

## Reading and reflection Second Sunday of Easter 27 April 2025

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### Reading from the Gospel of John.

*This is John's way of explaining what happened in the days after Jesus was executed.*

The doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the religious authorities. Jesus came and stood among them.

He said to them, 'Peace be with you.'

After saying this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy at seeing him. He said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so am I sending you.'

Thomas, called the Twin, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.

So, the other disciples told him, 'We have seen Jesus'.

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But he answered, 'Unless I can see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe.'

Eight days later the disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them. The doors were closed, but Jesus came in and stood among them. 'Peace be with you,' he said.

Then he spoke to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; look, here are my hands. Give me your hand; put it into my side. Do not be unbelieving anymore but believe.'

Thomas replied, 'My Lord and my God!'

Jesus said to him: 'You believe because you can see me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have faith'.

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Imagine the scene, John, the Gospel writer, in his house in Ephesus, has heard that after Jesus died his followers found a deep sense of peace and faith in the realisation that he still lived even after crucifixion on Calvary. How was he to write about this? This was around 70 years after it happened and he has heard various accounts of how it was back then but he wants to focus on two aspects in particular – the inner peace those early followers had and the faith that held them together. He did not have the conceptual language that we use today but he could, and did, wrap it up in a story. A story so good, it has captured hearts and imaginations ever since.

So good we are tempted to think of Jesus coming bodily through walls instead of recognising that it was the disciples who broke through the walls and limited horizons of their minds and preconceptions.

So good we often miss the point that the peace and faith sensed by those people carried them through a period of what must have been great anxiety and concern about what they were to do next.

**Peace.** The phrase, 'Peace be with you' is repeated three times.

**Faith.** Conviction that Jesus was alive without tangible evidence. John, the storyteller, says Thomas found faith without actually touching Jesus' hands or side.

Both points would have been important for John himself and his friends in Ephesus.

I omitted the part about forgiving sins because it feels like an awkward interpolation from a later date, like the piece in Matthew's Gospel about Peter and the keys of the kingdom.

We, people of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, are now in a position to understand those 'appearances' of Jesus in psychological terms as spiritual or religious experiences. Insights are described as dreams and a series of thoughts is a conversation with an angel. The genius of those writers in conveying their understanding of human behaviour, convictions and the significance of relationships is amazing.

In our times, we see others moving on to describing and explaining such experiences in the language of interiority, feelings, subjectivity, insight, meaning and responsibility. We would all benefit if we would modernise the language and images we use to speak about our faith and the peace it brings to our hearts.

Compassion and care, kin-ship and kin-dom resonate with our age far more than someone coming through the wall.

**Peace and Faith**