

The Second Sunday of Easter, April 12, 2026

Alleluia Christ is risen

The lord is risen indeed alleluia

Please be seated

The Lord is risen indeed. Note that we do not say the Lord was risen, but rather that the Lord is risen. He was and is and always will be risen for us, in one of the most impactful theological aspects of our Christian faith. The Lord is risen and has opened for us the path to everlasting life. The theological scholars have written in depth, minute- detailed ,scholarly explanations on the realistic facts of this belief. I read multiple before sitting down to write this, and thankfully, threw them out the window... for this week anyways.

We find in today's gospel the disciples who were witness to holy week as it played out in real time. They are shuttered inside, trying to process the trauma of all that had happened, trying to understand what they do next. Jesus appears to them. Thomas, like many who are skeptical of our christian faith, who was not there to see Jesus, does not believe his friends. A common question we as Christians face, is the question of how we can believe if we have never seen. It has come up for me, and I'm sure its come up for many of you.

And there are times when I have been more like Thomas than Peter, who is known for having the strongest faith out of the twelve. I once heard a famous theological scholar and preacher say something I have always found very profound. That a faith that cannot be questioned, tested and doubted at times, cannot be trusted. Blind faith would be very scary, like a cult, but I believe it

is our wrestling with and testing that makes us stronger. Notice that Jesus doesn't rebuke Thomas for his unbelief, but rather provides reassurance, grace, and compassion, and love. So the next time you feel guilty about having a little doubt in your faith, remember our friend Thomas.

My favorite book of the Bible that you will come to find is the book of Job. Just wait until mid to late October of 2027, I have several sermons already cued up! But the thing I find so relatable and likable about the incredible hardships put on Job, is that even though his faith is tested, he is reassured that God is real and he is and always will be present here on earth.

Back to our friend Thomas. He sees and he believes. There are times that I have wondered if I will ever have such a direct meeting with Jesus here on earth. I have not encountered Jesus so directly as to him to show up at my house unexpectedly and said "Peace be with you". Though I will say I've had several experiences in my life where I have seen Gods presence among us. A very important part of being a Deacon is to share where I see God in the forgotten shadows of the world. The easter season provides an important time for us in scriptural study of the importance of exploring the absence-presence dynamic. That is Jesus is no longer with us, but in a new way, he still is. Jesus is risen. My diaconal ministry is to serve as an interpreter, helping the church understand the needs, concerns, and hopes of the whole world. It is to expand the meaning of our baptismal covenant especially in striving for justice and peace and respecting the dignity of every human being.

My religious journey was also not a straight path. I came to the Episcopal church via way of the Roman Catholic faith. My father being a cradle Episcopalian here at Good Shepherd, married himself a Roman Catholic girl. During high school the Roman

Catholic Church took on a position about the LGBT community during the time of civil unions becoming a thing. My brother and I started attending here back around 2005 when I was confirmed by Bishop Ely. When I went to college at Plymouth state, I didn't go to church for a couple of years, however I no longer had a reason not to attend when my brother convinced them to hire me as the choir director. After graduation I took a job up to Lyndon State college where I was convinced I could be a regular parishioner. Well shortly after I got involved in their choir, then became a lay worship leader, and when the priest asked when I was going to become to do more I started my discernment to the vocational diaconate. I continued to be called, whether I planned on it or not. Just like Thomas I've had plenty of doubts along the journey, but I continued to come back to the realization that Jesus is the path towards everlasting life and that he is working in our lives each and every day.

So what is a "Vocational Deacon" Anyway?

I can assure you that I am not on my way to the priesthood. That would be what we call a "Transitional Deacon"

When I started discerning a calling towards ordination I read the book by Parker Palmer Let your Life Speak and I think he summed it up perfectly- quote- "True vocation joins self and service, the place where your deep gladness meets the world's great need" Where I could see a need for strong leadership in the church, I saw more the needs of my community, whereas I did not want to make a living serving the church, I did want to make a living serving in my community.

A Deacon is a baptized person called and empowered by God and the Christian community to be an icon illuminating Christ as a model of servanthood for all people. The role of the Deacon in

liturgy mirrors the role of the deacon in the church and world. The deacon fulfills this calling through action and example as servant leader, witness, intercessor, facilitator, visionary, nurturer and interpreter among diverse people. The deacon is messenger and proclaimer of Christ's presence among us. *so this is a very fitting day to be giving my first sermon here at The Church of the Good Shepherd as we explore the absence-presence dichotomy of the risen Christ.

Rosalind Brown also sums it up in a way that has always spoken to me in her book being a deacon today - quote- "Deacons are called to work with Bishops and Priests with whom they serve as heralds of Christ's kingdom. They are to proclaim the gospel in word and deed, as agents of God's purpose of love. They are to serve the community in which they are set bringing to the church the needs and hopes of all the people. They are to work with their fellow members in searching out the poor and weak, the sick and lonely, and those who are oppressed and powerless, reaching into the forgotten corners of the world, that the love of God may be made visible."

My sermons will, and should be, very different than that of a priest. They should be a calling to action, a window into depths of depravity, bringing hope to hurt, and light to darkness. Though I will admit Earl is a very Diaconal priest, and you are already a Diaconal parish. You have mission, vision, sharing empathy and compassion in all your ministries. I assure you I'm not here to reinvent the wheel, but rather to help it continue to roll in the way of love.

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 song of God and that through being you may have life in his name. I'm here, as a

Deacon to tell you, that there are many signs in the world today, where Jesus is at work, in us, and through us, and with us each and every day. I look forward to sharing more with you as our shared ministry continues. I am blessed beyond belief to be assigned to this church. To share in our journey in faith. Amen.