

DO NOT DOUBT BELIEVE!

Words from today's Gospel, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

May the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts, be always acceptable in your sight, O God, our strength and our redeemer. **Amen.**

Some years ago I was at home when I was told my grandmother had died. I rushed to her bedroom, looked at her, she looked peaceful. I could not believe she was gone. I needed confirmation from the doctor. When he came, he sat on her bed, took her hand and began to stroke it. I told myself if he was doing that – stroking her hand – she could not have died. I searched his face for confirmation, but found none. I needed to hear the words. I asked the question. He said yes. I lost it! The rest is history.

Reading and reflecting on today's gospel brought back that memory of how, like Thomas, I doubted what was a reality, and I too, needed confirmation.

We are told that it is the evening of the first day of the week and the disciples are gathered behind lock doors – they were still fearful. Given the events of the past days, they did not know what to expect. Perhaps they were wondering if their lives were in danger. Perhaps they were wondering how could things have unfolded the way they had. No doubt they were bewildered, felt lost and was probably wondering what would happen next. What happened next was that Jesus appeared among them and they rejoiced when they saw Him. We could well imagine how that scene played out!

However one is absent. Thomas was not present and when he was told by the other disciples that "We have seen the Lord." He did not believe. He was skeptical. He probably thought, why are you saying such things? I know what I saw! How could this be? He probably felt they were drunk and had taken leave of their senses. He told the disciples "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

Evidently, Thomas wanted proof and he did not have to wait long. A week later, while gathered with the disciples in the upper room, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Singling out Thomas he said to him, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

Thomas, who was later to become known as "Doubting Thomas", is not one of the popular disciples portrayed in the Gospel narratives. Could he be termed a "bad person" for wanting to see for himself? Is this not like us at times wanting to see proof? If God exist, show me the proof! If Jesus is alive, I need proof! Show me the evidence! We do behave like Thomas at times.

On resurrection morning we saw how Mary would have been bewildered at finding the tomb empty. Peter doubted, and denied Jesus three times. Thomas, like the other disciples who had deserted Jesus in His greatest hours of need, would have been perplexed over the happenings pre and post the crucifixion. Yes, Thomas accompanied Jesus on his many journeys. Yes, he

had witnessed and could bear witness to the miracles Jesus performed – healing the sick, restoring sight, calling out demons, raising Lazarus from the dead – he no doubt wrestled with how could someone, who had done all of these things, was not able to save himself. He did not understand and, unlike the other disciples, he voiced his doubt.

Is it any different for us today, as Easter people - people who have benefited from hearing the eyewitnesses' accounts of Thomas and the other disciples, and have encountered the risen Christ in a personal way? Do we not doubt at times when we or our loved ones are sick and in pain or going through rough times and we pray to God but feel our prayers have fallen on deaf ears and we cry out God, where are you? Are you listening? Have you heard? Do we not doubt when we hear of the catastrophes taking place across the world and we wonder where is God in all of this? Do we not doubt when we are asked to take risks for the sake of the common good, but because the outcome cannot be “guaranteed” to our satisfaction, we want no part in the plan being put forward? I can think of where we find ourselves today as a community of faith – the walk we undertook and the “doubters” who simply refused to give Grace a chance – and perhaps there are still “doubters” among us who do not understand that God’s work will be done.

Jesus did not scold or ridicule Thomas for his doubt. Far from it! He invited Thomas to take a look. "Put your finger here and see my hands, he said. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt, believe."

Our walk as Christians is not easy. Sometimes our faith is shaken. Sometimes we are knocked off our feet. It is during these times that we need to stop and focus on what the Cross means to us. Thomas' doubt provides a space for us to look at what the “empty tomb” means to us. Jesus calls us, in spite of where we are at or what is happening in our lives to “not doubt but believe”. As Easter people, Jesus wants us to lay down our fears and our cares, to look to him and to find our resting place in him. We do not and will not understand everything. We are asked simply to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing we may have life in his name and drink from the spring of living water.

Thomas encountered the risen Christ, believed and shared the good news. The tomb is empty, and there are no bones about it!

Let us prayer

Almighty and everliving God, who strengthened your apostle Thomas with sure and certain faith in your Son's resurrection: Grant us so perfectly and without doubt to believe in Jesus Christ, our Lord and our God, that our faith may never be found wanting in your sight; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

~ A Parishioner ~