

Calling him doubting Thomas does him a disservice.  
All the other disciples understandably  
are resistant to Jesus going back to Bethany  
when he hears his friend Lazarus had died,  
because on his last visit there the locals tried to stone him.  
Only Thomas, the Twin bravely says in John 11:16,  
'Let us also go, that we may die with him.'  
I've gone into deadly situations  
where those words sprang to mind,  
only then to be surprised by resurrection rather than crucifixion.

Thomas interrupts Jesus' lengthy sermon at the Last Supper,  
bravely admitting that he is baffled by our Lord's words.  
'Lord, we don't know where you are going,  
so how can we know the way?' he stutters in John 14:5.

Drawing this iconic response from Jesus  
'I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life.  
No one comes to the Father except by me.'  
Without Thomas' query  
we'd never have had those words.

I'm not surprised that Thomas wasn't with the other disciples  
for their ultimate lads' lock in on Easter Day evening:  
he strikes me as a can-do  
rather than lock-down sort of guy.  
And when all the other disciples seem to have gone totally nuts,  
claiming that a mangled, pierced, broken body  
has come back to glorious life,  
a very Anglican Thomas stands for the voice of reason,  
demanding empirical evidence  
rather than going along with the madding crowd.

Christians often lose the plot and go crazy.  
When I was at college, the Toronto blessing was all the rage,  
where during worship you lay prostrate giggling your head off.  
My friend Jonathan and I went  
to observe such a church in Cambridge  
but unlike the rest of the congregation,  
we were definitely not slayed by the spirit -  
the churchwarden came over and asked if we were alright!  
'Pretending to extraordinary revelations and gifts of the Holy  
Spirit is a horrid thing – a very horrid thing!'  
– Bp Joseph Butler to John Wesley 1739

But Jesus calls Thomas' bluff,  
returns to the Upper Room on Low Sunday,  
lets him touch the wounds in his hands and side.  
Interesting that our Lord took those wounds into eternity.  
My Uncle Edmund had a near death experience  
and remembered laughing with Jesus that  
the only gift he'd taken from earth was the terrible wounds.  
'My Lord and my God,' Thomas responds, the boldest creed.

'Blessed are they that have not seen and yet believe,' says Jesus  
suddenly addressing us here in Scalby on St Thomas' Day 2022  
and making the hairs rise on the back of our necks.  
Without Thomas we'd have been denied that blessing.

Legend has it that Thomas wrote an intriguing Gospel  
and travelled as far as India proclaiming the risen Christ,  
making Paul's travels around the Med pale into insignificance.  
Founder of the Mar Thoma Church, he was martyred in Madras.  
Not bad for a doubter - how are we doubters  
going to match him on his summer feast day?