

## LOCKDOWN DAY 98 – 2 JULY 2020

Molweni beautiful family and friends of False Bay Diocese,

Scripture: John 20:24-29

Hymn: *At the name of Jesus*

Tomorrow is the Feast Day of St Thomas. As I will not be doing a reflection tomorrow, I am reflecting today on his faith and pray that it will stir our hearts and faith commitment.

When Jesus first appeared to his disciples after his resurrection, Thomas was absent. The four things that Jesus gave them was: **Peace** to calm their fears. **Proof** that it was really he and that he was alive, as he showed them the wounds in his hands and side. **Purpose**, sending them out to continue his ministry, and, in particular, to preach and demonstrate forgiveness. **Power** to fulfil their calling as he breathed on them symbolically to give them the gift of the Holy Spirit.

A week later, Jesus appears again and Thomas is present. Thomas is invited to touch Jesus' wounds, the very evidence he had demanded when the others told him they had seen Jesus. Thomas' doubting scepticism is turned to faith.

John surely had vivid memories of these two events, and of seeing the risen Jesus in Galilee (John 21), when, over 50 years later, as an old man, he began to write his gospel and his letters to all Christian believers. Thomas had full trust in Jesus, and that was why, when all the other Apostles were afraid and hid themselves in the safety of a closed room, he dared to go out. The faith of Thomas was such that he was ever ready to die for his beloved Master. When Jesus was told about the illness of Lazarus and was setting out to Bethany in Judea, the other disciples were afraid and cautioned Jesus about the danger he would meet there. But Thomas boldly came forward and said, *"Let us also go and die with him"* (John 11:7-17). And indeed, Thomas did follow Christ and die for him. He shed his blood in bearing witness to Jesus Christ. According to tradition, he built seven churches and was martyred during prayer by spearing on 3 July, in the year 72, on the "Big Hill" near Madras, India.

St Thomas the Apostle is the Father in Faith of great many Christians in India, just as Abraham the Patriarch is the Father of Faith of all believers.

At the Last Supper, when Jesus tells his disciples that he is about to leave them and that they know the way where he is going, it is again Thomas who, under obvious strain, cries out 'Lord, we do not know where you are going, how can we know the way?' And thus saying, Thomas won for us the sublime saying of Jesus, *"I am the way, and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but by me"* (John 14:6). Here Jesus shows himself as the only way to the Father.

Such was Thomas. He was certainly not an unbeliever or doubter; on the contrary he was a person of staunch faith in Christ. It was the path of deep and sincere faith that he walked. Yet he was not ready to accept anything about which he was not convinced. He wanted to touch the Lord and put his hand in his side. And the Loving and Merciful Lord complied with his Disciple's wish. Thomas was not unlike many well-being people of our times who only believe what they can see and touch. The Lord showed Thomas his wounds and asked him to put his hand in his side but we do not know whether Thomas did so. The Lord himself asks Thomas only *"Have you believed because you have **seen me?**"* without adding anything about touching. Thomas could only fall down and worship, saying, *"My Lord and my God!"* And so we have from Thomas **the believer** this wonderful formula of adoration, this great declaration of faith in the divinity of Jesus. The doubt of Thomas was not a rejecting doubt but a searching one; he wanted to discover the truth and be convinced of it beyond doubt.

In answer to the adoring exclamation of Thomas, the Lord pronounced a blessing over us, *"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe."* When doubts regarding the faith assail us, when our mind is groping for proofs during Covid-19, let us remember the word of the Lord: *"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe."* This is the same beatitude which Elizabeth pronounced on Mother Mary. When the angel

announced the Incarnation to Mary, she did not understand it. She did not know how her future would be like but she believed, she accepted God's will: *"let it be to me according to your word"* (Luke 1:38). And so Elizabeth said, *"Blessed are you for your believing."*

We too shall be blessed, not for our learning or knowledge but for our sincere and living faith. A living faith is an active faith. Let us go forward with **peace** in our hearts, as people with a **purpose** and in the **power** of the Holy Spirit and touch the **scarred Jesus** as we reach out to the poor, the suffering, the sick, the lonely. It is comparatively easy to recognise Jesus in statues and holy pictures but far more challenging to look for and recognise him in the rags and tatters of human existence.

Today please **reach out** to members of your family and church community who are in the age bracket of 50 to 60. Tomorrow **reach out** to anyone who bears the name of Thomas and to clergy and members of any church named after St Thomas. We pray for them and congratulate them on their Patronal festival.

In **our prayers** today we pray for comfort and hope for the grieving and broken hearted. We pray against the evil of the metro police who evicted a man in his nakedness in Khayelitsha, part of our Diocese. The humiliation is horrendous. O Lord hear our prayer that justice may take its course. We pray today for Archbishop Emeritus Desmond and Mama Leah as they celebrate their 65<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. They have given us so much to follow as people of faith. At a time like this we remember how Arch Desmond never shunned away from speaking truth to power. We pray that our God of Love may be kept as the anchor and centre of all marriages. May God's love weave through all our lives. Amen

I am, Because we Are, Because God is ... Opening hearts to heal God's world. *Goodbye 'til Monday. God be with you.*