

We are a church without visible boundaries – as is being discovered increasingly today of people, our selves do not stop at our skins, to paraphrase Karl Rahner. This does not mean that our bodies and their senses no longer matter but that they lead us into realms beyond the visible, the touchable, the sort of proof that Thomas was after. – and, in a sense, doesn't get. What he gets instead is a person present despite closed doors, who challenges him to use his senses in this way, to accept him even without touch as Thomas then seems to do, that is without touch, indeed does so with that expression of belief that goes beyond anything the other disciples have managed so far – an insight into Christ as both Lord and God, an insight which places Christ beyond any of the more normal constraints on a person as body alone. I would suggest that there is a similar dynamic or power at work in the letter to the Ephesians where the spiritual nature of us as Church is even more obviously eulogised, where the imagery of temple building is applied to our own spiritual growth. This runs directly counter to our temptation to build walls, to put up barriers between the spiritual and what we falsely perceive is the non-spiritual, to contain the Holy in this place or that, to recreate the ghetto. The wonder is that without walls we are led directly back into an encounter with the physical, with the bodily reality of others full of God. Walls have their uses, but they are no barrier to God. Thomas is an architect then not of buildings but of souls.

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