

"WHY DID YOU DOUBT"

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 grew and came to life.

My faith in the Resurrection will be like those dormant grains until I come to know Jesus as a real living person who touches my life in the here and now with His reassuring presence.

There is an old French proverb which says: 'God often visits us but mostly we are not at home'. That's what happened to Thomas, the apostle. We're 'not at home' if our faith in Him is just book knowledge or we're hooked on the idea that science explains everything. That doesn't at all mean we're anti-science. After all it was a catholic priest who first came up with the 'big bang theory'.

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's 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 more Christian lives? I doubt it.

However, even though we don't see Jesus in the flesh, we believe in the words He spoke to the apostles before his Ascension: *"behold, I am with you always"*.

In the news recently we've seen where the prime minister was applauded by some and vilified by others for saying we're a Christian country. He was obviously speaking of 'Christian' in the broadest possible terms. I believe it was the Church in this country, singularly catholic for the first thousand years of her existence, which laid the foundation for the values we take for granted. But the division between churches today on many important issues, even on the doctrine of the Resurrection itself, puts a question mark over our overall credibility as a Christian country. The more divided we are, the less credible we become.

Hand in hand with being a Christian, we also believe allegiance to a church is part of the packet. It is primarily through the Church's liturgy and sacraments, especially the Mass, that we encounter the Risen Lord.

Twice, after the Resurrection, Our Lord reveals Himself to the apostles in the context of a meal – a clear reference to the Eucharist. Pope John Paul II, who will be canonised a saint today, said that "*the Eucharist stands at the centre of the Church's life*". Without the Eucharist a vital 'link in the Christian chain' is missing. Put it like this, I wouldn't rely on a 'churchless Christianity' to get me into Heaven which, as the celebrations in Rome today indicate, is our final destiny.

Thomas wanted to touch the Lord's wounds. But it is Thomas who is touched when Jesus reveals to him his true identity – all his doubts disappear. As we grow in faith our doubts will dissipate as well.

QUESTIONS

1. *When might we not be at home when God visits us? Discuss*
2. Will science and religion ever be comfortable bedfellows? Discuss
5. Jesus says: 'I am with you always until the end of time. What does the group think he means by this statement? Discuss
4. When it is said that 'this country is a Christian country' what does this mean? Discuss
5. Is the position and authority of the Pope the 'sticking point' as far as ultimate union with other Christian bodies is concerned? Discuss