

The Rev. Renee L. Fenner
St. Barnabas Episcopal Church
2nd Sunday of Easter/Year C
April 11, 2010
Text: John 20:19-31

Alleluia, Christ is risen! The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!

As I reflected this week on today's Gospel, I could not help but think about my youngest nephew, Aaron. Some of you may have met him last week. He has always been an inquisitive little boy, not wanting to miss much like most children. Aaron is now four years old but when he was much younger I remember a few occasions riding along with him and his sister, Alanna, and my sister, Patrice on family outings. Maybe it is a 'boy thing' but he would get so excited about airplanes. When one of us would hear the sound or spot one we would say, 'Aaron, there's an airplane!' Aaron would begin to squirm in his car seat, frantically trying to see what we saw. There were times when he was able to see the plane traveling overhead just fine but there were those other times that he couldn't quite get there. Alanna, who is only two years older than her brother would often try to help him. The dialogue usually went something like this: "Aaron, look over there!" "Where?" "Over there, see it?" "No." "Aaron, over there. Hurry or you'll miss it!" "Where?" "Aaron!!!!" A lot of times an exasperated big sister would finally give up and a frustrated Aaron would be beside himself knowing that he had missed the plane. It didn't matter if I saw them or if his sister saw them-Aaron wanted to see them too. And so it went time and time again. Now that he is a little older and a little more coordinated, he can spot planes pretty much by himself and tell YOU where to look!

The desire to know or to see things for ourselves simply doesn't go away no matter what age we are. We are naturally curious people and we live in a world where "proof" trumps all. We want tangible proof and not just someone's word for it. We send robots with cameras to the farthest ends of the universe so we can know for sure what's out there. We tag all kinds of species of animals and water creatures with intricate devices and follow them so we can learn their habits. We make sure to record or tivo our favorite soaps, movies, and sport events so that we can watch them later at

our leisure. And anytime there is a wall bearing a sign "wet paint," we will touch it just to be sure. True to our Missouri motto we say- 'Show me!'

Our Gospel passage for this second Sunday of Easter is a familiar one. There we find the disciples locked up behind closed doors after Jesus' crucifixion, afraid that the authorities will issue them a similar fate. Jesus suddenly came and stood among them. When they saw him, the disciples rejoiced. But Thomas was not there. When the other disciples later told Thomas about their experience he refused to believe. No matter how hard they tried to convince him, Thomas would not be swayed. Thomas said, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger ... in his side, I will not believe." A week later, when Thomas *was* with the disciples, Jesus appeared to them once again and invited Thomas to touch his wounds. Thomas had only but to gaze upon Jesus and he believed.

"My Lord and my God," said Thomas.

Jesus then said to him, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

We have all heard this story before. More importantly, we have all lived it. We have all had times in our lives where we have doubted and when our faith has wavered, where we have said to God, "Show me a sign! Give me some proof!" Maybe it was because we were in a place of unbearable pain or we have received still another piece of bad news. Maybe we have found ourselves in that place of uncertainty as we discern a career move, a business decision, which school to attend. Perhaps it was a time when God seemed silent and far away.

Thomas' story is a testimony to the fact that it is sometimes hard to have faith, that is sometimes hard to believe. Thomas could not/would not believe that Jesus had risen from the dead until he had a firsthand encounter with Jesus. A secondhand encounter just would not do. Thomas demanded "what would become the cornerstone of all Christian faith"-a personal experience of the Risen Christ. Like Thomas, we need a personal encounter with our God.

I don't know about you but in our sometimes doubting and wavering spirits we need the Lord to break in and reveal himself to us as he did that Easter Day. God knows our need for a firsthand encounter-an upclose and personal experience with the Risen Christ. That is why God came to us in

the person of Jesus—took on flesh so that we could see him, hear him, and be touched by him.

At the end of this Gospel John writes, “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and through believing you may have life in his name.”

You and I are counted among “the blessed who have not seen and yet have come to believe” and charged to continue God’s work in the world. We have been loosed from our closed doors into our communities to share our own unique experiences of God. So that when others hear our testimony, may they not simply hear *words*, but may they *see* Jesus Christ fully alive in us and through us and come to their own personal experience with God.

The ways we minister to those in need; the ways we fellowship and welcome others into fellowship with us; the ways we support and nurture our youth and our elders; the ways we pray together and for one another; the ways we show love to one another are just some of the *visible evidence* of Jesus’ presence in our lives.

And at the end of the day, like Thomas we can shout, “my Lord and my God” for all God has done and will continue to do in the world. Amen.