

The Apostle Thomas has the reputation of being the doubting one. In fact, he is the first to profess his belief in the resurrected Christ by exclaiming, “My Lord and my God!” (Jn 20:28). His statement of belief parallels the beginning of the Gospel of John: “and the Word was God” (Jn 1:1). By acknowledging Jesus as God, he is also acknowledging Jesus is the Word of God, the second person of the Holy Trinity. While Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary into history, the Eternal Word always existed.

Thomas’s change of understanding points out two things:

- With God’s help he is capable of change and growth. Thomas has the benefit of a personal visit from the resurrected Christ who offered to have Thomas place his hands in the wounds of Christ. Thomas does not actually do this. Seeing and talking to Jesus helps him overcome his disbelief in the resurrection.
- The Gospel tells us Thomas is also called Didymus, the name means twin. We are more likely to refer to him as ‘Doubting Thomas.’ We often go with our first impressions and can stereotype a person. If we look at the larger gospel story in which Thomas encounters the risen Jesus, we might more accurately call him ‘Believing Thomas.’

Thomas’s ability to change and grow implies that each of us can change and grow. We should take care against being too rigid in our thinking.

A number of years ago, someone pointed out a problem with a person they struggled with based on a position they had held two decades earlier. I bought into the stereotyping and had my own negative views of the person. With doubts of my own, I went to listen to the person speak. I found a much wiser and mature person than I had anticipated. The person had grown and changed. And in judging the person on who they were in the present, I also learned of my own original blindness in thinking negatively about them.

We live in a very polarized society. We have and hold onto our doubts about others. We are firm in our convictions that we are right, and the other person is wrong. We may even go so far as to demonize another that we disagree with. We refuse to cooperate. We put obstacles in the other person’s way. As we listen to politicians posturing or news commentators expressing their opinions, we cannot help but wonder if there will be any movement towards the center, or any cooperation to avoid the gridlock of national politics.

Saint Paul’s letter to the Ephesians offers a more Christian approach in dealing with others. We are all citizens of the house of God. We need to acknowledge Jesus as our Lord and God. He who chose to do the will of the Father for the greater good of humanity, shows us by example how we are to pray for guidance from the Father and listen to the will of God over and above our own preset thinking. “Through him the whole structure is held together and grows into a temple sacred in the Lord; in him you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (2:21-22).

We are all capable of change and growth. Acknowledging Jesus as our Lord and our God helps us to recognize that he is the cornerstone, and we need to build our thoughts, words, and deeds upon the firm foundation that Jesus offers.