

## LIGHT AT THE END.....

If I could choose a nickname for Thomas it wouldn't be the one St John uses – Didymus, the Twin. It wouldn't be the one later generations have given him doubting Thomas. It would be Thomas the Social Distancer. We don't know at all why Thomas was not with the other ten disciples on Easter evening but we can conjecture. The week before had been appalling – there was something infectious, something evil in the air, something threatening you couldn't see but could certainly feel. The atmosphere was poisonous. It had really started in a quiet little village some weeks before when Jesus had restored life to Lazarus. But some virus had started spreading from that quiet village and since then hatred had lurked round every corner, plots were whispered everywhere, even one of their friends had betrayed Him and it had reached a climax in the shouts of the crowd “Crucify Him” on Friday afternoon and His devastating death on the cross. And it was still there – people were uneasy, whispers were going round – people were frightened and didn't know what was coming next. The only way to escape the nauseous but invisible threat to life itself was to realize one's vulnerability and shield oneself in self-isolation, to stay at home in lockdown, to wear as much PPE as possible, to put space between yourself and other people, to realize that normal life would never be normal again. That Easter Sunday Thomas was in total lockdown – there seemed to be no light at the end of the tunnel – no way of getting back to the days he had loved -to normality. All he could do was cling to the two metre rule, socially distance himself, cocoon himself away from others – keep himself to himself – Thomas the Social Distancer. He was not with the others.

A week later Thomas has moved. He has reviewed the evidence, come out of lockdown, is no longer observing social distancing– but now insisting on tests. “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side I will not believe”. Thomas has laid down the criteria for an exit strategy-perhaps a little too early!

For Jesus had His plans for Thomas. On the second Sunday when Thomas was there, the risen Jesus comes and social distancing goes out of the window. Jesus stands amongst the disciples and invites Thomas to the most personal of human relationships, contact and touch that was miles away from social distancing, –“Thomas, put your finger here. See my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side”. This most personal of invitations changes Thomas from being the social distancer par excellence to being the disciple who drew himself into the deepest relationship possible as he spoke the most personal words of worship –“My Lord and my God”.

There was light at the end of the tunnel. A new normality was established – the world was rebooted and today we with Thomas live in it, moulded anew to live in peace and love with our fellows with no social distancing and in a new and profound relationship with the One

we know to be our Lord and our God. In these weeks of our social distancing we can hone our love for each other and our love for God, certain that at the end of the tunnel there is the light of the risen Christ.

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