Today is Low Sunday. It’s the first Sunday after Easter and I suppose we are all feeling a little low, the excuse to eat excessive amounts of chocolate is over, the party that was the initial celebration of Jesus Risen is over and the bank holiday is over.

However, Low Sunday isn’t called Low Sunday because of our self induced hang overs but because it closes the Octave of Easter – the eight-day period from Easter Sunday until today. It is also called St. Thomas Sunday.

When we think of the Lord’s disciples. We have certain words that almost always go with them. We think of Judas Iscariot or Judas the Betrayer, we think of Peter denying Christ three times but also Peter the Rock that the church was built on, we think of the John, the one Jesus loves, and we also think of Thomas or as he is better known as Doubting Thomas.

I want to look at the man that we know all too often as doubting Thomas and see if this name really fits the character of Thomas. Is this doubting aspect of Thomas really negative or should we see it as a positive trait: as an inquiring mind that needed to see the truth to believe but was more than willing to believe once he saw the truth.

Maybe he just needed to see the truth, had questions and wanted them answered.

I think that the doubt that Thomas expressed is said well in this quote: “His doubt had a purpose. Thomas wanted to know the truth, his doubt gives evidence not a lack of faith, but of a desire to have faith founded in fact not fancy.”

Let us look at the three times that Thomas is mentioned in the Gospel of John. This is the only gospel that makes any mention of him beyond being listed in the list of disciples. The first mention we find is in John 11:16. Let us start by reading a few verses before:

Starting in 11:7 “Then he said to his disciples, “Let us go back to Judea.”” But Rabbi,” they said, “a short while ago the Jews tried to stone you, and yet you are going back there?” Jesus answered,” Are there not twelve hours of daylight? A man walks by day will not stumble, for he sees by this world’s light. It is when he walks by the night that he stumbles, for he has no light.” After he had said this, he went on to tell them,” Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am, going there to wake him up.” His disciples replied,” Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.” Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. So then he told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe, but let us go to him.”

Then Thomas (called Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

The last few times that Jesus had been in Judea, the Jews had tried to seize and kill Christ so there was good reason why the disciples were not too eager to go back there to see Lazarus.

But we see in this case the good example of Thomas, who knew that Jesus was going to go back there no matter what the disciples thought. Jesus was going to go to his now dead friend Lazarus. Thomas’ statement that he made here was a very brave statement in that he had assumed that if he went with Jesus it could very well mean the end of his life. He was willing to follow Jesus in this case even if it meant death.

He was putting into action the teachings of Christ that we find in Mark 8:34-35: “If anyone would come after me; he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.”

In this case Thomas was the one disciple who was putting into action the teachings of Jesus. He was willing to follow Jesus even if it meant death. He truly wanted to do the will of God and if this meant death then he was willing to take it. This does not fall in line with the personality of a doubter, but rather one who has honest questions, and once he receives the answers, he is more than willing to follow. Thomas could only see disaster – but he was for going on. Thomas was determined to be faithful – even in the face of death!! For Thomas there may be death, but there could never be disloyalty.

The second mention that we find of Thomas is in John 14. We will start in verse 1: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me. In my father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you with me that you may also be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.

Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one come to the Father except through me.”

But perhaps Thomas is also one of us.

I think that Thomas exemplifies many of the characteristics we share today.  I wonder if you too see Thomas as a disciple you identify with?

I think we are more like Thomas than we would like to admit.

We learn that Thomas went far and wide in his travels after the death of Jesus and his name is one regarded as one of the greater missionaries although all of the Gospels mention Thomas, it’s only the Gospel of John that records any of Thomas’ words.

Church tradition and history tells us that Thomas travelled outside of the Roman Empire as a missionary, possibly as far away as India to preach the gospel, which is yet another indication of Thomas’ boldness.

He may have reached Muziris, India where he baptized several believers and was possibly the first to bring the gospel to the Far East. This might explain why he is considered the Patron Saint of India. His name in the Indian language, “Thoma,” remains quite popular to this day in India.

Not very much is known about the method of Thomas’ execution but that maybe due to the fact that he was a missionary in faraway India. Church tradition says that while he was establishing a church there, he was stabbed with a spear, dying from the wound.  Is it ironic that Jesus told Thomas to touch his side and his hands where the wounds from the cross were still visible? There are so few historical facts that are available beyond this account that we cannot add much more to this account and do so with absolute certainty.

I feel sorry for Thomas.  He was no more doubting than the [other disciples](https://www.whatchristianswanttoknow.com/who-were-the-12-disciples-or-apostles-of-jesus-christ/) and the only reason he doubted and the others didn’t was because they had seen the resurrected Christ. When the women came back from the empty tomb and after seeing the risen Christ, the other disciples also doubted.

To me, there is no doubt that Thomas was a strong believer and a powerful and influential missionary used by God. His name features in so many places where educative and hospital work is preeminent – so his work is alive and contemporary in every sense.

Doubt is not to deny Jesus. Doubt is when we seek to understand what it is Jesus wants from us? Doubt is when we seek to make sense of the risen Christ!