

July 3 St Thomas the Apostle



Thomas, one of Jesus' 12 apostles, was an impulsive, confused, honest sceptic. Jesus could understand and work with such a man.

Thomas' impulsiveness was evident when Jesus prepared to visit Lazarus in Bethany. It was a dangerous trip to make, because of the Jews, but Thomas urged his fellow disciples: "Let us also go, that we may die with him." (Jn 11.16) Instead, Jesus brought Lazarus back to life.

Thomas' confusion is shown in later talks with Jesus. He was not really sure where Jesus was going long-term (Jn 14.5). But Jesus accepted this confused commitment, and began to untangle it, patiently explaining "I am going to my father", and "No one comes unto the Father but by me."

Finally, Thomas' honest scepticism is revealed after the Resurrection, which he flatly refused to believe - unless he could touch the wounds of the risen Jesus. Sure enough, Jesus appears - but instead of scolding him, shows him the wounds. Thomas responds: "My Lord and my God" (Jn 20.26ff).

Thus Doubting Thomas' honest doubts, turned to honest faith, have become a reassurance for thousands of men and women across the centuries, who also want to follow Jesus, but who require some proof of this amazing event - the Resurrection. In Doubting Thomas' complete affirmation of faith, after meeting the risen, crucified Christ, they can find support for their own faith.

Ancient legends tell how Thomas went on to India as a missionary. There are rumours that Thomas even built a palace for a king's daughter in India, and thus he is the patron saint of architects.

It is believed that he was martyred by a spear on 3 July, 72 AD in Mylapore, near Madras. 46 ancient churches in England were dedicated to him.

July 11 Benedict (c.480 – c.550) Author of famous Rule

Benedict was an abbot and author of the famous Rule that bears his name. Because of his Rule, Benedict is also the Patriarch of Western Monasticism, and Patron Saint of Europe.

Surprisingly little is known about his life: born at Nursia, Benedict studied at Rome, which he then left before completing his studies to become a hermit at Subiaco. After a time disciples joined him, whom he organised into twelve deaneries of ten. After an attempt on his life, Benedict moved on to Monte Cassino, near Naples, where he wrote the final version of his Rule.

Benedict's Rule is justly famous and respected: not only did it incorporate much traditional monastic teaching from revered monks like Basil, but Benedict went on to modify this in a way characterised by prudence and moderation within a framework of authority, obedience, stability and community life.