

HOMILY FOR SUNDAY 4TH JULY 2021 – ST THOMAS REVD ANGELA WYNNE

May I speak in the name of the living God. Father Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

The 3rd July is the day dedicated to St Thomas. Did you know that the day on which we celebrate a particular saint is not their birthday but the day they died. That sounds a bit morbid but what we celebrate is their life's work for Christ and we look back with thankfulness because it's through them that we know about Jesus ourselves.

Fortunately, we can glean quite a bit about Thomas from the gospels because some of his words have been recorded. In John's gospel when Jesus decided to go back to Bethany to raise Lazarus from the dead the disciples advised him not to, because his life was in danger. But when he was determined to go, it was Thomas who said, "Let's go with him. We might as well die with him!"

When Jesus was explaining that he was going back to the Father and said "You know the way to where I am going", it was Thomas who spoke up and said "We don't know where you are going, how can we know the way?" That prompted Jesus to say those faith inspiring words "I am the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

However, perhaps the most famous words are the ones in today's gospel which earned him the title "Doubting Thomas" and although this sounds a rather dubious honour, we should be grateful to him.

Grateful because we too have doubts and we can identify with Thomas. It reassures us that we can be Christians and still have doubts. Thomas' doubt opened the door for faith to step in. It enabled Jesus to dispel his doubt by inviting him to put his finger in the wounds and see that he was real. "Do not doubt but believe." Thomas' response was, "My Lord and my God!" It went beyond believing; this wasn't just the risen Lord it was God! It was a true revelation. Reassuring to us future believers that when we look at Jesus, we really see God.

So there's a huge amount to be grateful to Thomas for.

What happened to Thomas after Pentecost is not clear but one of the most enduring stories is that he took the gospel to India where he taught and preached. There is today a Christian Community in South India called the St Thomas Christians, so there maybe there is some truth in the legends.

In the end he was killed by a spear and then buried in a tomb near Mylapore, near Madras around 72 AD. In Christian art you usually see Thomas depicted holding a spear because that was the weapon that killed him. Sometimes he is shown with a builder's T square because one legend claims that he built a palace for an

Indian king which led him to become the patron saint of architects.

That neatly leads us into Paul's letter.

Paul says that our faith is truly based on a foundation of apostles and prophets with Jesus as the cornerstone. The cornerstone of a building is the one on which all other stones depend. The cornerstone provides a firm base to build on.

Paul says that we are built into a holy temple. A temple is a beautiful building often decorated with precious stones, the work of the finest craftsmen in the land. The image Paul might have had in his mind was the beautiful temple built by Solomon using the finest materials and craftsman's skill but remembering that the instructions for the temple were given by God. The dimensions and the materials all defined by God, the skills and wealth of the people were all combined to build the temple fit to house the ark of the covenant, the special chest that contained the stone tablets given to Moses and various other holy items. Solomon's Temple was God's dwelling place.

Today we are called to bring all our skills and talents to build up the Church, the holy temple of the Lord in our time. We need to be fully committed and God needs to be in charge of the building work; everything we do must have a foundation of prayer; listening to God for guidance as to what his will for us is, and at the same time recognising us that together we embody God's love for the world.

Through us as the holy temple he sends out new apostles for the current times. We are his messengers of salvation, and we are the bringers of his peace to our world. It's a daunting task but together and building on that firm foundation of Christ the Apostles and prophets we can do it and God will bless us with what we need.

Let us thank God for making us part of his plan of salvation and for giving us the foundation of Thomas and all the saints to be our inspiration and strength.

Amen.