

Greetings to you!

Today we give thanks for the Apostle Thomas, whose doubt was turned to faith. While the actual day falls on 6th of October we are celebrating it today as it is the closest Sunday and also because St. Thomas is the Apostle of India. Very often we find misunderstandings among the people of our country who feel that Christianity is a western religion and was brought to us by the British. However, history reminds us that St. Thomas came to India in AD 52 and preached the gospel in Kerala and Tamilnadu and was finally speared to death in Mylapore in Chennai in AD 72. No sane person would travel all the way from west Asia to India if the resurrection of Jesus was not true. Thomas himself was quite a doubter and wanted empirical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus.

In the gospel reading for today we see that Thomas was missing on the first occasion where Jesus appeared to the disciples. So the other disciples told Thomas that they had seen the Lord. But he said to them “unless I see in his hands the marks of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of nails, and my hand into his side, I will not believe.” Thomas was not somebody who could be easily be satisfied as he wanted to touch and feel and know for certain that from the dead.

A Week later Jesus appears to the disciples in the house again and on this occasion Thomas was also present. Jesus tells Thomas, put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it on my side. Stop doubting and believe.” Thomas who had demanded for evidence was given the hard proof with Jesus own presence. Thomas said to him, “My Lord and My God!” Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen yet have believed.” Thomas believed because he had an encounter with the risen Christ who showed his hands and his side. He was rebuked for his unbelief and was called to be a man of faith. Thomas’s life was turned upset down because of this encounter with the risen God. This made him travel all the way to India to share the goodness of Jesus Christ.

In the Acts of Thomas there is a legend about Thomas being interviewed by king Gundaphore for whom the apostle had undertaken to construct a palace. With the kings abundant supplies Thomas initiates a program of relief to the poor while preaching the gospel. King Gundaphore discovers the truth about Thomas’s activity on an inspection visit and imprisons the apostle. The king throws in to jail While he was languishing in jail awaiting punishment the king’s brother, Gad, dies and goes to heaven where angels shown him various mansions. He requested to dwell in one of them which he liked and was palatial. He was told that it belonged to his brother. Gad obtains permission to return to earth and tells his brother about the palace built for him. On hearing this both the royal brothers become the followers of Christ. Even though this is a legend we see here the love of Christ shown to the poor by St. Thomas. Preaching and practice needs to go hand in hand. On verbal witness needs to be matched by our reaching out to the poor.

Because of St. Thomas seeds of the Christian faith were sowed in our country. The good news is meant for the whole world. Thomas came to India and shared this good news which was met with the opposition and ultimately led to his martyrdom. Even though 2000 years have gone by we are still miniscule community of 2.4% according to the 2011 census. The onus of responsibility to share the good news of Jesus Christ with all whom we come into contact with lies squarely on your shoulders. The challenge for the Christian community is to share this good news in a manner that is not abrasive but attractive and exemplary. It is only when others see our life style reflecting the character of Christ that they will be attracted to him.