

**The Second Sunday of Easter, March 30, 2008**  
**Immanuel Old Church, Hanover County**  
*by the Reverend David Knight, Interim Rector*

I have not seen, how am I to believe?  
My eyes have never marked the risen Christ.  
Is one to trust the stories others tell,  
God raising up what has been sacrificed?

I have not felt his hands, stone cold grow warm,  
nor heard the heart once silenced beat again;  
yet here I am, surrounded by a faith  
that apprehends his presence now as then.

We hope for signs, but in the end will trust  
that risen Life, arising, surely weaves  
of faith and doubt alike a living truth  
that blesses all who question to believe.

*from Songs for the Cycle by Michael Hudson*

**H**ere you and I are this morning, surrounded by a faith that apprehends his presence now as then.

As we move into the second week of the Great Fifty Days of Easter we encounter in today's Gospel the risen Jesus as he reaches out to Thomas who is having great difficulty believing what the other disciples were telling him about Jesus being alive and in their midst. Thomas had not been with them when Jesus first appeared. When they said, "Thomas, we have seen the Lord," he could only reply, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe." A week later, and this time Thomas was there, Jesus appeared once again. He said, "Peace be with you." Then, he looked at Thomas. He went over to him. He said to him, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt, but believe." Thomas did as Jesus told him. "My Lord and my God!" he exclaimed. Jesus then said to them all, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

As the risen Jesus met Thomas where he was in his doubt, so the risen Jesus, now as then, is in our midst to meet us where we are. Could it be that in each one of us there is an element of Thomas? Could it be that as much as we want to believe in the Resurrection, it is, nonetheless hard for us to imagine how it could have happened? Could it be that you and I, as did Thomas, wish for some sign, some evidence that gives us assurance. How many times have you heard it said by someone who has lost a loved one, "If only I could hear one time that she was OK? Perhaps you have said that yourself. I have. It is natural to question. It is normal to doubt because, you see, doubt and faith are not in contradiction with each other. One's faith journey can be filled with doubt. Times of questioning can lead to a deeper faith experience. Times of questioning can open our hearts to experience God in ways we had never imagined were possible. Stories that others tell can sometimes help us along that journey as well.

I want to share with you this morning an experience that has had a profound effect on my belief in the Resurrection. In many ways, I am like Thomas, I want to see things so as to believe in them. What I sometimes see, however, is not of my own doing. What I sometimes see, like what you sometimes see, is a gift from God. It was on an April morning in 1983 at Goodwin House in Alexandria. It was at the bedside of John Baden, beloved bishop suffragan of this diocese and one of my predecessors at Christ Church, Winchester. After his retirement he and Mrs. Baden lived on a sheep farm in nearby Bunker Hill, West Virginia. I am told that he didn't realize it was in West Virginia until after he was in the process of signing the papers, but that's another story. I would often visit Bishop Baden and would seek his counsel. He was a very wise man. He became one of my heroes. But back to his bedside at Goodwin House on that April morning in 1983. After battling cancer for several years, he was now at the end of his earthly journey. The doctors had told his family it was a matter of hours. His family asked me if I would go with them to Alexandria to be with them there at Goodwin House. It was a privilege I shall never forget. We took turns at his bedside. It was early in the morning. Mrs. Baden emerged from his room for a little break and rest. She asked me if I would go in. I sat beside him and held his hand. Twenty-five years later, I remember distinctly what happened in those next few moments. As I held his hand, I said, "Bishop, shall we say the Nunc dimittis together?" He had slipped away into semi-consciousness, yet I felt a faint grip of his hand as I held his. I began, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace..." Faint as it was, his response to these words was palpable. His lips were moving with the words. Moments passed. Then, I'm telling you what's the truth about what happened next. The room became very quiet. I became aware that something was being lifted. It wasn't something I saw. His body was still there quiet, very peaceful. The grip in his hand was gone, yet there was a powerful sense that something had gone upward. Something had risen. It was undeniable then. The memory of that moment has remained with me to this day. The nurse came in. She examined him. She said, "He is gone." My response to her was involuntary, "No, no, I said, he is risen. He is risen." I share this experience with you in the hope that it may be helpful in some way to you in your journey as you contemplate the sacred mystery of the Resurrection. I share it in the hope that it might be helpful to you in some way and as you think about the resurrection of those whom you love because...

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Amen.