

Lectionary Meditation – Easter 2 (Year A)

The American musician Frank Zappa once said: 'A mind is like a parachute. It doesn't work if it is not open.' I wonder whether your mind is open or closed? Are you open to possibilities, to embracing new ways of thinking, new ideas and concepts? Are you also willing to have some of your pre-conceived ideas challenged? It's very easy for us to think that we are open-minded when in fact our minds are tightly closed.

In today's Gospel narrative we read that it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples were meeting were locked for fear of the Jews. (20:19). For the last three or so years they had been disciples of Jesus of Nazareth; they had left everything to follow him. They had seen him perform great miracles and he had changed their thinking and indeed their lives. Now everything had crumbled, he had been arrested, tried and executed. Everything their hopes and dreams were in shatters. They were now outlaws and heretics in the eyes of the Jewish religious establishment and now feared for their own lives.

It was then that Jesus chose to come and stand in their midst and said, 'Peace be with you'. Jesus showed them the physical marks in his hands and his side to prove beyond doubt that it was indeed their friend and master, Jesus. Their reaction was not surprisingly joyful. But can you imagine what was going on in their heads as they tried to process all that seemingly contradictory information - for it is not every day that you meet someone who has come back from the dead.

There was however, one disciple who was missing that evening and that was Thomas. Now I have always said that I think that so-called doubting Thomas gets a bad press. He certainly didn't have an open mind, did he? However, I wonder how many of us would have reacted in a similar manner and want to see tangible proof with our own eyes? A week later Thomas had his chance to meet the risen Christ and was able to physically touch the nail marks in his hands and the hole in his side.

It was George Bernard Shaw who once said: 'Those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything'. What Thomas and the other disciples saw totally transformed their thinking. They went on to be bold witnesses to the resurrection and many of them died martyr's deaths as a consequence. We heard Peter's bold first-hand witness account in our earlier reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

Back to the Frank Zappa parachute analogy - a parachute only works when it is deployed and opened. Without a fully open chute a skydiver will rapidly plummet to his or her death. The same applies to our thinking. If you have a closed mind, can I encourage you to unfurl your metaphorical parachute and embrace new possibilities, new ways of thinking? Some of the world's greatest agents of change have been those who have had open minds. For example, Albert Einstein who said: 'The measure of intelligence is the ability to change'.

Jesus said to those first disciples who were first-hand witnesses of his resurrection: 'Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe' (20:29) and the gospel writer John said: 'But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name. I wonder are you willing to open your mind and embrace life in all its fullness?

Fr Andy