

EASTER THOUGHTS

Of course Easter isn't over, just because Easter Sunday has passed, such is the significance of the events that day, that Christians everywhere celebrate until Ascension and Pentecost.

So it is no surprise that the Gospel reading for the second Sunday of Easter (19th April) tells us of further appearances of the Risen Christ, from John's Gospel Chapter 20: 19- 31 and on reflecting upon it I find it particularly relevant to our present lockdown situation, albeit for somewhat different reasons. We are acting on scientific and medical advice, in response to a very real fear of the Covid-19 virus. The disciples of Jesus are also in self-imposed lockdown, prompted also by fear, though of course their reasons are entirely different. They are scared for their safety following the crucifixion of Jesus. If they are too much in evidence will they be picked off next?

For reasons of his own, Thomas is not with the locked down disciples, when Jesus comes to them. Perhaps he alone realised that the authorities, having thought they'd got rid of Jesus, were not bothered about his ragbag followers. Get rid of the ringleader and the others will fizzle out. Or perhaps Thomas no longer cared about his safety, remember it was he, who supported Jesus in his decision to head for Jerusalem and certain death saying "then let us go and die with him".

So when the disciples say they have seen the Lord, Thomas refuses point blank to believe – "unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger in the mark of the nails, and my hand in his side I will not believe".

A week later it was a different story. They were in the same room and this time Thomas was with them. Again Jesus came to them, with his customary greeting "Peace be with you". Thomas' response to Jesus' invitation is simple and profound, he no longer needs to touch the evidence "My Lord and my God". Thomas doubts no more and his response feels honest and authentic. He has summed up the entire meaning of the Gospel in a simple phrase.

Jesus' response to the disciples is a simple question, followed by a Beatitude, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe". That is, of course, addressed to all of us as we continue to celebrate Easter, and the reality of the Risen Lord, bringing us hope in our current situations.

May the Risen Lord bring you joy and hope, and enable us to show your love to one another in these difficult times

Alice