

# TO BELIEVE OR NOT TO BELIEVE ...

(JOHN 20:19-31)

*Stained glass window depicting Thomas' encounter with the risen Jesus*

Our Gospel passage today relates two occasions when the disciples experience the risen Jesus among them. The first takes place on the evening of Easter Sunday, when Jesus had made himself known to Mary Magdalene. The setting has a negative tone, that of fear on the part of the disciples, fear which turns to joy as Jesus' promise that they would see him again is fulfilled.

One of the differences between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptics is that, in John's account, the disciples have no part in Jesus' ministry. There are no "apostles", only "disciples". Jesus acts alone. Now, the risen Jesus commissions the disciples to carry on his work and bestows on them the Holy Spirit by breathing on them in a gesture reminiscent of the Lord God infusing the breath of life into the first human being. As well as bringing eternal life, the gift of the Holy Spirit empowers the disciples to forgive or retain sins, which will be part of their mission.

A week later, Thomas, the disciple who represents the sceptical point of view, encounters the risen Jesus for himself. Jesus challenges him to set aside his doubts about the testimony of the others by testing the reality of Jesus' wounds. Thomas does not actually touch Jesus' hands and side, but makes the supreme declaration of faith in Jesus as "My Lord and my God!"

The Gospel according to John ends with the statement often called "the Johannine Beatitude", with Jesus saying to Thomas, and therefore to all of us, whom Thomas represents, "Happy [Blessed] are those who have not seen and yet believe." ■

## REFLECT

The main theme running through the Fourth Gospel is that of believing. In the various characters who appear in dialogue or meetings with Jesus, John presents us with different reactions to Jesus and his message. In our passage today, Jesus commissions his disciples to continue his mission of confronting people and bringing them to a point of crisis or decision as to whether they will believe or not. Jesus actually says to Thomas, "Do not be an unbelieving person, but a believing one". In the mission of passing on the good news, a positive decision will be expressed by the person being baptised and entering a new life with the risen Jesus, with their sins forgiven. A negative choice will result in not being baptised.

The celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation developed in the Church well after the writing of the Gospel accounts in response to difficult situations which affected the community as a whole. The practice of individual confession came later again. Although the forgiving or retaining of sins may suggest to us this familiar practice, we might bear in mind that the Gospel text refers to the decision of the person about accepting baptism. The disciples are not being given the power or the right to determine whether or not someone deserves to be absolved of their faults. It is the person who judges themselves by deciding to believe or not. ■

## LEARN

The noun "faith" does not occur in the Fourth Gospel: the verb "to believe" is found nearly one hundred times:

Belief in Jesus is, therefore, not something we "possess", but something we "do" or "put into practice".

The individuals who appear in the Gospel according to John, such as Thomas, represent different types of people and their reaction to Jesus and his message.

## DO

As you close your door in the evening, put yourself in the place of the disciples: be aware that the risen Lord is with you with his loving (not judgemental) presence.

## SAY

Blessed am I who have not seen and yet believe.  
(see John 20:29)

**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

Like newborn infants, you must long for the pure, spiritual milk, that in him you may grow to salvation, alleluia.

**GLORIA**

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

**COLLECT**

God of everlasting mercy, who in the very recurrence of the paschal feast kindle the faith of the people you have made your own, increase, we pray, the grace you have bestowed, that all may grasp and rightly understand in what font they have been washed, by whose Spirit they have been reborn, by whose Blood they have been redeemed. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**FIRST READING**

Acts 4:32-35

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles. The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul; no one claimed for his own use anything that he had, as everything they owned was held in common.

The apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus with great power, and they were all given great respect.

None of their members was ever in want, as all those who owned land or houses would sell them, and bring the money from them, to present it to the apostles; it was then distributed to any members who might be in need.

The word of the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

**PSALM**

Psalm 117

Response:

Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, for his love has no end.

or  
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

1. Let the sons of Israel say:  
"His love has no end."

Let the sons of Aaron say:  
"His love has no end."  
Let those who fear the Lord say:  
"His love has no end." (R.)

2. The Lord's right hand has triumphed; his right hand raised me up. I shall not die, I shall live and recount his deeds. I was punished, I was punished by the Lord, but not doomed to die. (R.)

3. The stone which the builders rejected has become the corner stone. This is the work of the Lord, a marvel in our eyes. This day was made by the Lord; we rejoice and are glad. (R.)

**SECOND READING**

1 John 5:1-6

A reading from the first letter of St John. Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ has been begotten by God; and whoever loves the Father that begot him loves the child whom he begets. We can be sure that we love God's children if we love God himself and do what he has commanded us; this is what loving God is – keeping his commandments; and his commandments are not difficult, because anyone who has been begotten by God has already overcome the world; this is the victory over the world – our faith. Who can overcome the world? Only the man who believes that Jesus is the Son of God; Jesus Christ who came by water and blood, not with water only, but with water and blood; with the Spirit as another witness – since the Spirit is the truth. The word of the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Alleluia, alleluia!

Jesus said: "You believe because you can see me.

Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe."

Alleluia!

**GOSPEL**

John 20:19-31

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, "Peace be with you," and showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord, and he said to them again, "Peace be with you.

"As the Father sent me so am I sending you,"

After saying this he breathed on them and said:

"Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain, they are retained."

Thomas, called the Twin, who was one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. When the disciples said, "We have seen the Lord," he answered, "Unless I see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe." Eight days later the disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them. The doors were closed, but Jesus came in and stood among them. "Peace be with you," he said. Then he spoke to Thomas, "Put your finger here; look, here are my hands. Give me your hand; put it into my side. Doubt no longer but believe." Thomas replied, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him:

"You believe because you can see me. Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe."

There were many other signs that Jesus worked and the disciples saw, but they are not recorded in this book. These are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing this you may have life through his name.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

**PROFESSION OF FAITH**

I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, *(all bow during the next two lines)*

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended into hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

**PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Accept, O Lord, we pray, the oblations of your people (and of those you have brought to new birth), that, renewed by confession of your name and by Baptism, they may attain unending happiness. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

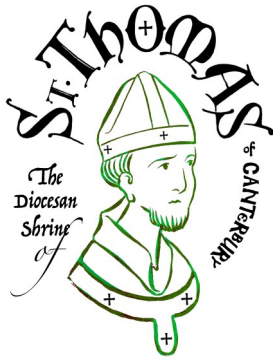
**COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

Bring your hand and feel the place of the nails, and do not be unbelieving but believing, alleluia.

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Grant, we pray, almighty God, that our reception of this paschal Sacrament may have a continuing effect in our minds and hearts. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

# NEWSLETTER



## CATHOLIC CHURCH OF ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY

59 Burgate Canterbury Kent CT1 2HJ

Telephone: **01227 462896** Email: [canterbury@rcaos.org.uk](mailto:canterbury@rcaos.org.uk)

Web Site: <https://stthomasofcanterbury.com> St Thomas of Canterbury

Parish Priest: Canon Anthony Charlton email: [anthonycharlton@rcaos.org.uk](mailto:anthonycharlton@rcaos.org.uk)

Assistant Priest: Fr John Howard

email: [johnhoward@rcaos.org.uk](mailto:johnhoward@rcaos.org.uk)

Parish Administrator: Miss Linda Scott

**St Thomas' Shop** (01227 462896): **OPEN SUNDAYS FROM AFTER 9.30 MASS UNTIL 12 NOON**

**University of Kent Chaplaincy:** Fr Tom Herbst (01843 230 774) email: [tjherbst@gmail.com](mailto:tjherbst@gmail.com)

**St Thomas' Catholic Primary School:** Head Teacher: Miss Lisa D'Agostini (01227 462539)

**St Anselm's Catholic Secondary School:** Exec Prin: Mr M Walters; Academy Prin: Mr J Rowarth (01227 826200)

The Parish Office is open Mondays and Fridays  
9.30am to 3.00pm (closed 12.30 - 1pm for lunch)  
Linda works from home Tues & Thurs - please email

### ALL MASSES ARE LIVESTREAMED

6.00 pm (Vigil): Bishop Charles Henderson - RIP

**Sunday 11th Apr: Second Sunday of Easter** Jn 20:19-31  
**DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY**

8.00am: People of the Parish

9.30am: John & Jackie Thackray - Thanksgiving on 50th  
Wedding Anniversary

11.00am: for Martina's Private Intentions

3.00pm: Adoration and Divine Worship Chaplet

6.00 pm: for Darlene Letey's Private Intentions

**Monday 12th Apr: Feria** Jn 3: 1-8

7.30 am: Margaret Turner - RIP (Geraldine & Edwin Yates)

10.30am: Church open for private prayer and adoration

12 noon: Tom Hickey on his birthday

6.00pm: Live-streamed Prayer

**Tuesday 13th Apr: St Martin I, Pope & Martyr** Jn 3: 7-15

10.30am: Church open for private prayer and adoration

12 noon: Jean Parker - RIP (Geraldine & Edwin Yates)

6.00pm: Live-streamed Prayer

**Wednesday 14th Apr: Feria** Jn 3: 16-21

7.30 am: Michael Stack - Covid Recovery (Geraldine & Edwin)

10.30am - 11.30pm: Reconciliation

10.30am: Church open for private prayer and adoration

12 noon: Aleyamma Abraham - RIP (Jomon Family)

6.00pm: Live-streamed Prayer

**Thursday 15th Apr: Feria** Jn 3:31-36

7.30 am: for the British Army (James Pullicino)

10.30am: Church open for private prayer and adoration

12 noon: Victoria Fetherston-Dilke

6.00pm: Live-streamed Prayer

**Friday 16th Apr: Feria** Jn 6:1-15

10.30am: Church open for private prayer and adoration

12 noon: His Holiness Benedict XVI on his birthday

1.00pm: Church open for private prayer and adoration

6.00pm: Live-streamed Prayer

7.30pm: Welfare of Sisters Bridie & Betty (Coolock Convent)

**Saturday 17th Apr: Feria** Jn 6:16-21

10.30am - 11.30pm: Reconciliation

10.30am: Church open for private prayer and adoration

12 noon: Gordon Ventress - RIP (Pauline Ventress)

6.00 pm (Vigil): James Scott - RIP (Kathleen Kerr)

**Sunday 18th Apr: Third Sunday of Easter** Lk 24:35-48

8.00am: Welfare of Family of Mary Wright

9.30am: Becky Judge - RIP (Annie & John)

11.00am: Cyril Benedict Hardy - RIP (Richard & Elaine)

12.15pm: Baptism of Avery Perez Dennis-Mensan

**4.30 pm: Parish Annual General Meeting via Zoom**

6.00 pm: People of the Parish

2nd Collection: **SVP**

### PARISH MATTERS

#### Please remember in your prayers:

Marie Strong, Angeline Frizell, Luisa Ward, Janette Hughes, Barbara Brett, Mary Dittrich, Pat Gibson, Jenni Aldridge, Mary Reynolds, Brian Wicker, Joan Sutton, Audrey Martin, Elizabeth Gilhenny, Bill Parker, Lucy Purbrick, Josie Carr, Simon Lam, Sr Anne Bross (formerly of our parish), Pippa Swan, Fr John Slater, Jennifer Lang, Pauline Lilford, Barbara Markham, Patricia Gray, Patrick Sellars, Fr Kevin Alban O.Carm, Sr Margaret McGrath, Angela Nichols, Jean Boyce

#### Please pray for the repose of the souls of:

Patricia Collins, Andrzej Czupkowski, Chris Bateman, Pia Iannacci, Antonio Iannacci, Ellen Fitzgerald, Anna Koeller, Fr Michael Gwinnett, Ann Sexton, Paulina Manfredini, Fr Michael Boland, Fr George Webster, Theresa Ramsundar, Canon Frank O'Sullivan, Margaret Willis, Rev Paul Saunders, Sylvia Guy, Pat Gill, Baby Layla Green, Paul Card, Alan Skeet, Rodolfo Ignacio, Isabella Bannon and Prince Philip - Duke of Edinburgh

#### Please pray for those whose 1st anniversaries are this month:

John Todd and Maria Prado

#### COLLECTIONS: Our retiring collections:

**This weekend: 10/11 April:** No second collection

**Next weekend: 17/18 April:** for the work of the **SVP**

#### DATE FOR YOUR DIARY:

**Sunday, 18 April - Parish Annual General Meeting at 4.30pm** remotely via Zoom. The Link will be in the newsletter next week.

**SVP:** many of you have generously donated a number of items during lockdown. These are being passed on to people who can use and appreciate them. As we do not have storage space at the church, and Charity Shops are reopening, please now give direct to them. Thank you for your support.

Father John, Canon Anthony and Mgr John would like to thank all of you for your cards and best wishes for Easter

**GIFT AID ENVELOPES:** Do you gift aid by direct debit? If you do, please check the table in the Saints Chapel for a white envelope containing Gift Aid envelopes for the Second collections. Thank you

**CAFOD LENTEN FAST DAY:** Cafod would like to thank all parishioners for your generous donations to their Fast Day on 26 February 2021. We raised £1058.91 here in St Thomas'.

I still remember the image that Pope St John Paul II used on the day he was consecrated Pope on 22nd October 1978 when he said, "Brothers and sisters, do not be afraid to welcome Christ and accept his power.... Do not be afraid. Open wide the doors for Christ." These words came back to me as I reflected on John 20:19-31.

In the gospel today, Jesus came through the closed doors where the disciples were and said "peace be with you". The risen Jesus entered to free them from fear. The resurrection means that no lock or no bar can stop the Risen one from coming in and touching our hearts. Jesus breathed on the disciples and said: "Receive the Holy Spirit."

This was wonderful encounter with Jesus, risen from the dead. But Thomas was not with them. Some refers to Thomas as "doubting" Thomas, because he said, 'Unless I see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe.' As one writer points out "Thomas is not a doubter but someone who seeks experience. He does not content himself with just believing what others tell him. He wants to see, feel, touch for himself." All of us desire an experience of God, an experience of the risen Christ. Jesus stands among us who perhaps are still full of fear, who have closed hearts. Every Sunday as we celebrate the Eucharist Jesus stands among us. On that eighth day Thomas touched the wounds of Christ. Each Sunday at Mass Jesus allows us to touch him. "When he puts his body into our hands under the appearance of bread, the we place our finger into his wound, because it is his flesh, which he has given up for us, which he gave for the life of the world." (Anselm Grun). When we receive the risen Lord in Holy communion, like St Thomas, we can say "My Lord and my God"

This Sunday is now known as Divine Mercy Sunday. The devotion of Divine Mercy was actively promoted by Pope St John Paul II. On April 30, 2000, the Canonisation of Faustina Kowalska took place and the second Sunday of Easter was officially designated as the Sunday of the Divine Mercy (*Dominica II Paschae seu de divina misericordia*) in the General Roman Calendar.

At the altar of St Joseph, we have Divine Mercy image. Jesus is shown, as raising his right hand in blessing and pointing with his left hand on the Sacred Heart from which flow forth two rays: one red and one pale. The depiction contains the message "Jesus I trust in you" The rays that stream out have symbolic meanings: red for the blood of Jesus and pale for the water. The whole image is a symbol of charity, forgiveness and love of God referred to as the "Fountain of Mercy. According to Faustina's diary, the image is based on her 1931 vision of Jesus.

On the last day of the Octave of Easter let us have the courage to come back to Jesus, to open the door of our heart to him, to meet his love and mercy in the sacraments. May we feel his closeness and tenderness. We say with faith "My Lord and my God. Jesus, I Trust you"

**Marriage & Family Life Bereavement Support Trainers:**

The Marriage and Family Life team are seeking volunteers who would be interested in being trained to train others in Bereavement support ministry at parish and deanery level. An introductory meeting will take place remotely, **via zoom** from 10am to 11am, on Saturday 8th May. Please email Elizabeth Partridge at: [mflbereavement@rcaos.org.uk](mailto:mflbereavement@rcaos.org.uk) to register and receive the zoom meeting joining details. Subsequent online training meetings are planned. Further details at the introductory meeting.

**THE LEPROSY MISSION - UNCONDITIONAL APPEAL:** All donations to the Leprosy Mission before 24 April 2021 will be matched by the UK Government to support the Missions work finding and treating Leprosy sufferers in Mozambique:  
£24 (doubled to £48) finds and cures two people of Leprosy.  
£35 (doubled to £70) trains a Leprosy Changemaker - local people trained to recognise early signs of leprosy to help catch the disease early.  
More information via 01733 370505 or [post@TLMEW.org.uk](mailto:post@TLMEW.org.uk)  
Please give generously online at: [unconditionalappeal.org.uk](http://unconditionalappeal.org.uk)

**DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY:** This Sunday, 11th April 2021 is Divine Mercy Sunday and there will be Adoration and the Chaplet in the Church from 3pm.

**CONTACTING THE PARISH OFFICE.** Please use only the email [canterbury@rcaos.org.uk](mailto:canterbury@rcaos.org.uk) to contact the Parish office as the Parish Administrator, Linda, does not have access to any other email addresses.

Get our Parish Newsletter emailed directly to you by subscribing at [stthomasofcanterbury.com/newsletters/](http://stthomasofcanterbury.com/newsletters/)  
This weekly eNewsletter also shares additional information from around the Parish.

Under the current restrictions, Linda is only in the office on Mondays and Fridays but is working from home on Tuesdays and Thursdays where she has access to the parish email. If you wish to speak with her, please send an email with a contact telephone number and she will phone you back.

**THANK YOU** to everyone who continues to send in their Mass donations, weekly collections and other very generous payments to the parish funds.