

A Homily for 2nd Sunday of Easter 2020 from Fr Allan

Archbishop Stack has written this week's homily for the Second Sunday of Easter. (*See attached document.*) He will preach it at a streamed mass tomorrow, 19th April.

In the light of that this is a reflection on St Thomas and the place of Doubt within Faith.

Recently I quoted St Augustine when he said that 'Faith is to believe what you do not see. The reward of faith is to see what you believe'. This is a sentiment that has been repeated many times throughout history. Other people have said that pure faith is trust in God through Christ not because of the evidence for such trust but precisely in spite of the absence of such evidence. (Paul Tillich).

All this seems appropriate for today when one of the main protagonists is St Thomas - who has gone down in history as the archetypal 'doubter'.

"When someone who refuses to believe something without direct, physical, personal evidence or expresses grave scepticism, we maybe too quick to call him or her a 'doubting Thomas'. But who among us has not doubted at some point in life? Perhaps we have doubted a vocation, or a relationship, or our own self-worth. Perhaps our faith has gone through periods of doubt or even despair. The biblical precedent is real enough. Abraham bargains with God over a decision that he considers unfair and he also refuses to believe that God can bring a child to him and Sarah. Jacob wrestles with the angel, trying to banish him. Jeremiah refuses to let God off the hook in answering the question 'Why do the evil prosper and the righteous suffer?' Various apostles including Peter and Philip, fail to understand God at work in Christ, and even turn their backs on Jesus on occasion. And lest we conclude that all doubters and wrestlers with God were male, there are Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus, who say to Jesus, 'You've let us down; if only you'd been here, Lazarus would not have died. All our evidence says that you failed us, Jesus.'

"But the opposite of faith is not doubt; it is apathy. Doubt is rather a crucial ingredient in faith. Faith and doubt have a sort of yin-yang relationship - dependent, complementary, energising and focusing one another. Doubt is the enemy of inquiry. Faith is never lost through the fearless search of truth. And so it is with Thomas. His initial doubting leads him to proclaim one of the great faith statements of the New Testament: my Lord and My God. Jesus challenges Thomas: 'Be not doubting but believing'. But Thomas had never been unbelieving, rather, his faith had been clouded by scepticism and unsurety, though all the while setting the stage for a powerful confrontation with God in Christ."

(Robert Kyser: Preaching John and Philip Culbertson: New Proclamation)