

Year C Easter 2

Acts 5: 27-32

Revelation 1: 4-8

John 20: 19-31

FOMO – Fear of Missing Out

Well here we are. The week after Easter. Christ has risen, love has had the last say over death and love has most definitely won. The whole world order was changed, and it will never be the same again.

We have eaten our fill of easter eggs, had our nostrils assailed by the 'like it or hate it' perfume of lilies, and have had our first few days of saying alleluia. We are on the 8th day of 50 days of unremitting joy of the liturgical season of Easter. 42 days still to go!

Has much changed because of Easter? Sometimes people express to me a bit of a post-Easter dip: the joy and exuberance, the highs of Easter, and then what?

Well, in a sense, I wonder if some of the disciples felt that dip? And as for poor old Thomas... he had the misfortune to not be with the rest of the disciples when Jesus appeared amongst them that evening, the first day of the week, the first day of a whole new era heralded by Jesus' resurrection.

Did Thomas have a touch of FOMO – the fear of missing out? I remember as a teenager – yes my memory can stretch back that far – to wanting to not only know what was going on but to be part of it. I wanted to be part of a group. In those times FOMO (fear of missing out) wasn't a named thing, but I certainly felt it.

Poor old Thomas. Had he missed the one and only chance of seeing the risen Lord? All the others had seen Jesus; had seen his hands and his side, the unhealed wounds and scars of his crucifixion.

When Jesus appeared to the disciples on that first Easter Day he had also used those powerful words, 'Peace be with you', not once but twice. Not surprising really, the disciples probably didn't really take it in at his first attempt to give them peace.

Thomas spent a whole week with that cloud of 'fear of missing out' hanging over him. There was nothing unreasonable in wanting the same evidence that the other disciples had seen when Jesus appeared amongst them.

And then, a week later it happened. The disciples had gathered together. The doors were shut, probably locked and barred out of fear that the authorities may come to arrest them all. And just as the week before Jesus was suddenly in the room with them, and spoke to Thomas, directly addressing his doubts. The same Jesus, the same unhealed wounds and scars on his body.

Jesus, resurrected, in a wounded scarred body. And why not? Isn't that what we should expect, rather than a perfect healed body, with no trace of the traumas and experiences of life? Even Jesus, brought back through God's restorative and redeeming act of resurrection, carried the scars of his earthly life. Resurrection did not remove all trace of Jesus' earthly life.

Jesus' scars enabled him to invite Thomas to 'reach out your hand and put it in my side.' I have read that sentence so often but not really thought that much about it. It is a visceral sentence, and yet it reminded me of a scene from my own life. The day after my wife had a mastectomy, I took my five and three year old daughters into the hospital to visit their mum. They were intrigued by the tubes and equipment, and to be honest, rather fearful of it all. However, my

wife asked them if they wanted to see where the tubes came out of her body and showed them. After that, when they had seen the tubes and the neat stitches, they were clearly no longer afraid. Sometimes, knowing what the scars are and being open about them, takes away a lot of fear. Jesus invitation to Thomas to see his scars had the same effect.

Jesus instinctively knew what would help Thomas on his journey in faith, and how to stop Thomas being afraid of having missed out on something and feeling different from the others. Jesus came alongside Thomas and gave him what he needed.

The resurrection was a once and for all act for all of humankind. It is the resurrection that gave life to a new way of living, to that group of disciples following 'the way' of Jesus, that we also follow today.

And yet, Jesus returned in a scarred body. His resurrection took but three days; his bodily healing it seems, took longer – his body was not instantly healed. And his wounds and scars became an intrinsic and essential part of his early resurrection interactions with the disciples.

Do we like to present ourselves as having no scars, physical or mental? Do we want to be perceived as without flaws - almost perfect perhaps?

Certainly, when I read about online influencers and the like, perfection seems to be an obsession. And what an appallingly false picture that paints to those they aim their videos at; young people who are sensitive to how they look at a time in their lives when acceptance by peers, not being seen as being different, having a fear of missing out, can have such a large impact on their wellbeing. It places pressures on them that thankfully in my younger days we just didn't have.

This gospel story shows that perfection as humans see it in each other is vastly over-rated. In fact, it is not real, it is not authentic and actually, in us humans, it is not really a thing. What is shown to us on our tv screens, on our phones and tablets, is a false construct. The people behind those carefully manicured images are not perfect. Many of them may be presenting in that way, but truly they are not.

Jesus, to be authentic, showed his scars, his open wounds, without any sense of shame. Jesus was modelling for us what our lives in faith should look like. As followers of Christ, journeying on our way through life, we will all have picked up some bruises, scars and wounds. They are part of who we are, they tell some of, but not all of, our story. We are not perfect; some old wounds cause us to stumble still, whilst others are long healed but like one scar on my forehead from falling off my pushbike they are still faintly visible and just a part of who I am.

Jesus loved Thomas. Thomas should never have feared of missing out. But that is easy for us to say, who know the whole story, and how that week after Easter ended.

Jesus comes to each one of us at the most surprising moments, often when we are vulnerable and have let down our defences, when we admit to our wounds and scars, to our doubts and fears.

Jesus comes along side us, and if like Thomas, we are honest and open about our wounds and fears, our encounter with Jesus will be the start of a time of healing and joy.

Those early Christians were clearly called 'followers of the way' for a reason – people saw the changes that happened in the followers' lives as they came to know and love Jesus.

As we continue to celebrate this Easter season, may we invite Jesus into our lives once more, to heal us, to give us that same peace he gave to the Thomas, so with joy we can say, 'Jesus Christ is risen, he is risen indeed! Alleluia!