

**2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY OF EASTER YEAR C HOMILY 2022**  
**HONEST THOMAS MOVES FROM DOUBT TO FAITH**  
*Jn 20.19-31                      AA 5.12-16                      Apoc 1.9-13, 17-19*

Well, here we are on what I like to call “*Honest Tom*” Sunday, as opposed to “*Doubting Thomas*”, as, once again, as in John’s Last Supper account of Jesus’ long, long farewell discourse, Thomas is the one who steps up and asks Jesus directly what the others are thinking and worrying about, as to where they are to go from here, as the ominous darkness descends upon them as Jesus faces his fate, in human terms. Jesus’ words of reassurance are all very well, but what do they really mean, when he says: “*I am the way and the truth and the life*”? More often than not, this is the Gospel passage of hope chosen for funerals.

I read an article recently titled “*Losing certainty, keeping faith*”, by writer Barry (not Ross) Gittins, speaking as a parent discussing openly with his teenaged children. He asks the question of whether we can be comfortable with mystery, while pursuing clarity and truth? This is the challenge of faith for us all.

He reflects on previous patently wrong beliefs: “*The world is flat, watch you don’t fall off the edge. Or, the sun orbits the earth, which is 5,000 years old. Happily, laughter (reason’s safety valve, and faith’s saving grace) often follows when you examine some old, discarded beliefs, doctrines; doctrines that people used to swear and live by, or believe still. Just as human knowledge changes so our collective beliefs and creeds tend to adapt.*”

He asks the question: “*Can faith function alongside doubt?*” He quotes philosopher Soren Kierkegaard: “*Every mental act is composed of doubt and belief, but it is belief that is the positive, it is belief that sustains thought and holds the world together.*” He concludes with a hope that faith can bring comfort, meaning, nurturing and affirmation for all, as he puts it: “*for my kids and for every human being, every child of God.*”

And now for today’s Gospel, here we are in a post-Resurrections scene, with first the apostles gathered together, locked in a room, “*for fear of the Jews*”, (meaning the religious authorities or Temple Police, primarily), still wondering what is to come next, what they are to do and where they are to go, but then with the initial experience of the Risen Jesus suddenly in their midst, with a greeting of peace and then the gift of the Spirit. Their initial reaction of surprise and then joy presumably remains with them, but Thomas is not convinced, until he too, encounters the Risen Jesus in person. Word of mouth is not good enough for him at first, and yet he then takes the leap forward to faith in Jesus, as he makes the profound statement ‘*My Lord and My God*’, very high Christological affirmation.

There is something different here, with Jesus present, but then gone from their sight, with their given mission to spread the message of faith, peace and forgiveness to all. The Gospel is no longer to be limited to a select group of faithful disciples, as they are directed from looking inwards, to moving out into the broader world, where the Good News of Jesus is to be proclaimed in word and deed, spread by example, with Christian disciples being commissioned to practising what they preach, although we know from the start, all fall short, in some way or other, so there remains hope for you and me!

We see the Gospel in action as we jump into Acts of the Apostles and the account of conversions and healing of the sick, disabled and possessed, which might be interpreted as those afflicted with limitations in mind, body or spirit. It was not as if all problems could be solved, nor that mortality would not have to be faced in the end. And we know that the journey of discipleship was not a straight path, guided by the Spirit as it might have been, but that rejection and persecution along the way was always going to be part of the deal.

Luke, in Acts of the Apostles, presents an ideal of hope and healing and inclusion, with a welcome to all comers, especially the afflicted, previously whom had been blamed for their own problems. Certainly, this was an easy cop out, denying any responsibility for those who could help in some way. Once again, it can be easier to be defensive and blind to our need to look beyond ourselves, and those with whom we are comfortable.

Good old Thomas asks the understandable question about seeking physical or empirical proof, but he then professes his faith as he reaches out to Jesus, who reveals his wounds, which could be seen as reflective of human injustice and the barbarity of which humanity is capable, up to the present world. And don't we see that as ongoing today, horrifying and evil as it may be, reflecting the darker side of human nature.

The natural fear and inward-looking nature of the apostles gathered, points to their understandable need to stick together, but then the appearance of the risen Jesus starts to wake them up to look beyond themselves and realise the role they are to undertake, inspired and impelled by the Spirit to get out there and into action living that Good News and proclaiming it.

Theologian Ronald Rolheiser OMI also puts it well: *“The resurrection of Christ challenges us to new life – to believe, precisely, that there are surprises hidden at the heart of death: that every scream, tear and cry is redeemed, and that God’s laughter is stronger than death. Ultimately, belief in the resurrection asks us to believe that, despite a strong experience to the contrary, reality is gracious, light does triumph over darkness, love over self-interest, justice over oppression, peace over chaos, fulfilment over hunger. Faith in the resurrection is the trust that, in the end, everything is good.”* In other words, his conclusion is that this is truly a wonderful world in which we are placed to respond to the Spirit of Jesus in the way we live our lives as people of faith, hope and love.

So, with **“Honest Thomas”**, I see one who asks the hard questions and steps forward in faith, accepting the mystery, believing that the Spirit given by the Risen Jesus will guide him into the unknown future, but with the certainty that the Gospel to be proclaimed is indeed Good News for all, despite the setbacks, failures, and things that can go wrong along the way, in all of our lives. And so for us too, as we respond to the Spirit, recognize his presence and live accordingly, with an attitude of peace and reconciliation.

*john hannon*

*24<sup>th</sup> April 2022*