

When this scene begins it had only been 4 days since the disciples were gathered around a table like this perhaps, eating a meal like this. It was only hours ago that they had learned that Jesus was missing from his grave. It may have only been minutes since Jesus' visit, minutes between then and when Thomas entered the room and found out what he'd missed.

Don't you hate that? You go to the bathroom and come back to find everyone saw a comet while you were inside; you nod off in the back seat only to be woken by cries of amazement about the moose that just ran in front of the car. I hate that because then I, you maybe, can't stop starrng at the sky looking for another comet; or watching the woods for a moose, or a deer, or a bear...a squirrel.

That was Thomas, I think, demanding to see not from arrogance but from a very human desire to be 'in' the group, in the know. So, I think the 'doubting' label is a little harsh – after all when Peter hears Mary's encounter with Jesus, he and the beloved disciple take off to see for themselves. It's a bit much to judge Thomas for not believing without seeing, when those condemning have seen without having to ask. Jesus showed them his wounds, willingly.

But even if the Doubting label isn't completely accurate, it's the one which serves us the best – each of us is sitting next to someone who has doubted, to someone who is doubting; to someone who wants to see in order to believe. Jesus knew the disciples would want to see him for themselves, why should we be any different? Thomas gets his nickname because he is the one who voices the demand others leave unspoken. "The emperor has no clothes." "I will not believe unless I see for myself." When we are strong enough to acknowledge doubt – large and small – we become strong enough to move beyond it. Having no longer to pretend we can become a community. Because we have seen another's wounds, because we have shown our wounds to another, we can be a community. And community is the cauldron and the container of faith – doubt leading to faith. It is in the offering up of our wounds and in acknowledging the wounds of others, that we form community; it is in responding to the wounds of another - "When you did it to the least of these you did it to me". It is in touching those wounds that we touch Christ's wounds – it is in a kitchen in Woburn, or the streets of Cambridge that we feel Christ's wounds. In a building in Lawrence or a shelter in Lowell we connect to the wounded, Risen Christ. It is in a pew in this room, where we linger after worship listening to another – hearing their woundedness – that is placing our finger on the hole in Christ's side, then, there, by touching another's wounds we connect to the wounded Christ. AND, when we allow others to see and touch our wounded places, we too are offering up Christ's wounds for others. We think we build a community by bringing our strengths, our competence, our accomplishments – those may help maintain a community. But we create a community, we become a community by bringing ourselves, our tender places, not our strengths, our disappointments, our failures, not so much our successes as our completeness our wholeness – our humanness, the whole of who we really are.

And that's where Thomas and frankly all the other disciples have something to tell us about finding and recognizing Jesus – about knowing when

God is present. Thomas thinks he needs Jesus to show him the places he was wounded; but it turns out that he didn't need that. What he needed, what we need, is to know that Jesus was willing to show him his wounds. The text doesn't say Jesus walked through a locked door and everyone knew he was him. It wasn't amazing sleights of hand or silver tongued oratory that convinced Thomas and all the disciples before him that Jesus was among them. Jesus' wounds and Jesus' willingness to show his wounds, his woundedness that was how Thomas knew God was present among them – that is how we know God is present among us – by the safety we have to be ourselves, the willingness to reveal our wounds, our woundedness. Be sure you hear what I am saying it is our willingness to show, reveal, and disclose our woundedness that makes this community a Holy One that tells us the divine is among us. Willingness – our trust, openness, authenticity all of these help us to know God's presence. We don't need to relate every detail nor perhaps any detail of our wounds – we just need to trust that others will care, and that we will not be diminished in anyone's eyes after we disclose our wounds, after we let others see we have them, after we allow another to tend to them.

This is not to say that we should not show each other how amazing we are. You are so amazing you couldn't hide it if you wanted to. You are amazing in what you can do, what you know, how you love and treat one another; you dazzle and amaze me and each other with your talents and with how you use them to make the world a better place. You disarm me with your charm, your care, your humor, your love. I see God at work in and through each of you; AND I see God knitting you together into a community as you share your woundedness and your wonderfulness with one another; It is God's presence at our willingness to reveal our wounds which makes us a Church, a Holy Place, a Healing Place. It is God's invitation to this table where the whole of us – our amazing talents carrying our deep wounds --our spiritual health in an ailing body - where the whole of us saint and sinner - is welcomed. The divine dances around this meal, this table, come and be fed.