

## Second Sunday of Easter 2020

John 20:19-31, Acts 2:14a-32, 1 Peter 1:1-12

Perhaps the most famous work of art depicting the encounter between Thomas and Jesus is by Carravaggio. In it Thomas clearly has his finger in the wound in Jesus' side and many artists since have been inspired by this classic depiction. But there is no record in the gospels of this occurring. Jesus *invites* Thomas to touch him to which he simply responds 'My Lord and my God.' Many throughout the centuries have looked to Thomas as a patron, someone who shares their doubts. But Thomas' reaction suggests that his doubt lay first in the person of Jesus and this is where many doubts lie.

Twice in today's reading from John's gospel we are told that the disciples are gathering fearfully behind closed doors and twice we are told Jesus comes into their midst. On both occasions Jesus comes with the same message: 'Peace be with you.' It is for good reason that Jesus proclaims that peace is in their midst. All the evangelists use strong words to describe the reaction of the disciples to the news of the resurrection. There is disbelief, fear, alarm, terror, amazement, astonishment...just for starters! We can only begin to imagine what the atmosphere was like in that upper room on that Sunday afternoon. Into this scenario comes the embodiment of Peace. Not a put your feet up and close your eyes kind of peace but a deep abiding sense of wellness, of salvation. Remember that for John this is Jesus bestowing the Spirit on his followers. At this very moment they are recreated!

The response of Thomas is crucial. He doesn't say phew, you're alive thanks goodness for that! So it is true after all! He is not saying now I *know* you're alive...he is saying now I *believe* you are God. His response 'My Lord and my God' takes us into another realm, the realm of faith and trust. Likewise the gospels are not books of knowledge...learn this and all will be well. Read this

and it you'll change your mind! Memorise this and you will believe in the resurrection. Faith is not about how much you know or don't as the case may be. The gospels draw us in a world in which we are called to faith, and that means we must be open to transformation to being recreated. They call us to reveal the resurrection by witnessing to it in the way we live.

It remains the greatest paradox of Christian faith that the glory of God is revealed to us in the wounds of Christ. It is by recognizing and responding to those wounds in ourselves and in others that we can encounter the resurrected Christ and live as the renewed people we are called to be. To live transformed lives even now! And in this way we too can say my 'My Lord and my God.' But this is not easy! I was reminded during the week of the words of Teresa of Avila who wrote: 'There are more tears shed over answered prayers than over unanswered prayers.' The disciples gathered in that upper room were, no doubt, overjoyed by the presence of Jesus, their prayers had been answered; and yet we know that his wounds became theirs as they lived this new life. Peter's letter to the dispersed and persecuted Church says it all: in the midst of suffering is an indescribable joy. This rather sums up our Easter this year. Our joys are undimmed but they are always – this year more than ever, celebrated in the context of Christ's wounds, the pain and suffering of our world.

'Seeing is believing' is the mantra of many. Can I suggest that the opposite is the case. It is in believing that we truly see. We truly see by seeing each other as God's sees, we truly see by seeing the created order as God sees and we truly see by seeing ourselves as God sees. Wounded but redeemed; for God so loved the world. The one time Bishop of Durham David Jenkins realised we needed new mantras, we might call them soundbites; 'My Lord and my God' is a good start. Bishop Jenkins wrote 'God is, he is as he is in Jesus. So there is hope'. That is a wonderful mantra for this season, for our day and time. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Amen.