

MEETING THE RISEN LORD

As humans, we have two sets of senses: the *external* senses (seeing, touching, hearing *usw*) which measure things and give rise to empirical science with proofs and experiments. And the *internal* senses (feeling, intuition, loving) which are personal and which inspire poetry, music, art, love and friendship. In everyday life, we use both sets of senses, depending on what we want to know or do. We wouldn't use poetry to measure radioactivity or maths to choose a marriage partner. But it would be wrong to think that in matters of faith and religion, only the internal senses matter, even though the heart IS crucial in deciding values and beliefs. It's tempting to see science and religion as in an opposition, whereas really, it's a false dichotomy. For in matters of faith, the external senses, like the internal, are also important, as we see in today's Gospel. THOMAS, PUT YOUR FINGER HERE. GIVE ME YOUR HAND: PUT IT INTO MY SIDE. DOUBT NO LONGER BUT BELIEVE.

In this Gospel, St. John tells us it was Sunday and the apostles were gathered for prayer in a closed room. Jesus appeared among them and breathed on them the Holy Spirit, giving power to forgive sins. Thomas was not with them and like a scientist, he wanted proof for what they had told him. A week later, Jesus gave him that proof, personally. Not only did he give Thomas the external data of touch, sight and sound – this was no ghost but a real person of flesh and blood – but he moved his internal senses; he touched his heart; he filled him with faith, hope and love. No wonder Thomas exclaimed: MY LORD AND MY GOD!

Today, we honour the Divine Mercy of Jesus Christ, with Whom you have spent these last few days in Eucharistic Adoration. The context of this prayer is the Year of Faith which the Church throughout the world has been keeping, and our Diocese of Portsmouth too. A few years ago Sir Fred Hoyle, the famous astronomer, said WHEN I LOOK THROUGH MY TELESCOPE, I CANNOT SEE GOD, although later in life, he admitted the more he studied the universe, the more he believed it to be intelligently designed. Maybe you and I don't have major intellectual problems with our Catholic faith, but I'm sure most of us would like to understand it better and with greater conviction. This is why Easter is exactly the right moment to reflect on this: not only what we believe, but why. If someone asked for proof, what would you say? Or think of Thomas meeting Jesus: Where in your life today do you meet the Risen Christ? The Gospels are keen to tell us where we can meet Him: in prayer, on a journey, eating meals, when gathered with others, reading the Bible, above all in the Mass and sacraments, not least in adoration of the Holy Eucharist. In all these ways, as for Thomas, external and internal evidences coalesce. They confirm for us, that despite doubts and difficulties, Christ IS risen. He is alive. He is with us. He loves us.

HAPPY ARE THOSE WHO HAVE NOT SEEN YET BELIEVE. Today Divine Mercy Sunday, let us thank God for the wonderful gift of our Catholic faith. You and I, unlike St. Thomas, have not touched the Risen Lord, though God has given us the same gift of faith. In this Mass, let us ask him to deepen that faith. Let us ask him for a faith full of joy, full of conviction, full of enthusiasm, a faith we can share with those around us. Indeed, may the love and mercy we receive in every Mass, from the Sacred Heart of Jesus, enable us to persevere in our faith all the days of our life, and thus one day to pass-over with Him to Paradise.