

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER (YEAR B) Sunday 7 April 2024

EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL AT HOME

TOUCHING

EXPLORING NEXT SUNDAY'S THEME

Introducing the Gospel

The risen Jesus (John 20:19-31)

John's gospel portrays Jesus coming and standing among his disciples on the evening of Easter Day. Thomas, who was not present when Jesus came, refused to believe without proper evidence. A week later (the second Sunday of Easter) Jesus came and stood among his disciples again. This time Thomas was there and Jesus provided him with the evidence he needed. Thomas saw and heard and touched the risen Jesus, and then he believed. But Jesus said, 'Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

Our image to stimulate reflection on John's account of Thomas' encounter with the risen Jesus is *touching*.

Core extract from the Gospel (John 20: 26-28; for reflection throughout the week)

A week later his disciples were again in the house,
and Thomas was with them.

Although the doors were shut,
Jesus came and stood among them and said,
'Peace be with you.'

Then he said to Thomas,

'Put your finger here and see my hands.
Reach out your hand and put it in my side.
Do not doubt but believe.'

Thomas answered him,

'My Lord and my God!'

Gospel prayer (for use throughout the week)

Risen Lord Jesus,
you made yourself known to doubting Thomas.
When we, too, are surrounded by doubts,
help us to feel your presence,
and to trust your sustaining power;
for you are alive and reign for ever.
Amen.

READING NEXT SUNDAY'S GOSPEL

John 20.19-31

Jesus Appears to the Disciples

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

Jesus and Thomas

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.'

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.' Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

The Purpose of This Book

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

ENGAGING WITH THE THEME

Dwelling with the text (John 20: 19-31)

Begin exploring John's account of Thomas' encounter with the risen Jesus by employing the SIFT approach of Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking. You may find that one of these approaches comes easier to you than the others. But it is worth trying all four.

- What details in the passage catch your attention (Sensing)?
- What big ideas in the passage spark in your mind (Intuition)?
- What most touches your heart in the passage (Feeling)?
- What most stretches your mind and makes you think in the passage (Thinking)?

Thinking and talking

Identify topics within the passage that can get you thinking and talking. Here are some ideas to get you started.

- What were the reasons for the disciples being behind locked doors?
- What was the significance of Jesus' greeting, said twice, 'Peace be with you'?
- Why do you think Thomas doubted what he was told?
- Why was it so important for Thomas to touch Jesus himself?
- What does the narrative say to us today?

Using your Bible

Explore themes that John had introduced earlier and are now picked up in this passage.

- John 7: 10-13
- John 11: 14-17
- John 14: 25-27
- John 16: 22

Explore a parallel narrative in Luke's Gospel.

- Luke 24: 36-43

Explore relevant images in the Old Testament.

- Genesis 2: 7
- Psalm 22: 16

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Exploring online

Widen your exploration of John's account of Thomas' encounter with the risen Jesus by looking up some of the following themes and others of your own choosing.

- Doubting Thomas in classic art. What do you see in Caravaggio's *The incredulity of Saint Thomas*?
- Thomas in John's Gospel
- Malcolm Guite's poem 'Thank God for "Doubting" Thomas!'

Drawing on experience

The image to stimulate reflection on Thomas' encounter with the risen Jesus is *touch*. Draw on your own experience of the need to test things by touch. For example:

- Have you ever needed to test whether the ground was solid to walk on?
- How do you know when the bath water is at the right temperature?
- Have you tested the texture of fabric by touch?

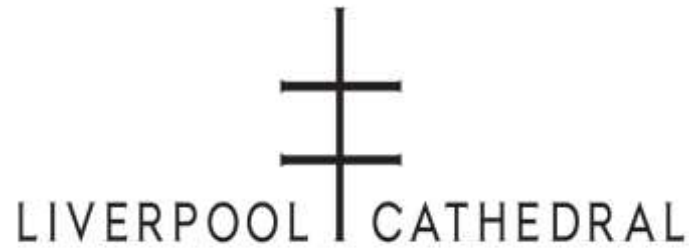
What have you learned about the importance of touch?

Creating and making

This section offers pointers to some creative activities that may be inspired by John's account of Thomas' encounter with Jesus or by the image of touch.

- Create a poster drawing on images of Thomas' encounter with Jesus.
- Arrange surfaces and artefacts with different textures that can be touched and described.
- Create a collage of ideas stimulated by Malcolm Guite's poem.
- Create a reflection, poem, or prayer on the theme of Thomas' encounter with the risen Jesus or on the image of touch.

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EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL AT HOME

Each week we are inviting people in their homes to look forward to those Sunday services that follow the Revised Common Lectionary Gospel readings. We employ the SIFT approach (Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking) to encourage reflection on the Sunday Gospel. We are suggesting a variety of ways in which people of all ages, and households working together, may engage with the Gospel reading and celebrate that engagement with shared activities.

Our invitation then is for you to share your reflections, prayers and photos of your creative work with the Cathedral by emailing them to smc.lesliefrancis@gmail.com.

These materials have been developed by the Canon Theologian of Liverpool Cathedral working in collaboration with the staff team here at the Cathedral, and with sponsorship and support from the St Mary's Centre in Wales and the St Christopher's College Trust.



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