

We are now in the second Sunday after Easter and we are looking at some of the witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus. Over a period of forty days Jesus appeared to numerous people showing that he had indeed risen from the dead. He revealed himself to Mary Magdalene on first day of the week as well as to other disciples that evening. A week later he appeared to all the disciples including Thomas who was missing in the previous week. Thomas had refused to believe unless and until he put his finger on Jesus' nail pierced hands and also touch his side where he was speared. When Jesus reveals himself to Thomas, he acknowledges Jesus and says, "My Lord and My God." Jesus then tells him that he had believed because he had seen Jesus. However, Jesus says that it is more blessed to believe even though one has not seen him physically.

In the gospel reading from St. Luke, Jesus comes and stands among the disciples and says, "Peace be with you." The disciples were startled and frightened thinking that they had seen a ghost. Jesus then addresses them and says, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your mind? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." The presence of Jesus in bodily form scared the disciples and they were terrified. They still could not believe that the Lord Jesus had risen from the dead and was there in their midst. We are clearly told that the resurrection of Jesus was a physical resurrection because Jesus himself tells them that he is made of flesh and bones and showed them his hands and feet. The physical resurrection of Jesus is of vital importance to us because we too are given the assurance that there will be a physical resurrection of our bodies.

The disciples were eye witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus and yet found it difficult to believe that when the risen Christ came into their midst. Jesus then asked them whether they had anything to eat. And they gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and eat it in their presence. This again shows the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Jesus then explains to them that the Old Testament scriptures had clearly indicated that the Messiah would have to suffer and die and then rise to life on the third day. Jesus had to open their minds in order for them to understand the scriptures. Jesus told them that repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem and going to the ends of the earth. Jesus tells them very clearly that they were witnesses to all that had happened in his life.

The life of the disciples was transformed by the resurrection of Jesus. They became powerful witnesses as they went around testifying to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Nobody would have dared to go out and testify if they had known that the resurrection was a lie. One of the witnesses to the resurrection was Thomas the apostle who doubted the resurrection of Christ and was convinced after the risen Christ appeared to him. He was the one who came to India and preached about repentance for the forgiveness of sins through Christ. Thomas was martyred in Mylapore by the Brahmins who were upset with his preaching. But because of his presence in India the gospel has taken deep roots in our country. Thomas came to India in AD 52 and was martyred in AD 72. Today you and I are called to be witnesses to the resurrection. We are people who have not seen him physically but have believed in him. We are called to testify to the risen Christ, the forgiveness available in his name and the hope of eternal life to all our friends and neighbours.