

St Philip's Anglican Church, O'Connor — Second Sunday of Easter — 30 March 2008

Revd Rob Lamerton

Acts 2.14a, 22-32; Psalm 16; I Peter 1.1-12; John 20.19-31

Is the glass half-full or half-empty?

Do we celebrate our faith or bemoan our doubt?

Today's gospel is about doubt and faith. It is not about the denial of doubt but the acceptance of the reality of doubt and the focusing on faith. It is about Thomas moving from a position of great doubt, despair and even anger to one of faith.

This was done for Thomas by the disciples being witnesses to the resurrection and telling Thomas of their experience.

It is done for later generations by people like Thomas and the gospel writers being witnesses to the resurrection for those whose faith would not be able to depend on sight. "Do you believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

Is the glass half-full or is the glass half-empty? Do we let doubts drag us down or do we accept their reality and choose to act upon our faith?

I hark back to the disciples in the story, who are witnesses to the risen Jesus and tell their experience (what they know to be real and true) to Thomas. Thomas is cynical and unbelieving, but they persuade him to gather with them the following week and Thomas's needs are met. He comes to discover that the wounded Jesus is also the risen Lord. "My Lord and my God!"

We are called upon to say what is real for us! Like the man born blind in the story in John chapter 9; who says, "I don't know if he is a sinner or not. What I know is that once I was blind and now I see!" Resurrection for him was seeing, but also distantly discerning something about Jesus.

Resurrection for *me* came at a time of great doubt and depression when all the stories of Jesus from my youth and the church were put to the test. I was aware of an image of Christ on the cross and a sense that all about which I was concerned would be okay. But I had to choose to hang onto that hope rather than being hope-less, without hope. It is still an issue day-by-day, but I try to choose hope.

That was resurrection for me! I tell you that because I think we need to tell each other how it works for us—like the disciples who find Thomas to tell him, "We have seen the Lord!"

We tell one another our experience of resurrection! It is the calling and purpose of the Christian church to be witnesses to the Resurrection. It was one of the qualities required of the candidate, Matthias, who replaced Judas, that he be a witness of the Resurrection.

It was expected that the apostles would be witnesses to the resurrection. This was the whole point of Peter's speech at Pentecost. "This Jesus, God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses."

What other stories of resurrection hope and faith that we can bring to others, within our Christian family and within our wider community?

In our pew sheet, I have written about the hopeful signs for the appointment of a children's worker; after a long wait we have two applicants.

We are now assured of Anglicare funding for the Northbourne Community Centre, as well as some other

possible funding. So from what seemed a difficult situation, lots of hope produced considerable effort to put together a funding application that has been effective in enabling the continuation of this ministry!

I think we need to approach the future life of Pandora's at O'Connor with the same resurrection hope, that there is a way ahead. It will be different, but resurrection life is always different!

Similarly, there was discussion yesterday about hope for a new home group to be formed as well as a possible monthly gathering (breakfast).

I go back to the story of the risen Jesus appearing at the upper room. Following his traditional Jewish greeting, "Peace be with you", "Shalom", he breathed on the gathering and bestowed the Holy Spirit— sending them out with words of forgiveness, challenge and judgment. This appears to me to tell of the transition from the risen Christ to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will continue to make Christ present in the community of faith.

The other disciples told Thomas, "We have seen the Lord." "We know he is risen." They were witnesses of the Resurrection, bringing hope to one who was in doubt, despair and even anger. We are witnesses of the Resurrection and bringers of hope to our fellow Christians and to others.

Do we celebrate our faith, or wallow in our doubt?

Is the glass half-full or half-empty?