus, a large number of people brought the sick to the Apostles and they were all cured. The gospel tells of how Thomas was slow to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead.

Once I had the pleasure of speaking in front of my niece’s first grade class shortly after I returned to the U.S. from my work at an eye hospital in Cambodia. I asked the class, “What did Jesus do when the deaf came to him for help?” and their hands went up – “He made them hear” was their answer. “And for the lame?” Again the answer, “He made them walk.” Then I asked, “And what about the blind people, what did Jesus do for them?” “He made them see” was the answer in unison.

Then I asked them, “If a deaf or lame or blind person comes to you, can you cure them like Jesus did?” A look of confusion precedes a few barely audible “No’s” around the classroom.

“Do you think I can cure them?” Again the confused looks, then a student offered an emphatic, “No, you’re Emily’s uncle, you can’t do that.”

Like Thomas in today’s gospel, they doubted my story. So I tell them a story about how I was involved in many miracles during my time at the eye hospital for poor Cambodians. The story is about a young farmer: It was the harvest season and Pok Ky was with his family and friends in rice fields starting to bring in the crop. Pok Ky brought his sickle down through the dry stalks of rice when there was a large explosion. He then saw a large hole in the ground in front of him, felt a sharp pain in his left arm, and then passed out. His sickle had activated a trip wire attached to a land mine that was left there in the field after the war had ended.

It’s estimated that more than 80 million landmines have been laid in more than 80 countries. A single landmine can cost as little as \$3 to produce but as much as \$1,000 to clear.

When he was taken to a hospital, the doctors saved Pok Ky’s life but he lost his arm and he was blind from the explosion. He returned to his farm but, sadly, was unable to work like before to support his family.

A few years passed when he heard of a new eye hospital that could help blind people, even the poor. He borrowed money to make the trip 90 miles to the Maryknoll eye hospital which I just helped build. The same day he arrived he was taken to the operating room; our doctors were able to insert an artificial lens in one of his damaged eyes. The next day he was able to see for the first time in five years.

Overjoyed, Pok Ky began to pick up the few things he brought with him, like the straw mat he used as a bed and his mosquito net, and prepared for the long bumpy ride home. The staff told Pok Ky he had to rest another day before going home, but he was determined to leave. The hospital staff figured that Pok Ky was worried about how he would pay the hospital bill. The staff assured him at this hospital people who are poor only have to pay what they can, and the rest would be provided, there was no need to sneak away. But still Pok Ky was in a hurry to go. He explained that he HAD to return home

now. “You see,” he said, “my wife gave birth to a baby girl three months ago and I want to see her face.”

Because of this relatively inexpensive eye operation [he probably paid no more than one dollar, which happens to be the average daily income of a Cambodian rice farmer] Pok Ky is now able to work again in the fields, get around on his own, not to mention watch his daughter grow up.

“So,” I asked the first graders, “you see I helped the blind to see too. Jesus only had to touch the blind persons’ eyes to make them see, I used my hands and my education to help build a hospital for the poor – so that poor farmers like Pok Ky could see again even though he did not have the money to pay the hospital. Believe me,” I said, “for Pok Ky, who thought he would be blind the rest of his life, that was a miracle.”

“You and I are the hands and heart of Jesus in this world, if we use our gifts for others less fortunate, we can continue to make miracles happen, just like Jesus did.” Like Thomas in today’s gospel, they came to believe too.

As candidates campaign and make their promises, it might be good to put before them the fact that the U.S. government remains on of the few countries left that has not signed the International Mine Ban Treaty. Those running for public office should know the positive impact that signing on could have. Call your senators to urge their support of legislation to permanently end the production and use of these weapons that kill and injure civilians long after wars have ended.

According to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, the number of States Parties to the treaty has risen to 156, including mine-affected countries as well as former users and producers of the weapon. Only 39 countries have not joined yet, and these include two of the original signatories - Poland and the Marshall Islands - as well as major powers such as China, India, Pakistan, Russia and the United States. (International Campaign to Ban Landmines website: www.icbl.org/news/10years_pr)

For more information:

Read more about peace and sustainable security in *Loving Our Neighbor in a Shrinking World*, a resource developed by Maryknoll missionaries who witness the global impact of U.S. political and economic decisions. Through this resource, Maryknoll missionaries encourage voters in the 2008 elections to scrutinize candidates’ policy proposals through the lens of those who, both in the United States and overseas, lack basic necessities and suffer the consequences of the United States not participating in multilateral efforts to solve grave transnational problems like land mines and arms proliferation.

[Email for a copy, or find the election guide here:](mailto:ogc@maryknoll.org)
www.maryknollogc.org/2008elections/index.htm

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