

*Through the written word,
and the spoken word,
may we come to know the Living Word
Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen*

MOVE 1

Welcome to the week after. Many of you will be aware that today is traditionally known as "Low Sunday". "Low", in contrast to the "high" pageantry and grandeur of the Easter Triduum. However, the cynic might suggest "low" because - well just look around, we're somewhat fewer this week... Easter numbers have taken a hit.

Last Sunday it was all resurrection, victory, triumph and alleluias. Scott shouted, "Christ is risen", and we shouted back, "He is risen indeed". But today, Low Sunday, represents *back to normal, business as usual*, or as Shaun from The Chase might say "*Just another day at the office*".

Yes, I enjoy celebrations and parties as much as the next person, - yet I welcome this recognition of the *regular*, the *ordinary*, the *routine*. For, truth be told, most of the time I don't live ten feet above the ground. Most of the time I walk on the hard unyielding concrete of the city - and I expect you do to. So welcome to the week after - the reality of Low Sunday.

MOVE 2

Which brings us to our assigned Gospel reading. For this is a Low Sunday text if ever there was one. Oh, it starts off on a high Easter Sunday note:

- Fearful and cowering disciples
- locked doors
- an appearance of the risen Lord
- ending in great rejoicing... "Alleluia Christ is risen, he is risen indeed!"

But then, quickly follows Low Sunday. A week later, and almost a repeat performance from the earlier week:

- Fearful and cowering disciples
- locked doors
- the appearance of the risen Lord
- but this time no rejoicing...

just a headstrong, pragmatic, down-to-earth Thomas with arms folded: "Unless I see... the print of the nails... and my hand in his side, I will not believe." Low Sunday!

MOVE 3

I for one am grateful that John includes the story of Thomas in his Gospel. As a young person, new to the faith, I thought the gospel was:

- good news and no bad,
- victory and no defeat,
- all joy and no sorrow.

My Jesus was a strong, strapping Jesus, fighting for me. And it became important to present this muscular version of Christianity to others. I tried to pummel myself into a model of moral perfection. But all the time it was choking me on the inside.

And it goes without saying that when I read about "Doubting Thomas", well, Thomas was the bad guy, the cynic, the unbeliever - the loser. The supposition was that Thomas was full of flaws and had weak faith. "Serves himself right" says me "for missing out on Jesus - what do you expect if you don't turn up for church!" Yes, Thomas was the anti-hero, the one NOT to copy!

(Pause)

But I've got to be honest. I no longer see Thomas in that light. Instead, I see:

- someone who's not prepared to base his faith on hearsay,
- someone who's not inclined to just go along with the crowd,
- someone who's not content to piggy-back on someone else's experience,

I see a person with the cheek to admit uncertainty. Someone with the audacity to turn up to church with a wheelbarrow full of awkward questions, yet still somehow hoping to find Jesus for himself. No! Thomas wasn't a heretic! - he was seeking a living encounter with Jesus for himself!

MOVE 4

Thomas reminds me that resurrection is never easy. It was hard from day one. People back then no more believed that dead people come back to life than people today. It's hard to accept - hard to internalize - hard to apply to our lives. If nothing else, Thomas shows us that faith is not necessarily plain sailing... there are questions, frustrations, and struggles. And you know something? That's OK.

- It's OK to waver
- It's OK to question
- It's OK to take our time.

Maybe... (and I think I might be on to something here!) - maybe we could think of doubt not so much as a thorn of unbelief to be dug out, but more like a seed of faith to be nurtured. In the last verse of today's Gospel, John says that he wrote this account in the hope that it's his readers might come to believe. The implication is that faith is not necessarily instantaneous. OK, for some faith is like Velcro - we make contact and instantly stick. For others of us - well... well, it's more like cheese-maker in that Mainland ad - you know, "Good things take time". Maybe that's why the earliest Christians referred to the Christian faith as "The Way"... Because a "way" is not a destination - it's an invitation to take a journey - to get on board and make some discoveries along the way...

MOVE 5

Yes, John chose to tell the story of this tenacious, stropky doubter, not to belittle or smear Thomas, but rather to help us believe. In the footsteps of the doubting disciple, you and I are invited to voice our desires and hopes – and yes, our doubts. We are given permission to bring ambiguity, uncertainty, hesitancy, and perplexity to church. Yes, we're even given permission to feel a little envious... envious of those with Velcro-like faith, or those who have experienced Jesus more dramatically than we have.

So, if you, like me, relate to Thomas. If you too find something in common with the doubter, take heart! Take heart in the fact that Thomas took his time in coming to Jesus. And lean into the amazing fact that Jesus allowed him all the time he needed. Take heart also that by inviting Thomas to reach out his hand and put it into his side Jesus was literally sharing his broken body so that Thomas could come to wholeness. Today, this very same invitation is open to everyone of us.

Amen.