May we all be a little more like St. Thomas.

I am here to defend Thomas. Yes, Thomas the doubter.

I propose he was a man born out of his time--certainly a man for the 21st century. He understood the universal truths that Jesus taught. He became a follower, but a circumspect follower. How many of Jesus’ miracles did he witness? And, when he saw them, he was in awe but also thought about the mind and body connection. Quietly, to himself, he may have thought, “The mind is a powerful instrument for God to show his glory.” He did not work in a hospital but all the more reason for him to observe the variety of illnesses that wracked his neighbors and family, but also the self-cures, over time. He didn’t ask to sit at the right hand of Jesus when the Father called Jesus home, but there’s no doubt that the other disciples knew him as a true follower of Jesus. They rushed to bring him to the locked room where the rest hid. They told him of the many sightings of the resurrected body of Jesus: The fellow traveler met on the way to Emmaus; the old fisherman who served a breakfast by the shores of Galilee; the graveyard caretaker who found Mary of Magdalene as she lay sobbing near his grave. None looked like the Jesus they previously knew, but they suddenly and profoundly recognized him. Now Thomas was a man who understood the tricks the mind can play when in the throes of grief. He understood that misinformation is everywhere. He understood the power of the crowd to convince a reasonable person to pull out a sword and strike at a Roman soldier. In the 21st century, he would have been a communications major. He may have worked for a political party that stirred his sense of justice, but he would not have joined a crowd that stormed the Capitol. He would weigh the truths from a variety of sources and evaluate their reliability.
But, in the first century, in AD 33, he was told that Jesus himself appeared to them as they hid behind locked doors. They urged him to come and see for himself and believe. But, Thomas said, “Unless I see the marks of the nails in his hands and put my fingers into the nail marks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”

Yet, as circumspect, cynical, or literal as we want to view Thomas, the moment when Jesus asked him to place his hand in his side, his shield of logic fell to the floor, as he did, saying, “My Lord and my God.” When the veil between our reality and God’s reality fell from his eyes, he saw and believed.

How many times in our lives has that veil between our world and the next fallen from our eyes? How many times have we desperately tried to explain it away? How many times have we refrained from telling anyone else lest we be tolerated as delusional? How many of us see and believe? Let me give you a story from real life.

One night my sister, an ER nurse, called me. We weren’t in the habit of sharing spiritual insights, so I was surprised to hear her say, “I saw the face of Jesus tonight.” “Tell me more,” I urged. It was the late 70’s, the beginning of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. A young man had come into the ER room brought by his lone friend. Curiosity was replaced by repulsion among the medical crew and finally only my sister took the time to comfort him. He told her of his lifelong abuse by his family and friends until he became worthless and abandoned. As she listened to his story, a feeling of intense love overwhelmed her. Then she realized something profound was gripping her-- she was looking into the eyes of Jesus.

May we all recognize Him when he appears to us. Thank you, God, for sending Jesus to us then, and today. Amen