

EASTER 2 2025 TG “My Lord and my God” dtw

John 20.28: Thomas answered Jesus, “My Lord and my God!”

One way or another, Thomas, like Martha and a few other figures in the NT, has had a pretty hard time at the hands of preachers and commentators. It is all too easy to magnify his faults and ignore his virtues; but then, we human beings are good at doing that. I like that saying, “Be quick to praise, slow to condemn”. But look at all the disciples – all sorts of problems with their faith, not just with Thomas. None of them was exactly full of the joys of the Lord at the beginning of today’s gospel. They were in the house with the doors shut tight, in fear – all except poor Tom. Imagine it – a great key turned in the lock- perhaps a bar across the door as well – and all the shutters on the windows screwed into position – for fear of the Jews it says. You might do the same yourself if you had seen your best friend murdered and wondered if your turn was next. But then, without anything opening or shutting, there he is – in the midst – the Lord! And one by one the disciples get all the goodies – all except Thomas. “Peace be with you,” he says – imagine that. The fairly conventional greeting, ‘Shalom’ would never be quite the same again- rather like him coming to us and saying ‘Good Morning’ and we would at once know that those words could never have the same merely conventional meaning again. And today, once more, the ever-present risen Lord will be there again in that greeting within this Eucharist: ‘Peace be with you’. Then with that greeting he commissions his disciples: “as the Father has sent me, even so I send you.” He breathes on them his Holy Spirit and gives them authority as ministers of reconciliation, the same words prayed over every priest at his or her ordination. But Thomas missed out on all this.

Who is this Thomas anyway? In the first 3 gospels he is no more than a name. Fortunately, it is St John who gives us 3 different and profound glimpses into the role and character of Thomas.

There is the person of **COURAGE**: Back in chapter 11, when Jesus announces that he will go to Bethany in Judea to raise Lazarus. Judea was hostile to Jesus – the authorities were plotting to kill him. It seemed disastrous but Thomas speaks up and says, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.” He obviously saw that the way ahead was full of danger – but if Jesus was prepared to face death, Thomas would too. Here is a man determined to be faithful, courageous, though later, no doubt like Peter who said he would also die, Thomas would despair. Perhaps you too have had moments of courage later compromised by fear? I’m sure many of us have.

Three chapters later we have another glimpse: this time we find an **HONEST** Thomas. He would not pretend to know something he didn’t, to have insight that he didn’t possess. Jesus tells the disciples that he is going to prepare a dwelling place for them in that beautiful passage we often read at funerals. And Jesus adds, “Where I am going you know, and the way you know.” At once Thomas blurts out, “Lord, we do not know where you are going, how can we know the way?” It was a bold thing for Thomas to do, to contradict his master, but he must be honest. And aren’t we so glad that Thomas asked the question?! For his protest brings back from Jesus the immortal words that have chiselled the rock of faith in human hearts down the centuries of Christianity: “I am the way and the truth and the life...” A scriptural gem – and all because Thomas just wanted some clarification. I like that other saying, “Don’t

be afraid to ask; chances are that someone else isn't sure either." - and I'll bet most of the disciples were pretty confused. Thomas may have been ignorant but he obviously couldn't handle pretence, he was too honest. He has something to teach us. We need to be sincere with each other, genuine in our dealings, our conversation, our witness and worship. We can't fool God. Why should we try to fool others?

And now we come to our Gospel passage. The first section, as we have seen, describes the appearance of the raised Christ to the disciples behind closed doors on the first Easter night. But Thomas wasn't there. Later Thomas rejoins them but stubbornly refuses to believe their account of seeing the Lord. It seems that the more they try to convince him, the more Thomas gets worked up, until his protestations are even crude: "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark..and my hand in his side, I will not believe". Here is doubting Thomas with a vengeance and doesn't he speak for a lot of people since, every person with even a slight bit of scepticism who reckons that seeing is believing? Yet Thomas will realise almost straight away that seeing is no guarantee of believing; it did not constitute a leap of faith any more for him than it would for us. But he could not force himself to believe any more than you and I can lead a horse to water and make it drink. He wanted to be convinced beyond doubt that Jesus was alive. The very fact that he had not been with the disciples earlier may have meant that he was plunged into an even greater spiritual darkness than they were; just needed to be alone...(you know people like that?)...

But now he is with them. Again the Lord comes into their midst behind closed doors and again with those so familiar yet transformed words "Peace be with you" he turns specifically to Thomas, "Put you finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and place it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." Yet Thomas clearly does not take this chance to proof test. He responds with something as far removed from scepticism as you can get, "My Lord and my God!". This is no mere physical satisfaction – this is **SPIRITUAL CONVICTION** – beyond all doubt. Here is a person brought into the presence of his very God. To the courage and honesty of Thomas we can now add total conviction and this brought about by much more than *physical seeing*. Hence Jesus' powerful words, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe". And all of us, two thousand years later, are in that camp.

At some point in our lives God has to become REAL for us, for you and for me, as he did for Thomas. This is why, happily, we can all identify with him. It may be a trouble we overcame unexpectedly, a joy that came our way that we never dreamed of, or a quite definite conversion experience. Or perhaps a hopeless situation cast in a brand new light. But whatever it was, it made us exclaim, like the big "Aha!" or the big "Wow!", "My Lord and my God!"

This Christ crashes through all the barriers we can ever set up; that's what Thomas discovered. *Be that Thomas*. When Christ truly comes to you, he can never leave you as you were before. You will see him with different eyes. With his presence life of a different kind begins. He says, "Peace be with you", gives you today his Body and his Blood. Do not doubt but believe. Will you discern his presence? Will you say, "My Lord and my God!" in the Breaking of the Bread?