

Second Sunday of Easter (B)

During excavations in Egypt during the 1920's, archaeologists found a handful of wheat in a tomb belonging to one of its ancient Kings. The wheat would have been about 5000 years old. Someone decided to plant the grains and, to their amazement, they came to life.

Our faith in the Resurrection will be like those dormant grains unless we believe that Jesus is still present with us as a real living person, mindful of the fact we don't see him in the flesh. He touches my life in the here and now with His reassuring presence especially at Mass.

There is an old French proverb which says: 'God often visits us but mostly we're not at home'. That's what happened to doubting Thomas. We're 'not at home' if our faith in Him is merely academic or if we believe that science explains everything. That doesn't at all mean the Church is anti-science as some make out. The first Observatory in the world, for instance, was in the Vatican. The first Universities in Europe which became the model of all universities were mostly founded by the Church and included faculties on natural philosophy and physics. I know the church censured Galileo but it wasn't because the Church discounted his theory that the Earth circled the Sun, as some make out, but because they wanted him to treat it as a hypothesis rather than the undeniable truth but he wouldn't listen. That was the nub of the problem. The protestant Church at the time actually condemned his theory as anti-scriptural. That's what happens when the bible is interpreted too literally.

Thomas would not believe that Jesus had risen until he'd seen Him in the flesh. But Jesus gently tells him: '*blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe*'. Well, that includes us.

The resurrection has more to do with transformation of the inner man or woman than seeing Him in the flesh. If Jesus

were to walk into this church right now, after all the initial excitement had died down, would there be any guarantee that we would go out and live better lives on the strength of it? I doubt it. Jesus didn't come down from the Cross when challenged because he knew that if he did, the people would still not believe in Him. He worked hundreds of miracles for all to see but they still put Him on the Cross. It's a bit like the moon landing in 1969. Many people even to this day believe it was all a fabrication no matter what the evidence.

The doctrine of the resurrection is the cornerstone on which our faith is built. Tamper with that and we shake its very foundations. St Paul reminds us that 'if Christ is not risen then all our believing comes to nothing'.

The Church wasn't built on 'doubting thomases' but on the unshakable belief that Jesus rose from the dead in his human body and is with us in the church until the end of time.

Thomas wanted to touch the Lord's wounds. But it is he who is touched when the Risen Jesus pays him a surprise visit. He visits us in Holy Communion. Unlike Thomas may we never doubt his presence with us.