

Unless I see the mark of the nails . . . I will not believe.

Poor Thomas gets some bad “press” in today’s Gospel reading. He has become known as “doubting Thomas”. He needs evidence – even as modern scientists do – to conclude something is true. He demands that God meet him on Thomas’s own terrain – rather than vice versa. He says in effect: “You come to me rather than that I should abandon my reason and come to You”.

And yet, if I may speak in Thomas’s defense: what is he asking? *Only that he may see the wounds*; the mark of the nails in human flesh, the gash in Jesus’ side. May this not be interpreted: *I want a God who bleeds* - a God who cares enough for us and this world to experience the agony, the pain we all experience upon this earth?

Let’s allow that Thomas has lost interest in a God who dwells far beyond the clouds and galaxies of this universe – incapable of suffering, an author of impersonal laws – both of nature and of human dictation – a God who may smile one day yet smite by lightning the next.

He has understood the gospel of his mentor, Jesus, that grace, mercy, care (universal in its human scope as well as touching upon the tiniest grain of sand) manifest the true nature of God. And now in the aftermath of the brutal death of his beloved mentor – Jesus - he is fed up. *Unless I see the wounds, evidence of a God who bleeds for us – cares that much – comes down from being inaccessible aloft – what’s the use of believing in anything!*

At which point Jesus becomes a presence in the room – opening *his* wounded hands, showing *his* wounded side, *his* bruises – the marks of excruciating pain – and says in effect: *See, Thomas, I am the everlasting presence of the only God who ever has been and has chosen to experience human and every other kind of pain and mortality as evidence that I Care, that I know your agonies as parents know the agonies of their children and that I am always sensitively near, just beyond that door – that near! And you will forever find me in the story of this Jesus that I have become – in his care for paralytics, demoniacs, aliens, scribes and Pharisees, whatever!*

Jesus is ever present in your space – no longer remote as we have conceived of God but tangible in ways that you have yet to realize. So be alert. Don’t miss out on his appearances – the way Thomas did in the early part of today’s Gospel. So that Jesus had to return to respond to Thomas’s demand [on his and our behalf]: *Show us your wounds! Show us that you are someone whom we can honestly address as My Lord and My God.*

As a postscript to this: why do you think St. Paul in his *Letter to the Corinthians* makes it clear that while others try to find God in miracles or in philosophy, he declares: *We preach Christ crucified!* – a scandal to many, sheer foolishness to others – but to us the revelation of how far true God will go to redeem our pain, even raise us from the dead. And ought we not to behave in this world with a similar divine commitment?

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