

ST GEORGE'S EASTERGATE, APRIL 19, EASTER2:

Easter has been very different this year hasn't it; we have not been in control; but of course in reality we never are! The world around us is being changed in ways we never expected or thought possible. It was very much like that at the time our readings are describing.

It is easy to consign the stories of the resurrection appearances to history but we are all caught up in God's salvation history. God is working in His world all the time; it is as if there is a time warp; past and present meet, catching us up in it all. In a very real sense we are all in the Resurrection story. God is here with us as He was with those disciples we have just read about; and He is always the same, in control. He is wanting to do for us what he did for them.

Look at the passage we have just read from St John's Gospel; the crucifixion had been devastating, the empty tomb was terrifying. Our familiarity with the story can blind us to the fact that the disciples were utterly exhausted, mentally, physically, and spiritually. They were frightened and behind locked doors. [not unlike our own situation now!] This was the state they were in when Jesus appeared to them. It took quite a long time for the enormity of what was happening to sink in. BUT they were uplifted by an experience they did not fully understand. A week later they were again huddled together in that room and that time

Thomas, who had been absent on the first occasion, was there as well.

Before we go on to look at Thomas's experience lets try and take in the significance of that first meeting between the resurrected Jesus and the disciples. He greeted them quietly with the words we repeat each week in our Eucharist..."Peace be with you". Then he breathed on them and said "Receive the Holy Spirit." This passage is not at first easy to understand but what Jesus was in fact saying was that by breathing the breathe of God into God's people he is empowering them to do God's work in the world. To do a job that they would not have imagined they were ever capable of doing! They are to continue Jesus' mission in the world; they are to proclaim God's message of forgiveness and salvation. God sent His Son, who sent His disciples, us, into the thick of the world where light needs to shine and where sins need to be forgiven. In our epistle from the early chapters of Acts we see that beginning to happen; and people came to believe...they still do today.

If we were to ask our congregations to tell us how they came to faith I know that many of them would say that someone had helped them to belief in a time of darkness and grief and need. That is where many of us and those around us are today.

Let us now turn our attention to Thomas..doubting Thomas. The first thing that springs to mind here is how

very human he is; and how very human doubt and scepticism is. We should not be ashamed of doubts; they show we are human. Why do you think the evangelist included this story in his Gospel? Thomas was a dogged disciple determined not to be taken in and standing on his rights not to believe anything until he got solid evidence. Do we know people like that? Are we a bit like that ourselves? Well solid evidence is what Thomas got! Jesus made it quite clear that that he was not a ghost; but he came and went a bit like one as though he were now part of both this world and the next world with his Father. Thomas's reaction was to take a leap of faith. Jesus had given him what he needed to be able to take that leap of faith. He still does that today!

I want to close with an idea from Bishop Michael Currie's Easter sermon from Washington cathedral. Some of you may remember him preaching at Harry and Megan's wedding. He said this of the experiences of those disciples that we read about in the Gospels " it didn't seem like Easter; it didn't feel like Easter; it didn't even smell like Easter..but Easter happened anyway! And it is the same for us today...it may not seem like Easter, it might not feel like Easter, it may not even smell like Easter...but Easter has happened anyway!"

God's renewal is at work

Alleluia Amen!