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Evidence

The Second Sunday of Easter, Year C, RCL. John 20:19-31 (Thomas the Doubter). April 3, 2016. The Episcopal Shared Ministry of Our Saviour, Salem and Trinity, Alliance in the Diocese of Ohio. The Rev'd Jerome H. (Kip) Colegrove.

Well, that's weather for you. Yesterday at Martha Unger's funeral I preached a little homily that exulted in the fresh new flowers on the cross out in front of the church. By sundown those flowers were white with snow. Apparently it wasn't smart to take the arrival of springtime for granted.

That was Thomas's problem. Thomas, famously hard to convince of Jesus' resurrection, knew that if you get your hopes up, if things are looking really good, if what you most want looks like it's coming true, watch out—disappointment is most likely just around the corner.

A rule of thumb many of us live by is that if something looks too good to be true there's probably something wrong with it. Much of the time that's a useful rule. But in the life of faith it can interfere with trusting God. We have to be careful about what constitutes good evidence.

To see Jesus solidly enough to put faith in him cannot mean for us, as it did for Thomas, looking for physical proof of his resurrection, because the circumstances of Jesus' birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension lie too far in the past. We have to look for the form his presence

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takes in our time. Jesus can be encountered through interaction with God (usually called prayer), through interaction with other people, through interaction with the natural world, and through study and reflection (often involving the Bible) that takes these interactions into account.

A pattern emerges from this that convinces us, and helps us convince other people, that Jesus is alive and active in the world and especially in the lives of those who believe in his active presence. If Thomas had not been convinced by the astonishing presence of the risen Jesus, I think it very likely he would have been convinced by the way the other disciples were talking about Jesus, that is, by the effect Jesus' living presence was having on their understanding and their behavior. You can infer the cause of a transformation by carefully observing the transformation's effects.

The effect of Jesus on believers is not to turn them into

credulous ninnyes but to make them holy. Track holiness back to its source and you get God, specifically, in the case of Jesus, you get God healing his creation from the inside out. God takes creation on—not as one boxer takes on another in a fight to the finish, but as a person takes on the debts of another, assuming a burden he did not cause.

When that understanding commences to change our lives, Jesus is alive among us in the most important way.

Thomas may have verified Jesus' resurrected presence by putting his fingers into Jesus' wounds, but Jesus' ongoing,

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effective presence in Thomas's life could be verified only by that change, that transformation in the direction of holiness. When Thomas responded to Jesus by saying "My Lord and my God!" that was a start. A good start. But from that point, the road of faith Thomas walked, along with his brothers and sisters in Christ, was no different from that of any Christian. Most definitely including us.

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