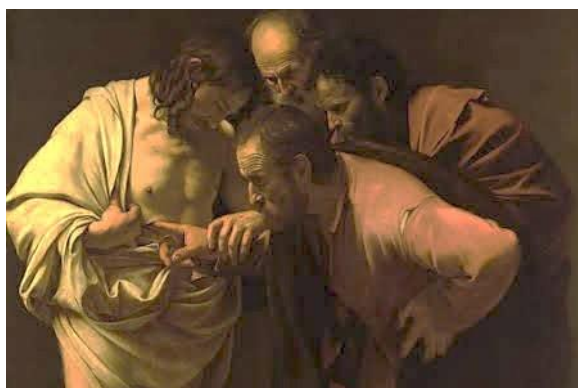


# NEWSLETTER

16th April 2026



*The Incredulity of St Thomas*  
By Carravaggio

## Dear Everyone - Greetings to you all

In his sermon on Sunday, Kamran talked about Thomas, (John 20;19-31) and his not being present with the other disciples when Jesus appeared before them. Three times Jesus said to assembled group, "Peace be with you". But Thomas was not there and did not believe them when they told him. He was behind shut doors and, as a result of the way we read his story, poor Thomas has so often been defined by his lack of belief rather than encouragement of honest questioning over blind acceptance.

Kamran talked of the many ways "locked doors" can be interpreted. There are the locked doors of the Heart, of Fear, Grief, Guilt and Doubt. Feelings of one sort or another we all suffer from in different ways. He said, "No-one can see what is in the heart of another, but Jesus can". "No door can shut Jesus out". As St Augustine said, "Our hearts are restless until they rest in God". Jesus is always with us and, Thomas was honest in his questioning. He cannot pretend to believe what he has not seen, as so often we cannot either. "Whatever door is locked today, Jesus bringing hope, will always come through it".

I cannot believe it was just coincidence that the day before, Kamran's sermon I had read a piece by, **The Reverend Charity Tozivepi-Nzegwu on "Reflecting on St Thomas"**. The Revd Charity is a Methodist Minister in London, a Theologian, storyteller, justice centred EDI specialist, author, speaker. She is also a Digital creator. She studied at the Queen's

Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education, where I did post graduate studies for a year some while back –a totally brilliant and stimulating place to be.



It was so interesting to read Rev Tozivepi-Nzegwu’s piece on Thomas (printed below) and then listened to Kamran’s sermon on the Saint and locked doors. In so many ways they complement each other.

The Revd Charity brings thoughts of Thomas into our present day cultures and the conflicting contexts experienced by so many, especially those who feel on the Edge in societies. She talks of Thomas’s absence not always being seen as abandonment. She says, “Sometimes it is refusal. Refusal to be governed by fear. Refusal to let oppressive power define the limits of one’s life”. She then asks, “whether absence might sometimes be its own form of presence. Experience has taught that those who step outside prescribed spaces are often misunderstood. They are labelled. They are reduced”. Her writing is always challenging; to me she writes as a liberation theologian wanting to free people to think beyond the restrictions we carry and to think for ourselves. She says of Thomas, that he, “has carried that burden in our reading and his question has been turned into a flaw, rather than received as integrity”. Her full article is below. I believe what the Revd Charity has to say is extremely important to us and our society in the way we question and think. Please read what she is saying and see what you feel.

**“The Three Marys”:** Kelly Latimore is an increasingly famous Iconographer whose works are collected across the world. In an article below he writes about his Icon, “The Three Marys”, that, in that act of being with, even in death, they became the first witnesses to new life. Here he coincidentally picks up on a thread in Revd Charity’s article (below), when she says that, *“the women are not named here, though they had already encountered the risen Christ. Their testimony did not hold the room. Absence in the text does not mean absence in reality. Wisdom often lives with those who are written out.* Kelly “wrote his icon in the hope that it can continue to remind us, that in a time where women were excluded and overlooked, when Christ was crucified and buried, and the male apostles fled and hid, it was the women who stood by Christ in his suffering and death, and became the first witnesses and preachers of the gospel. We must remember and honour them.

**Birthdays:** It was Simon's turn for Happy Birthday greetings and prayers from everyone, plus a great chocolate cake afterwards which was much enjoyed.



**Christening:** Next Sunday during the service there will be the Christening of Eliana the baby daughter of Kenneth and Chamelka. Kenneth is the younger brother of Felicia, the wife of Ibezim. We all look forward to this joyous occasion.



**Listening and Learning, Bible Study:** the Bible Study will continue to take place on <sup>Thursdays</sup> at 7.00pm pm. It will be held in church as usual but also on Zoom to enable those who cannot get to church to join in. The link is: **Join Zoom Meeting**

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81391462394?pwd=Iw9o8zKMnoUjEx2TwGmOlwUm21F2V.1> Meeting ID: 813 9146 2394 Passcode: 226547 --- One tap mobile

+12532050468,,81391462394#,,,,\*226547# US

+12532158782,,81391462394#,,,,\*226547# US (Tacoma) Join instructions

<https://us06web.zoom.us/join/81391462394?signature=9LDb9LImnxkAbxeBXA-gdH3xLiUglFvqZ2iPFwUE8ys>

**Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM):** This is an important meeting during which we go over all the events and happenings of the year. Reports are given, questions are asked and issues discussed. It is a time when church wardens are elected and members of the Church council too. Please put the date in your diaries and make a point of attending. **The date is: Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May** after the morning service.

**Please be sure to sign up to the Parish Electoral Role.** There is a list of names at the side of the church. If your name is not already on it you can sign on the forms which are on the table or ask Alexis who is our electoral role officer.

**Coffee:** This enjoyable time takes place each Wednesday from 10.30am – 12 noon when we then have a short communion service. Everyone is welcome – cakes and conversation.

**Toddler Group:** The Toddler group will be back this week after their Easter holidays.

**We badly need more helpers for this group.** If you are willing to give some time to help between 9.30 and 11.30am on Tuesdays, please let Kamran know on Sunday or contact him on: Kamran@gg-pc.co.uk or the church WhatsApp.

**With love and good wishes for a continuing Happy Eastertide - Sally**



*You can tell that Spring has come when the Puffins appear in the Farne Islands.*

### **Reflecting on St Thomas by the Reverend Charity Tozivepi-Nzegwu**

“During my reflections this morning, I kept returning to that detail in Gospel of John 20, that the doors were locked for fear. I wonder what kinds of fear were moving in that room. Not just personal fear, but political fear. Fear of authority, fear of being seen, fear of what happens to bodies that refuse to comply. Communities learn to survive by closing in on themselves. They become careful.

They measure their words. They learn when silence is safer than truth. That room is not far from us. Many still live in it.

Yet, Thomas is not there. I cannot move past that. I wonder what it means that while others are gathered behind locked doors, he is absent. Absence is not always abandonment. Sometimes it is refusal. Refusal to be governed by fear. Refusal to let oppressive power define the limits of one’s life. This led me to ask whether absence might sometimes be its own form of presence. Experience has taught that those who step outside prescribed spaces are often misunderstood. They are labelled. They are reduced.

Thomas has carried that burden in our readings. His question has been turned into a flaw, rather than received as integrity.

Because when Thomas is traced across the gospel, a different picture comes into view. This is the one who, in the face of danger, says, let us go with him, even if it leads to death. This is the one who refuses vague assurances and asks, how can we know the way. He does not borrow understanding. He does not pretend clarity. He speaks what is true, even when it

unsettles the room. What appears in this passage is not a sudden failure of faith, but a consistency of character. He needs truth that can be held, touched, known.

So when he says he needs to see and to touch, this is not doubt in its shallow sense. It is integrity. It is a refusal to perform belief in order to belong. Many have been asked to accept what has not met them with honesty. To trust without evidence. To receive without question. Experience has taught that not every proclamation of good news has been good for everyone.

This led me to think about how communities learn to ask, where are the marks, where is the truth, how does this touch the ground on which we stand. Is it possible that Thomas is resisting not Christ, but a form of belief that bypasses the body. And then Jesus returns. He enters through locked doors again. He speaks peace again. But this time the encounter is direct. It is attentive. Thomas is not generalised. He is not asked to become like the others. He is met as he is. And the wounds are offered. Not as spectacle, but as testimony. As if to say, this is what violence does.

This is what empire leaves behind. It is not hidden. Resurrection does not erase it. It holds it in plain sight. This led me to sit with the wounds, not as something to move past, but as something that still speaks. Perhaps this is where our theology must begin. Not in abstraction, but in wounded bodies that carry truth.

There is also this quiet truth. The others had already seen. They had already received what Thomas is asking for. Yet he is the one remembered by his question. How communities remember people matters.

Who gets labelled. Who gets reduced. Whose honesty becomes a problem. And the women are not named here, though they had already encountered the risen Christ. Their testimony did not hold the room. Absence in the text does not mean absence in reality. Wisdom often lives with those who are written out.

So Thomas stands, not as a doubter, but as one who refuses second-hand truth. The kind of faith that emerges here is not fragile. It can hold questions. It can withstand touch. It does not collapse under scrutiny. And the peace Jesus speaks is not passive. It does not maintain the status quo.

It enters locked systems and unsettles them. It honours the question. It dignifies the body. It refuses to hide the wound.

Perhaps the invitation is not simply to believe. Maybe it is to become communities where fear is named, wounds are not hidden, and where those who ask to see, touch and to know, are not pushed to the edges, but recognised as those through whom truth is made clearer.

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***The Three Marys Icon  
by Kelly Latimore***



Kelly Latimore reflected on the Three Marys in preparation for his Icon. He writes, “God chose women to first bring the good news of the resurrection of Jesus to the world. The women who went to the tomb that first Easter morning weren't going there seeking resurrection. They were going to perform one last act of loving presence—to anoint a body. But in that act of being with, even in death, they became the first witnesses to new life. In the Icon Christ’s mother wraps her arms around Mary Magdelene and “the other Mary” as they go from the garden tomb to proclaim Christ’s resurrection. Each gospel tells a different version of Easter morning. It could be easy to miss the point of the story and get lost by the amount of exegesis that has gone into the who’s who of Mary’s in the Gospels. There is Mary (mother of Jesus), Mary Magdelene, “the other Mary”-Mary (mother of James and Joses/Joseph), Mary (wife of Clopas) and Mary of Bethany. In Mark and Luke, the gospel writers mention many women, “the myrrh-bearers” going to the tomb Easter morning. Some historians believe some of these Mary’s in the gospels could be the same person. (i.e. Mary, Christ’s mother and Mary the Mother of James) In Luke, Mary the wife of Cleopas is interestingly also considered to be the “unnamed follower” with Cleopas as they walked on the road to Emmaus with a risen Christ they did not recognize. (tradition also holds that Mary and Cleopas were Jesus’ Aunt

and Uncle!) In Matthew, it is Mary Magdalene and “the other Mary” who go to the tomb. In John’s Gospel, it is Mary Magdalene alone who first sees the risen Jesus, mistaking him for the Gardener. Although, as some could point out, Jesus’ Mother is not described in any of the Gospels as being present with the women coming to attend to the body of Jesus and saw the empty tomb. However, in his work, ‘The Life of the Virgin,’ St Maximus the Confessor draws on the Church’s tradition to say that Mary was “inseparable from the tomb” and so was there on the Sunday morning when the other women arrived. This belief has been preserved in the traditional iconography with many icons of the myrrh-bearing women, when studied closely, contain Mary, the Mother of God with the other women, denoted by MP ΘΥ (a Greek/ abbreviation for Mater Theos; Mother of God) inscription is clearly written in her halo. Regardless, I hope this icon can continue to remind us that in a time where women were excluded and overlooked, when Christ was crucified and buried, and the male apostles fled and hid, it was the women who stood by Christ in his suffering and death, and became the first witnesses and preachers of the gospel.

***Signed Giclee Prints and Digital Downloads of the above icon is available from:  
kellylatimore icons.com***

### **Pope Leo’s Prayer Vigil for Peace**

Pope Leo delivered a stirring homily at the prayer vigil that took place on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> April at St Peter’s Basilica. It was an invitation to all people across the world to pray for peace at a particular time. Many of us joined in even if we couldn’t make that time. The paragraph below is part of what he said during the vigil and is very powerful.

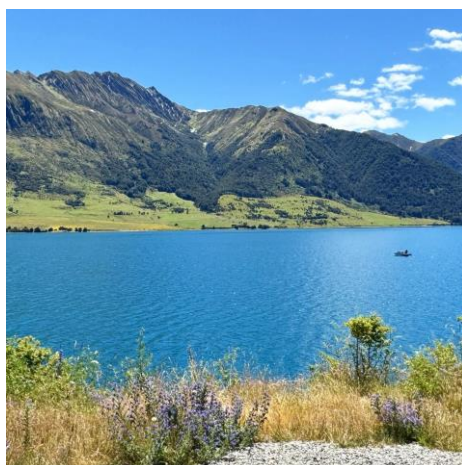
*“The balance within the human family has been severely destabilized. Even the holy Name of God, the God of life, is being dragged into discourses of death. A world of brothers and sisters with one heavenly Father vanishes, as in a nightmare, giving way to a reality populated by enemies. We are met by threats, rather than the invitation to listen and to come together. Brothers and sisters, those who pray are aware of their own limitations; they do not kill or threaten with death. Instead, death enslaves those who have turned their backs on the living God, turning themselves and their own power into a mute, blind and deaf idol (cf. Ps 115:4–8), to which they sacrifice every value, demanding that the whole world bend its knee”.*

He ended by saying:

Brothers and sisters of every language, people and nation: we are one family that weeps, hopes and rises again. “No more war, a journey with no return; no more war, a vicious cycle of grief and violence;” (Saint John Paul II, *Prayer for Peace*, 2 February 1991).

Dear friends, peace be with you all! It is the peace of the Risen Christ, the fruit of his sacrifice of love on the cross. For this reason, we raise our prayer to him:

Lord Jesus,  
 you conquered death without weapons or violence:  
 you shattered its power with the strength of peace.  
 Grant us your peace,  
 as you did to the women filled with doubt on Easter morning,  
 as you did to the disciples who were hiding in fear.  
 Send forth your Spirit,  
 the breath that gives life and reconciles,  
 that turns adversaries and enemies into brothers and sisters.  
 Inspire in us to trust in Mary, your mother,  
 who stood at the foot of your cross with a broken heart,  
 firm in the faith that you would rise again.  
 May the madness of war cease  
 and the Earth be cared for and cultivated by those who still  
 know how to bring forth, protect and love life.  
 Hear us, Lord of life!



### **How We Are**

As always, we send our love and prayers to all those who are sick. Please continue to pray for them that they gain in strength and good health; that God's healing hands may be upon them.

Please pray for Nwando who is unwell and in hospital for a few days. We send her our love and many prayers for a good recovery back to health.

Please also pray for Festus who is home after having been in hospital with a problem with his knee after his recent operation. We do hope he makes a good recovery and is back with us soon

We pray for Anita who is unwell. We pray for a complete recovery for her and send our love to her and Simon.

We pray for Daniel, for Keith, Myfanwy; for Chuba Agbim, for Eunice Adiele, recovering from an eye operation, for Gideon Onwutalu, Sir Edmund Onochie. Please keep Kelly's father John in your prayers.

We pray for the family of the Revd Dr Tarjei Park, our former vicar, who recently died. We send them our condolences. May he rest in peace.

We hold all the above in our hearts that they may be filled with God's healing and, if bereaved healing in their grief.

Please continue to let us know of family members and friends who are sick and would welcome our prayers, either by WhatsApp, email, Kamran@gg-pc.co.uk or by phone, 020 8455 1873

**Topic: Church Wardens' Personal Meeting Room**

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/8585545365?pwd=em85aDF5ZmJ5ZkVlb0x0DaDhIY2paUT09>

Meeting ID: 858 554 5365

Passcode: J4FbKf

**Contact details:** Parish Priest: Revd Kamran Bhatti Office Tel: 020 8455 1873 Website:

[www.gg-pc.co.uk](http://www.gg-pc.co.uk)

Date	Bible Passage	Readers	Intercessor	Refreshments	Eucharistic Minister	AV Desk	Warden on duty	Service leader	Preacher
12/04/26 <u>2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter</u>	Psalm 61	Cynthia	Tony	Bilan	Daniel	Onyeka	Tony		Rev Kamran
	I Peter 1:3-9	Guy			Ezim		Bilan		
	John 20:19-31								
19/04/26 <u>3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter</u>	Psalm 1:16:12-19	Conny	Nehar	Christina	Ifeyinwe	Shaniv	Ifey	Rev Ibezim	Rev Kamran
	I Peter 17-23	Sim			Onyeka		Shaniv		
	Luke 24:13-35								
26/04/26 <u>4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter</u> <b>Bring &amp; Share</b>	Psalm 23	Dozie	Rose	Cynthia	Nehar/	Daniel	Nehar	Jenny	Rev Ibezim
	I Peter 1:9-25	Andrew		Chinwe	Nwadi		Sohail		
	John 10:1-10								
03/05/26 <u>5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter</u>	Psalm 31:1-5	Sam	Jenny	Nora	Tim	Onyeka	Tony	Alexis	Rev Kamran
	I Peter 2:2-10	Daniel			Naila		Bilan		
	John 14:1-14								