



S'Marylebone  
Parish Church

## St Thomas the Apostle 2020

*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

The familiar story of St Thomas and the risen Lord in the Upper Room is one of the more familiar and moving stories of the gospels, although I do think it's a bit unfair that because of the story's telling and retelling, Thomas has been saddled with the title, "*Doubting* Thomas"!

It's unfair on a couple of counts:

first, because by dwelling on Thomas' doubt, we tend to overlook the rest of the Thomas' story.

It was *Thomas* who pleaded with the other disciples, "Let us go and die with him" when Jesus went to visit the tomb of Lazarus in Bethany, Bethany where Jesus' enemies were waiting to do arrest him – not so much '*doubting*' Thomas as '*courageous and brave*' Thomas!

Second, even if Thomas did have a tendency to *question* Jesus, was he showing 'doubt' or was he the one bold enough to voice what the other disciples were thinking but too embarrassed to ask?

Not so much '*doubting*' Thomas as '*honest*' Thomas!

Real life is like that; its full of questions, often question we are afraid to ask because we don't really want to hear the answers!

Faith is not, as some people think, about standing securely on the sure rock of certainty; it is about walking courageously over the quick sands of honest doubt. About having the guts and the strength and the integrity to ask honest open questions, and being prepared to work with whatever comes in reply and it is Thomas, who gives *us* the courage to ask the questions that perhaps no-one else is prepared to voice.

Thomas was to become perhaps the boldest and most intrepid of all the disciples, preaching the gospel across what we now know as Syria and Iraq and Iran, and on down through Pakistan to the south western shores of India.

Thomas, like countless Christian men and women since, discovered that difficult questions can, sometimes, only be answered by the most difficult and challenging of answers and, for Thomas, it was these difficult answers which truly opened his eyes and his heart to the suffering, risk-filled uncertainty of the disoriented world in which he found himself after Good Friday, the world of the Upper Room, in which he was able to draw close to his risen Lord.

Courageous, Brave, Honest and Faithful Thomas shows us that it can be through our searching questions, perhaps only through hard and difficult-to-voice questions and their unexpected answers that we can find true and dynamic faith,

faith that can withstand trial and testing and which can drive along paths as yet unseen and in ventures yet unknown.

At the end of all things, the strength of our faith and the reality of our belief in a Risen Jesus, will not be measured by our passive acceptance of doctrinal formulae or unthinking repetition of ancient creeds, but by the questions we dare to pose and our *response* to the answers we receive; whether we embrace those answers, no matter how difficult or unpalatable; whether we walk away from the suffering and sacrifice, which are the challenges of living and dying for Christ; or whether, in the face of it all, we can confidently proclaim, with Thomas, in our worship and in the living out of our lives, “My Lord and my God!” Amen.