

## **Second Sunday of Easter 2020**

**Archbishop George Stack**

**Today is the second Sunday of Easter. Notice it isn't called the second Sunday after Easter, or following Easter, but of Easter. The celebration of Easter lasts for forty days because it takes that mystical time to begin to understand the meaning of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Forty itself is a mystical number. It represents a whole lifetime in salvation history.**

**These times of enforced silence and social isolation are almost like a retreat. Even though we haven't chosen them, they are a wonderful opportunity to go back to the Easter gospels and allow them to penetrate our mind. Some of the names connected with the resurrection have been on my mind and in my prayers this week.**

**The first is Joseph of Arimethea who was a secret disciple of Jesus yet gave him a tomb. And then**

**Nicodemus who came to Jesus by night, with all that signifies, but was there at his burial. These two remind me to pray for all those who have been unable to be with their loved ones in their final hours, and have had to distance themselves even from their funerals.**

**The disciples were in a locked room, with the doors shut, not because of social isolation but because of fear of the Jews. They were locked in for self-preservation. We are locked in so that the whole community can be safe.**

**Despite the locked doors, Jesus came and stood among them. He is not bound by time and space. Buildings, walls and doors are no obstruction to him – except perhaps the door of our hearts. It was evening. It was getting dark. Their minds darkened by worry and fear and uncertainty. St. John has a great deal to say about darkness and light in his gospel.**

**My two favourite paintings for Easter are “Noli me Tangere” by Titian and “The Incredulity of St. Thomas” by Caravaggio. The first one is Mary Magdalene at the tomb on Easter morning. She supposes Jesus to be the gardener and only recognises him when he calls her by name. She rushes to embrace her risen Lord and Jesus says “Do not touch me”. Noli me tangere.**

**The second one comes from today’s gospel passage. The absent Thomas. The doubting Thomas. The incredulity of Thomas. Unless I see him, unless I touch him, I refuse to believe. Eight days later the same thing happens again. And Jesus says to him “Touch me. Put your hands into the wounds. Doubt no longer but believe”.**

**Those two scenes speak to me of our journey of faith and our relationship with Jesus. There are times we feel secure, and supported, experiencing the presence of Jesus in our lives and his healing touch. “Touch me”. And there are times when we are asked to walk by faith, no**

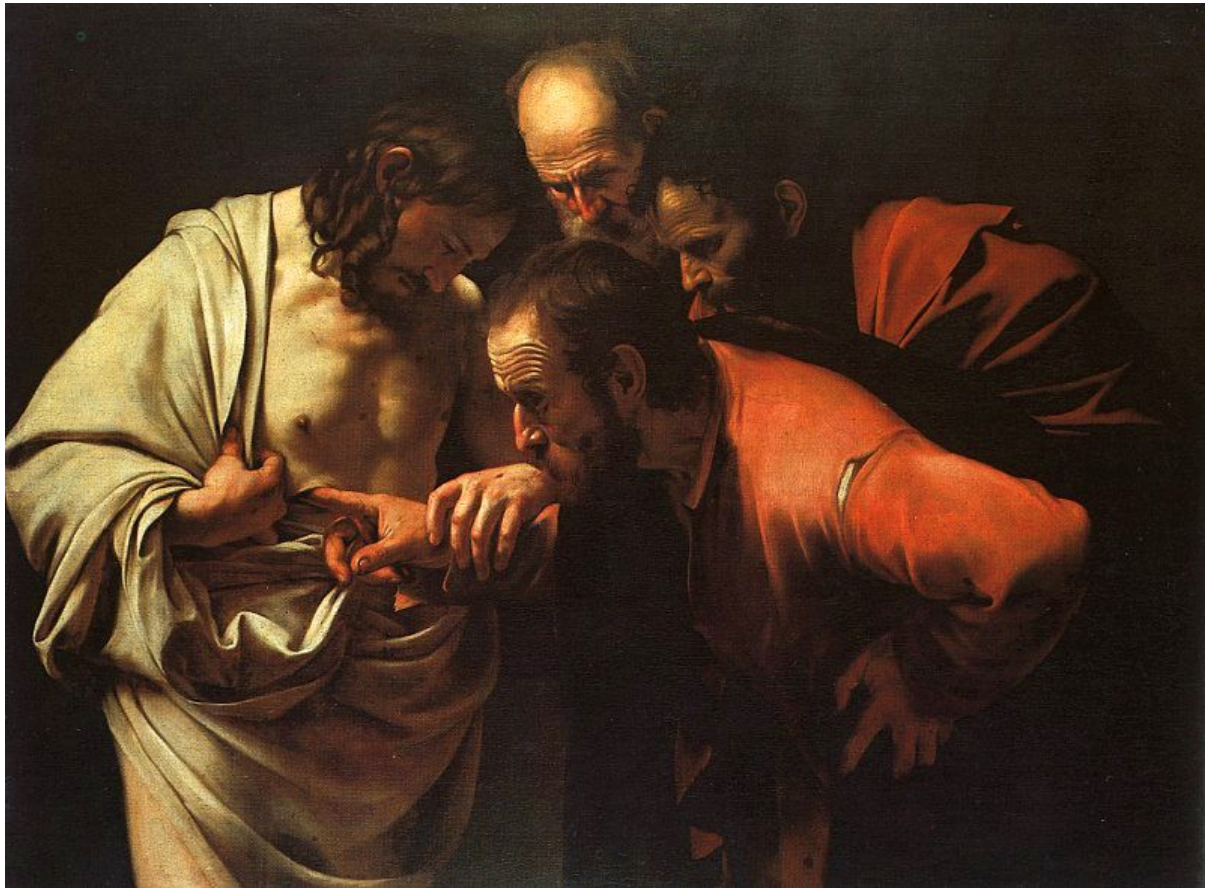
**comforts, no supports, perhaps even the suffering and pain which causes us to think that we have been abandoned by God. Where is God in the midst of the suffering and fear we are experiencing? “Here” says Jesus with arms outstretched on the cross.**

**During this time of distance and separation from the people and the things we love, one of them is surely our inability to come to Mass and receive Holy Communion. Touching the Body of Christ is what we know and love and of which we are deprived. Although we are physically separated from each other we are spiritually united to each other, not least through this Live Streamed broadcast of Mass. Jesus is not bound by walls and doors. “Although the doors were closed, Jesus came and stood among them”. Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among you.**



*Noli me tangere*





*The Incredulity of St. Thomas*