

Easter 2 (ABC)

During excavations in Egypt during the 1920's, archaeologists found a handful of wheat roughly 5000 years old in a tomb belonging to one of its ancient Kings. Someone decided to sow the ancient grains and, to their amazement, they grew.

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

There is an old French proverb which says: 'God often visits us but mostly we're not at home' - like doubting Thomas. We're 'not at home' if our faith in Him is merely academic – all head and no heart. We're not 'at home' if we believe that science has the answer to everything. Thomas needed observable data before he'd believe anything. 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, founded and run by the Catholic Church, included faculties on natural philosophy and physics. For Catholics, faith and reason run conjointly.

Doubting 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 Jesus in the flesh. It is interesting to note that on the four or five occasions when He appeared to the disciples after the Resurrection they had problems recognising Him. Mary Magdalene thought he was the gardener, the apostles fishing on the Sea of Galilee thought he was a ghost standing on the shore. The Emmaus disciples saw Him as a total stranger. If Jesus in the flesh

were to breeze into this church right now, after the dust had settled, would there be any guarantee that we would go out and live better lives on the strength of it? I doubt it. The people who conspired against Jesus and had Him put on the Cross saw him in the flesh. They saw his awe-inspiring miracles even raising people from the dead but that didn't sway their hard hearts. The words of Jesus recorded in Scripture are far more important than glimpsing Him in the flesh. In John's gospel Jesus says: 'the words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life'. When, through the power of the Spirit, His words become 'fleshed out', as it were, in us, then those 'dormant seeds' of Christ's resurrection will indeed spring to life. We will be, as St Augustine says, Easter People - not just in name but also in fact.

The doctrine of the resurrection is the firm bed-rock on which our faith is built. Tamper with that and we shake its very foundations.

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 sacramentally present with us in the church until the end of time, like He said He would be.