

## 2nd Sunday of Easter 2020

*<sup>24</sup> Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord!' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.' <sup>26</sup> A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' <sup>27</sup> Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.' <sup>28</sup> Thomas said to him, 'My Lord and my God!' <sup>29</sup> Then Jesus told him, 'Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'*

*(John 20:24-29)*

It's difficult to know what to believe. Since the corona virus first hit the headlines there have been all sorts of comments and opinions shared. Even now different countries are adopting different approaches for preventing the spread. What's most important? Handwashing, masks or strict distancing. It depends a bit on your government. Then there are the ideas about causes and cures. They fill several column inches in our papers as well as hitting social media in a never-ending stream. It might be good information but on the other hand it might just be misinformation, as it's termed at the moment – fake news. So we're encouraged to be sceptical. Don't believe anything without proof. In fact we're encouraged to be Thomases.

Thomas was out of the house when Jesus appeared to the majority of the disciples. It had taken them a bit of time to understand what had really happened. Depending on whose account we read of what happened on that first Easter morning, some of the disciples were a bit dubious when the women told them that Jesus was alive. They'd insisted on seeing the empty tomb for themselves and even then we're not quite sure whether they understood what had really happened. But then Jesus appeared to them. He came into the house where they were staying, greeted them and commissioned them to go into the world.

But Thomas wasn't there. We don't know where he was. What we do know is that he wasn't prepared to believe the other disciples when they said they'd seen Jesus. Thomas needed proof. I can imagine this as being a bone of contention for a while. The disciples were stuck in a house together, being too afraid to go out. We know what it's like, especially at the moment. They would all have felt stressed. Little irritations keep being thrown up so I think this argument would surface and resurface. The ones who'd seen Jesus would have been full of it and Thomas would have been digging his heels in – he needed to see for himself. Then a week later, Jesus came again, and Jesus understood. He understood that Thomas needed proof so he gave him that proof.

I think there are times when we all feel like Thomas, perhaps more so than usual at this point in time. For a start, we're being encouraged to be sceptical. As well as that it's a time of uncertainty and it can be very easy to feel that everything we've believed in is going by the board. People are dying at an unprecedented rate and we don't know how much longer our key services can cope. On top of it all our churches are shut. The places where we've felt our prayers being listened to are no longer open to us. It wouldn't be surprising if we were having doubts about the presence of Jesus in the here and now. Having said that, in-between all the fake news and misinformation, the Christian message is emerging on broadcast media and on social media. Jesus has moved from our churches right into our homes. Just as he entered the house where the disciples were staying, just as he met with Thomas, he comes to us. So we can let go of our doubts and simply listen out for his message. 'Peace be with you.' Amen