

Second Sunday of Easter 2026
A Sermon Preached by Fr Ian M Delinger
on April 12, 2026

Acts 2:14a,22-32 / Psalm 16 / 1 Peter 1:3-9 / John 20:19-31

*The sun has risen. Let us greet the day.
Christ has risen. The stone is rolled away.
Christ has risen. He has given us the victory.
Christ is alive. He has risen from the dead.
Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

I have always had a soft spot for Thomas in this moment of today's Gospel. Whenever I am asked which biblical character I identify the most with, Thomas is one of them, and it's because of this moment: *Show me. I don't believe you!* I can have my doubts and still be a follower of Jesus. And still today, I'm not there in that room with the Disciples, and it's more than 2,000 years after Jesus' Ascension.

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.

Jesus says that to Thomas and the other Disciples, but John wrote it down for our benefit. It is written down so that we know that we can still believe without poking Jesus' wounds. We can experience and be drawn into the Passion and Resurrection in different ways, and certainly theologians and spiritual writers have taken us on journeys of all sorts that have helped us know the crucified and Risen Christ *because* we were not in that room.

Whenever Thomas the Twin comes up in the Bible, I wonder, "*Where was Thomas' twin?*" Thomas means *twin* in Hebrew, and in Greek, it's *Didymous*. And there is an early writing that didn't make it into the Bible called *The Gospel of Thomas*, purportedly written by the Thomas in today's Gospel. It's a Gnostic writing, meaning that it comes from a philosophy that focuses on personal

spiritual knowledge rather than the systematic institutional religion that we are used to in The West.

That Gospel gives us a clue to where Thomas' twin might have been, and the twin might be *literally* right under our noses! The Gospel begins:

Jesus said, "If those who lead you say to you, 'See, the kingdom is in the sky,' then the birds of the sky will precede you. If they say to you, 'It is in the sea,' then the fish will precede you. Rather, the kingdom is inside of you, and it is outside of you. When you come to know yourselves, then you will become known, and you will realize that it is you who are the sons [and daughters] of the living Father. But if you will not know yourselves, you dwell in poverty and it is you who are that poverty."

In a PBS documentary about the Gospel of Thomas, Harvard theology professor Helmut Koester puts the "poverty" into context:

Poverty is understood as the ignorance of a life in its physical existence. Knowledge is understood to be the knowledge of one's divine origin, of the fact that one has come from the Kingdom. ... when you know yourself, you are no longer in poverty.

But it's Princeton theology professor Elaine H Pagels in the same documentary who suggests that Thomas' twin ... is Jesus:

Here he appears as if he's Jesus' twin, and he is one who knows secret teaching, which Jesus hasn't given to all other people. Here, as in Luke 17:20, the Kingdom of God is said to be an interior state; "It's within you," The secret of gnosis is that when you know yourself at that level you will also come to know God, because you will discover that the divine is within you.

And when you look up Luke 17.20-21, it's right there:

Once Jesus was asked by the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God was coming, and He answered, 'The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; nor will they say, "Look, here it is!" or "There it is!" For, in fact, the Kingdom of God is among you.'

The word “among” is translated from the Greek ἐντὸς, which is also translated “in the midst of you” or “within you”.

The Gospel of Thomas opens with that reflection on the location of the Kingdom of God, and the rest of the Gospel is some sayings of Jesus, some found in the other canonical Gospels, some original to the Gospel of Thomas. But one other one sticks out as we explore where Thomas' twin might have been, or *who* Thomas' twin might be. Saying #70:

If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you.

In the quest for the Kingdom of God, if it is within you and you bring it forward, you will be saved. The only difference this has from traditional Western Christian thought is the physical location of the Kingdom, which *modern* Western Christian thought has not given a physical location ... so why can't it be ... why *shouldn't* it be within you?

Among the other sayings are similar suggestions that, in order to know Jesus, you need to know yourself. Once you know yourself, you will recognize Jesus. Couple that thought with what we heard in 1 Peter:

Although you have not seen Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and rejoice with an

indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

We see Jesus when we look within ourselves and find that Jesus is twin to each of us.

Now, I am not suggesting that we all become Gnostics. That would be quite a huge shift that requires decades of personal work in order to live a completely different philosophy. But what we *could* do is contemplate more deeply and earnestly what it means to be one with Christ.

In the Baptismal Covenant, which we renewed on Easter Day, we are called to *seek and serve Christ in all persons*. So, we already embrace the idea that Christ dwells within all persons, and we seek to serve the Christ in them.

In an interview with NYTimes columnist Ross Douthat, UNC Chapel Hill Theology Professor and Christian Atheist Bart Ehrman makes the astute observation that Christianity – the teachings of Jesus Christ – have radically shaped the moral character of the West since the time of the Early Church. In his book¹ and in the NYTimes interview, Ehrman states that Jesus introduced the radical idea that we should help our neighbor who is in need, and not that we only help them, but love them. This teaching – and Ehrman uses the Parable of the Good Samaritan to support his stance – this teaching is what compels us to care for people after natural disasters or to help the homeless or to volunteer in a soup kitchen. It is the *seeking and serving Christ in all persons* that we promise to do by our Baptism. It is Matthew 25.40:

Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” [Matt 25.40]

¹ “Love Thy Stranger: How the Teachings of Jesus Transformed the Moral Conscience of the West”

But what about the Christ within *yourself*? Without arrogance, narcissism or pride, how do you see Christ within *yourself*? If we follow the Gnostic understanding of Didymous Thomas, and the ultimate achievement of the Kingdom of Heaven is to be twins with Christ, that the Christ in you is the Kingdom of God within you – it *is* you – how do you need to live your life in order to achieve that?

Understanding being One with Christ, and understanding the Kingdom of God in this way is a radical, mind-bending exercise and experience. It fundamentally changes how we in the West approach our faith. I recall a Coffee Hour conversation that became a sermon about the dichotomy of living your life to get into Heaven vs living your life to avoid Hell. Living your life to discover Christ within you and that the Kingdom of God is within you – it's made up of your state of being – is *very, very different* than getting into Heaven or avoiding Hell. It's a journey of discovery of what it means and in what ways are you created in the image of God.

I am not doing justice to the Gospel of Thomas or the two theologians in the PBS documentary. And I certainly am not doing justice to Gnosticism. But it's not too late for any of us to explore the various, and dare I say, infinite ways to discover the full meaning of The Resurrection. Really ... will any of us ever discover the full meaning of The Resurrection? But imagine approaching today's Gospel understanding yourself to be not only the Twin of Christ, but to truly be One with Christ, to seek and serve Christ in yourself, and to love yourself so that you can love your neighbor.

Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side.

That means something far more intimate and transcendental when the wounds you inspect are also your own! The finger that you put into Jesus' spear wound is your wound. The finger you put into the nail wounds in Jesus' hands and feet are your wounds. It makes the Stigmata make more sense to me. The Stigmata is a

person experiencing and manifesting the same wounds that Jesus incurred on the Cross. The 5 wounds: both hands and both feet from the nails that held Him on the Cross, and the piercing of His side to make sure He was dead. And whether self-induced or unexplained, to experience the Stigmata is to be one with Christ. Thomas wants to know whether or not he, too, has been crucified and if he, too, has been raised to new life.

We say as much at our Baptism. At the blessing of the water for Baptism, we say:

We thank You, Father, for the water of Baptism.

In it we are buried with Christ in His Death.

By it we share in His Resurrection.

Through it we are reborn by the Holy Spirit.

Thomas' *actions* in today's Gospel gave us the *language* for the gift of the water of Baptism through which we are twinned with Jesus.

When you know yourself to be one with Jesus, you:

Do not doubt but believe.

Every time we pray, every time we gather for worship, every time we celebrate the Eucharist, the Great Thanksgiving of His sacrifice made once and for all, we are made one with Him! We are made imperishable, undefiled and unfading and kept in Heaven with Christ.