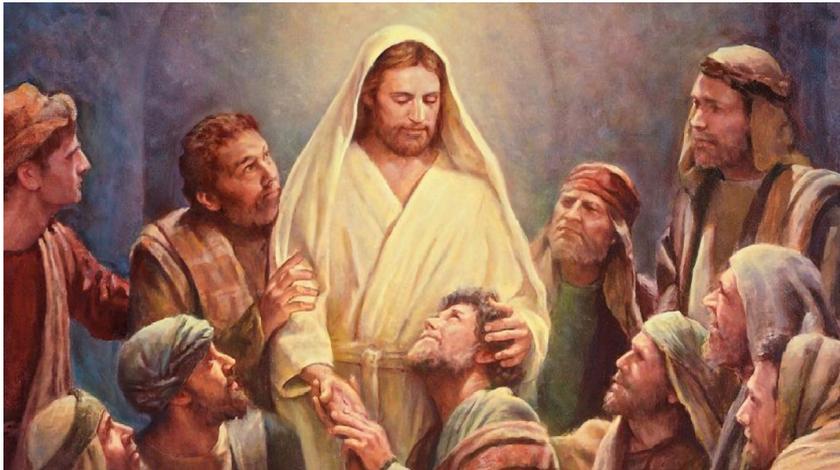




## St Matthew's Holland Park Weekly Bulletin 7th April 2024

This week's Revd. Morris' message: ***Jesus comes to us again and again - just where we are...***



In today's Gospel, we gather again with the Disciples on the night after the resurrection ... They have been told the astonishing news that ***Jesus is somehow now alive again***. Yet they remain in fear of the Jewish leaders - locked up tight. ***How can this be?*** They have heard of the death of death, the fulfilment of so many of God's promises and prophecies and the total triumph of Jesus ... but it all seems not to have made any difference at all!?

Then Jesus suddenly appears in their midst. I wonder how the Disciples felt at that moment? What did they expect Jesus to say to them? *I wonder how we would have felt and reacted in their place?* I wonder if ***they may have become somewhat fearful of Jesus himself?*** Would He punish them for their faithlessness, cowardice and betrayal in the run up to the cross? Due to their actions during that time, would He in judgement strip from them their roles as Apostles and Disciples?

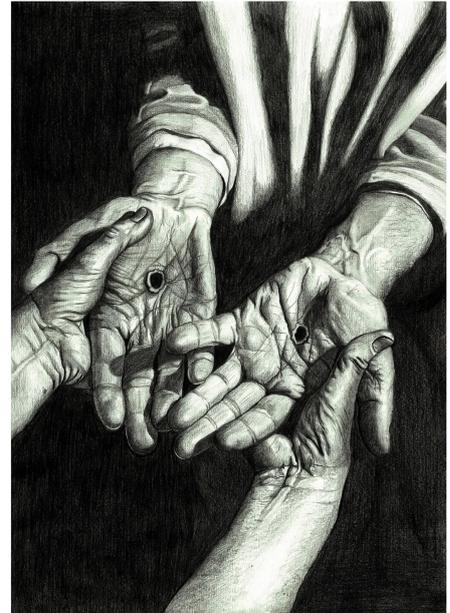
***But Jesus does none of this*** .... He greets them, shows them His identifying wounds, affirms and empowers them and bestows the Holy Spirit upon them. ***The disciples erupt in wondrous joy!*** Their Master has triumphed and He has reaffirmed their place in the wider God Story of Salvation.

Then we meet 'Doubting Thomas ..' ***Unless I can see and touch Him myself, I won't believe it!*** Imagine how uncomfortable it must have been for all the disciples [ and particularly for Thomas] at this point. I wonder what discussions and arguments ensued between them all with Thomas steadfastly holding his ground? I wonder why Thomas didn't accept the testimony of his friends and peers .. or ,at least, admit the possibility that what they reported may have actually happened?

***Eight days later***, [ that could feel like an eternity for all those involved], ***Jesus again appears*** and, without criticism, supplies to Thomas the tangible proofs he requests and Thomas responds with a heartfelt outpouring of personal conviction and faith. ***I wonder why Jesus waited those 8 days?***

I find this reading to be so encouraging for our walks of faith. No matter where we are on that journey, no matter our doubts, failures, betrayals and hesitations, Jesus just seems to come to us - just where we are - and provides what we so truly and desperately need. ***Any words of judgement and punishment we hear at that point are only ours.*** Jesus

just keeps turning up for us - time and time again... but at the times of His choosing. Sometimes, we are left to struggle on .. perhaps in our own strength, doubts and failure. Then, He comes to us, reminding us that *His was the struggle ...* and the victory. He metaphorically reminds us of His wounds received for our redemption and blessing [ *Put your finger into my hands. Put your hand into my side ...* ] Then, in His good time, He affirms us, empowers us and, once again, we become conscious of the presence of the Holy Spirit within us [ although, of course, the Spirit was always there upholding us whilst we had turned our attention away].



***So, in this Second Sunday of Easter, I wonder how you may be wanting Jesus to come to you now... fresh in the fullness of His resurrection power? However, beware! He may call you away from the safe but fearful locked rooms of your life into His ministry within the wider world that is in such dire need of His love, peace and Grace ...***

***Gospel reading: John 20:19-31. Some resources to dig deeper:*** <https://shereadstruth.com/encounters-with-christ-thomas/comment-page-2/#!> ; <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/second-sunday-of-easter/commentary-on-john-2019-31-10>;

***Upcoming Parish Activities Mid Week Eucharist*** - Wednesday 10:30 a.m; Meditation Group Wednesday 6:30 p.m; ***This and next Sunday*** Guitars and Ukulele lessons at 3 p.m

***Next Sunday's Readings:*** Acts 3:12-20; Ps 4; 1 John 2:15-17; 3:1-6; John 24:36b-48

***Parish Directory:***

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***Parish website :*** <https://www.stmatthewshollandpark.com/>

***Parish Private Facebook site :*** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/292308270851142> ;

***Public Site:*** <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61556418523933>

#### ***ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY:***

We acknowledge and pay respect to the Turrbal and Jagera Peoples, the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we gather today. We acknowledge their continued spiritual connection to country and surrounding land, sky and water. We pay our respect to their Elders, past present and emerging and pray that we may continue to learn from and nurture one another in the spirit of Reconciliation.

***STOP PRESS Easter Raffle results:*** 1st Prize [ Penfolds Wine ] Colleen Sawyer; 2nd Prize: [ \$50 gift card ] Margaret Coates; 3rd + 4th Prizes [ Pamper Pack + Baileys ] Nia Viviani; 5th Prize [ Cheese knives and board] Judith Harvison. ***Thanks to all who donated prizes or bought tickets..*** .all proceeds will be applied towards the cost of our new AV system.