

We live in a world that is dominated by technology. In our lifetimes we have seen the arrival of the mobile phone, the laptop, the pc, the Internet. We have become rapidly used to such innovations and quickly imported them into our lives. My own son is 18 months old. His ability to use mobile phones and remote controls seems amazing to me and I am sure you have seen the same in your children and grandchildren. We truly live in an interactive age with instant news on our phones, flat screen 3D TV's, films and television streamed on the Internet. We have access to all the information and disinformation in the world with just the click of a mouse key. We are constantly bombarded with visual media, adds, special effects and computer generated graphics and games. In our society, seeing is truly believing. And very often if we do not see something ourselves, then we do not believe.

Yet this human trait is not just reserved for our present day society. In this morning's gospel reading from the gospel according to John, chapter 20, beginning at the 19<sup>th</sup> verse, we see Thomas not believing that Jesus was resurrected because he himself did not witness evidence of Jesus' resurrection.

But Thomas (who was called The twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him ' We have seen the Lord.'

But he said to them '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.

Here is the original doubting Thomas. Thomas will not believe that Jesus has risen unless he sees it himself. As Christians we cannot judge Thomas too harshly as we are prone to this failing. Instead of having faith, we require

proof. Many of my friends who are not regular churchgoers have said those immortal lines ‘ I believe in something but what proof is there?’ It is a weakness of our society that we feel that we need visual evidence in order to believe. It is a reflection on how the need for empirical data and hard evidence, have come to dominate our society.

Thomas is given his hard evidence when Jesus appears to him and the other disciples eight days later.

Then he said to Thomas, ‘ put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.’ Thomas answered him, ‘my Lord and my God!’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.’

As we go through our daily lives, our faith can become tested. In our ministries and callings to serve our church, we should remember those words that Jesus spoke to Thomas ‘Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.’ We have not seen Jesus but we have seen his works and the power of his word. Our faith will continue to be tested as we face the trials and tribulations of our lives. But it will also be renewed and revitalised through our communities and our service. Our belief in Jesus will carry us through all the shadows that we may face.

Yet questioning can reinforce our faith. Without questions we would not have all the innovations that we have today. Questions bring about growth and development and this applies to our faith. We should not be afraid to ask questions. Thomas himself was not afraid

to question, yet we now cast him as a sceptic or a pessimist. John 14:6 describes Thomas asking Jesus how they will know the way because they don't know where Jesus is going. Jesus replies that he is the way, the truth and the life. Though he questions Jesus, Thomas was one of Jesus' most loyal and faithful disciples. John 11:16 describes Thomas as being willing to follow Jesus to the tomb of Lazarus, calling on his slightly unwilling fellow disciples, 'let us also go, that we may die with him.'

As for doubting Thomas, he went on to spread the word of Jesus in Asia and the Indian subcontinents and founded churches as he travelled. He is one of the only apostles to have left the territory of the Roman Empire and met a martyr's death, killed by a spear near Madras, India. He is deemed to be the founding father of the church in Kerala, in Southern India, which thrives to this

day. So Thomas is a great example for us all in our own lives, showing us that a little bit of self doubt and questions will not hold us back from reaching our own potential, as we develop and grow our own ministries in God's church, through our faith in Christ!

May we, O God, by grace believe

And, in believing, still receive

the Christ who held His raw palms out

and beckoned Thomas from his doubt.

(Thomas Troeger, 1984, Psalter/Hymnal of the Christian Reformed Church)

Almighty and everliving God, who strengthened your apostle Thomas With sure and certain faith in your Son's resurrection: Grant us so perfectly and without doubt to believe in Jesus Christ, our Lord

and our God, that our faith may never be found  
wanting in your sight; through him who lives and  
reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now  
and for ever.

Amen.