

We cannot will ourselves to believe in God – if God exists there's nothing we can do to change that, whether in our belief or disbelief, but we can open ourselves to the possibility of belief and in a sense Thomas does this not in his demanding to see Jesus but in his turning up on a Sunday to be with the other disciples – none of whom was anymore in control of what God or Jesus would do next than Thomas was, or indeed ourselves. When Jesus first breathes on his disciples and gifts them with his spirit the initiative is his entirely as was God's first act of creation and the giving of life to Adam. In short Thomas comes to belief at God's initiative though he does have to be present too. And this is us in our daily pattern of waiting on God's initiative in one respect but getting on with life too, in doing whatever the next most necessary thing there is to do, the next most loving thing that there is to do and we don't have to search for extra meaning or extra-ordinary experiences of God, in the doing of it. The act itself is enough, is where meaning lies. There is a sense in which we can be too self-conscious about our faith and give the lie to our faith by not acting in accordance with what we say, with the love we profess to be. When Pope Francis embraces a disfigured person a cynic might say he's just doing that for effect but no, the doing of it necessarily speaks of one person overcoming their fear or revulsion of another and the act itself speaks though a lot will depend on the graced disposition of both – are they both willing to be moved by the encounter - let love be genuine one might say. In the short passage from the acts of the apostles today it is indeed their acts which impress other people – see how they love one another and make themselves present to each other at their daily assemblies in the Temple. This is Christianity at its most incarnate allowing God to be present in our wounds, in all the vulnerability of human flesh. When we break bread together – in a highly attenuated form in our present practice - this still speaks of something which is not within our own gift but which we can still make ourselves present to or vulnerable to. It's like casting off that hard shell and becoming suddenly vulnerable to love- to that sudden emotion that strikes Thomas here and causes him to exclaim 'my Lord and my God'.

What he says may have been contrived by the author of the gospel to some extent, but it's none the less moving for all that.

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