



# The Benefice of St Mary's Bocking & Panfield Church



Sunday 16th April 2023  
The Second Sunday of Easter  
Staying in Contact

The Very Revd Rod Reid - Incumbent (*usual rest day Monday*)

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or on Facebook, search for 'St Mary's Church, Bocking', or 'Panfield Church'

## Forthcoming Services

## Hymns

364

### **St Mary's, Bocking**

Sunday 16th April	8am	Said Mass
Sunday 16th April	10am	Sung Mass
Wednesday 19th April	9.30am	Said Mass
Sunday 23rd April	8am	Said Mass
Sunday 23rd April	10am	Sung Mass

A

128

319

### **Panfield Church**

Sunday 16th April	6pm	BCP Evensong
Tuesday 18th April	5pm	Evening Prayer/Office Hour
Sunday 23rd April	11am	Holy Communion

## Gospel Acclamation

*You believe because you can see me. Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe.*

## NOTICES

**May Day Raffle** - Alongside the top prize of £150 we are also looking to giveaway some other incredible prizes. If you would like to offer something or could donate monies so that we can buy something to raffle off, please speak to Jo Mallows or Fr Rod.

**Monday May 1st** - May Fayre helpers needed! Please have a think about how you might help us to make it a really successful event. You may be able to offer some time on the day, make something to sell, or sponsor one of the Flower Displays. Pru, Margaret or Jo look forward to hearing from you a.s.a.p!

**May Day Tombola!** - Angela Fuller and the team on the tombola are inviting any items for it to be brought to church in the coming days, and no later than next Sunday. Thank you in advance.

**Coronation Weekend** - It is just a few weeks until the Coronation. Understandably many will be watching the ceremony on Saturday May 6th, but we are hoping for a full church on Sunday May 7th at 10am for a special service of our own. Then on Monday May 8th, we will be hosting a picnic in the Church Grounds with a Cream Tea. All welcome, bring your own food and drinks for plenty of good fun and maybe some singing. Please arrive from 1.30pm onwards. If you would like a Cream Tea, cost £5 these need to be ordered in advance & can be collected on the day from 2pm. Sign up sheet at the back!

**Warm Place** - Our Warm Space has been an incredible success and after 20 consecutive weeks has now finished. The outreach and support for this initiative has been fantastic and Fr Rod would like to say

a huge thank you to all involved. I am thrilled to say that this regular community lunch space will re-launch on May 12th as the *Friendly Friday Café* from 12-3pm and will run until July 21st.

**Fellowship** - The next meeting is Thursday April 20th in the Church Hall. We start at 12.30pm with a light lunch followed by our speaker, the cost only £5, don't miss it.

**Prayers** - We keep in our prayers Peter Hopkins, Jean Goodwin, Sue, Roger, Frances, Peter, Jo, June Blackwood, Tony & Ann, and Margaret Everitt. We remember our care homes Millard House, Fern Lodge, Aspen Grange, Larchwood, The New Deanery & St Mary's Court. In our Years Mind, we pray for the families of Ruth Darby, Elsie Sams, William Hedger, Victor Jenner, Elizabeth Ware, Jack Jobson, and Eileen Pudney.

## The Collect for the Second Sunday of Easter

Almighty Father,  
you have given your only Son to die for our sins  
and to rise again for our justification:  
grant us so to put away the leaven of malice and wickedness  
that we may always serve you  
in pureness of living and truth;  
through the merits of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

## **Epistle Reading - Acts 2:14a, 22-32**

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: 'You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know— this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. For David says concerning him, "I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; moreover, my flesh will live in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One experience corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence." 'Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying, "He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh experience corruption." This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses'

## **Gospel Reading - John 20:19-31**

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.' But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, '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 his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not

doubt but believe.’ Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.’ 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 that through believing you may have life in his name.

## Address

In the story in St John’s Gospel of the raising of Lazarus, after Jesus tells the disciples that Lazarus is dead and that the plan is to travel to Bethany to the home he shared with Martha and Mary, it is Thomas who says, ‘Let us also go, that we may die with him’ (John 11.16). These are hardly the words of an habitual doubter. Thomas, indeed, comes across as the disciple who knows what needs to be done, even if that entails a degree of personal risk.

Yet the phrase ‘doubting Thomas’ has become a cliché for the sort of person who for every silver lining can usually find several dark clouds. Nothing can ever be quite as good as it seems. So when, for whatever reason, Thomas was absent when the risen Jesus first appeared to the disciples in a locked room, he expresses scepticism and wants proof. Was this simply the type of person that he was? Or could it be that, because he was a twin, he was much more aware of the possibilities of mistaken identity than the other disciples were? Maybe his desire to believe was outweighed by the fear of disappointment if it turned out that the other disciples had made an innocent mistake. We can never know, and further speculation is probably futile.

But what is doubt? In the case of Thomas it is a not unreasonable desire to be shown some evidence before he believes what seems to be impossible. Many centuries ago when people thought the sun revolved around the earth and doubted those who said that it was the other way round, the question could be resolved through scientific exploration and reasoning. But there are other forms of doubt. I may doubt my ability to do something. Indeed I think that for many years I doubted my ability to learn to drive a car. I had found ways of coping perfectly well without driving. Eventually I had no option but to learn and much to my amazement passed my test first time. Doubt can be a sort of coping mechanism to avoid being taken out of one’s comfort zone. Or it can be a sort of insurance against failure. If I am over-confident about a new task or an exam, then failure will hurt. If I constantly doubt myself, then the outcome will either be better than I feared, or I can always say, Eeyore like, that I knew it would all end badly.

Watching Manchester City in the decades before they acquired their present manager was an object lesson in the value of doubt. If your team has a habit of performing badly against inferior opposition, then there is much to be said for approaching each match doubting whether victory is possible and being pleasantly surprised if they win, but not being too down-hearted if they lose. Perhaps West Ham fans may understand these feelings.

While doubting may have its uses, I am not at all sure that it is to be encouraged. It can lead to a ‘can’t do’ rather than a ‘can do’ approach to life. But is it really fair to speak of ‘doubting Thomas’? The disciples were hardly going to be in an optimistic mood after the events of Good Friday. Not only had the ministry of Jesus seemed to end in disaster, but they must also have been fearful about what would happen to them next. Even if they heard the stories of the empty tomb and the appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene, they must have wondered about their own safety. It is perhaps not surprising that Chapter 21 of St John’s Gospel suggests that at least some of them left Jerusalem and returned to their old life of fishing in the Sea of Galilee. Maybe Thomas simply had the courage to voice what they were thinking and in so doing give Jesus the opportunity to resolve some of their doubts.

If it did, then it would hardly be surprising if they were not left with many questions, both about what Jesus had experienced at that first Easter and what they, as disciples, should do next. As we hear extracts from *The Acts of the Apostles* during the Easter season we will discover how some of these questions were resolved through the mission of St Paul and the proclamation of the Gospel by St Peter and others. But questions clearly remained. Indeed many of St Paul's letters were written, at least in part, to deal with the sort of questions, both spiritual and practical, that the earliest Christian communities faced. There is nothing wrong with having questions.

Indeed it would be possible to argue that one of the weaknesses of the contemporary church is that it is not sufficiently questioning. This might be the case in three areas. First, how often do we as a church community make time to ask questions about what it actually is that we believe and why we believe the things that we proclaim in worship? Questions can be unsettling, but if properly worked through can lead to a better understanding of the faith and of how to share it. This is not the sort of thing can be done through sermons, or even a regular teaching slot. It may need some sort of structured approach like the home groups that are a feature of many parishes.

Secondly, how often do we ask questions about the society in which we live and about the ordinary assumptions of everyday life? The wider church is good about this in some areas of life, particularly to do with relationships and family. It is perhaps not so good when it comes to issues concerning the world of work or the underlying assumptions about what makes for a 'good life'. Perhaps, for example, the church should be asking some hard questions about the sustainability of making economic growth such a high priority.

Thirdly, there might be questions that occasional churchgoers want to ask about just what goes on in a church service. Indeed I suspect that some quite regular churchgoers may have similar questions. Just what do we think we are doing when we gather each Sunday at 10.00 am? Why do we use the particular words that we use? What, if anything, is the meaning or purpose of the ritual that is at the heart of our worship? It is easy to take things for granted and assume that everyone understands what is going on. My suspicion is that there could be a lot of unasked and therefore unanswered questions.

It may, of course, be the case that few people have questions and even fewer have doubts. I suspect that this is probably not the case, and that if it is then that this is not necessarily a sign of a healthy church community. If the story of 'doubting Thomas' gives us permission to confess to our doubts and to explore our questions then it fully justifies its place in the Gospel readings for the Easter season. Amen.

## Post Communion Prayer

Lord God our Father,  
through our Saviour Jesus Christ  
you have assured your children of eternal life  
and in baptism have made us one with him:  
deliver us from the death of sin  
and raise us to new life in your love,  
in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.  
Amen.