

## Easter 2B

*Despite Jesus's many predictions to the apostles that he would rise from the dead, after the event took place it took a while for them to absorb the news, as in the case of doubting Thomas and others. But once it had fully sunk in there was no stopping them in getting this joyful mind-blowing message out to a wider audience. Quite frankly, if Jesus Christ had not risen from the dead we would probably never have heard of him. The early band of believers, comprising chiefly of eleven demoralised apostles, would have fizzled out on the launch-pad of history.*

Our faith tells us that Jesus is present with us now as a real living person. Even though we don't see him in the flesh - as say Peter or Mary Magdalene did, his invisible presence is meant to touch our lives in the here and now 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. 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 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 irrefutable truth, but he wouldn't have any of it. The Protestant Church at the time actually condemned his theory as anti-scriptural.

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 surely 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, facial recognition proved problematic, as if it didn't really matter. If Jesus in the flesh were to walk into this church right now, after the dust had settled, would there be any guarantee that our lives would change for the better on the strength of it? The words of Jesus recorded in Scripture are far more important than glimpsing Jesus in the flesh. In John's Gospel Jesus says: 'the words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life'. When we take on board His Word and it drops from our head into our heart, the power of His resurrection can indeed shine forth in our lives. We will, as St Augustine says, be Easter People - not just in name but also in fact.

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