

Doesn't Thomas sound a little angry in this story? "*I will not believe unless I put my hand into his side and my finger into the nailmarks.*" Wow! That is quite severe. Where is the anger coming from? Shouldn't he be overjoyed like the rest of them?

I think anger can surface when we lose hope. Like so many others, Thomas was likely expecting something different from Jesus. After all, this was the guy who healed the sick and fed the poor - thousands of them at a time from almost nothing; this is the guy who was promising a new kingdom - "*blessed are the meek for they will inherit the land; blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they will be satisfied.*" Yet he was nailed to a cross and could not do anything about it? This is the guy who raised up the dead, yet he was laid down in a tomb himself. Thomas probably thought it was all over. The possibilities, the freedom, the new life Jesus brought got buried with him. Thus, the anger.

But Thomas didn't count on one thing: not only blessed are the meek and those who thirst for what is right, but "*blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.*" There is always more than we can see and it is often the community of faith itself that helps us "see", much as the other apostles tried to help Thomas see. Any of us can get discouraged, can question what we believe, can get stuck in anger and disillusionment when awful things happen. The person who says, "I have always tried to do the right thing, to be good and faithful, yet now my husband has left me for another woman." Or "I always have studied hard and worked hard, never cheated and always treated others with respect and now I have lost my job and I can't find work, I can't feed my family." Or "I have always come to church and prayed and given to the poor and now my son is very sick or my mother is dying." We could give a million examples and, if we get stuck in anger or resentment we can be blinded to the bigger truth: that we are loved by a God who, as real as the crucifixion itself, suffers with us and walks with us on this journey of life - even through death. Sometimes we need the community to remind us of that. As the story of the beginning Church in the first reading told us: "*They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers ... all who believed were together and had all things in common.*" Beautiful.

"*We have seen the Lord.*" We have a choice in our response to those amazing words: Anger and disbelief or awe and wonder. We have the same choice when really hard things happen to us. We can choose anger and

discouragement or we can choose the freedom of forgiveness, the love of community and Jesus Christ present to us in the meal at this table. St. Peter wrote, "*although you have not seen him, you love him.*" I think we do see him and can see him every day - look around the room. The Christ is among us and within us - we are to be that visual, physical presence of Christ. Sometimes we fail individually, but as a community we are raised up to new life! Alleluia! Alleluia!