

St Thomas the Apostle 21st December

Thomas is mentioned as one of the Twelve by Matthew, Mark and Luke, but John gives us more details.

John 11

14 Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. 15 For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." 16 Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

The name "Twin" (Didymus in Greek, Thomas in its Aramaic form has the same meaning) is thought by some writers to suggest that Thomas and Jesus looked alike. The disciples were well aware that the authorities were targeting Jesus at this point, hence Thomas' comment.

John 14

(Jesus said)1 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. 4 And you know the way to the place where I am going." 5 Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life.

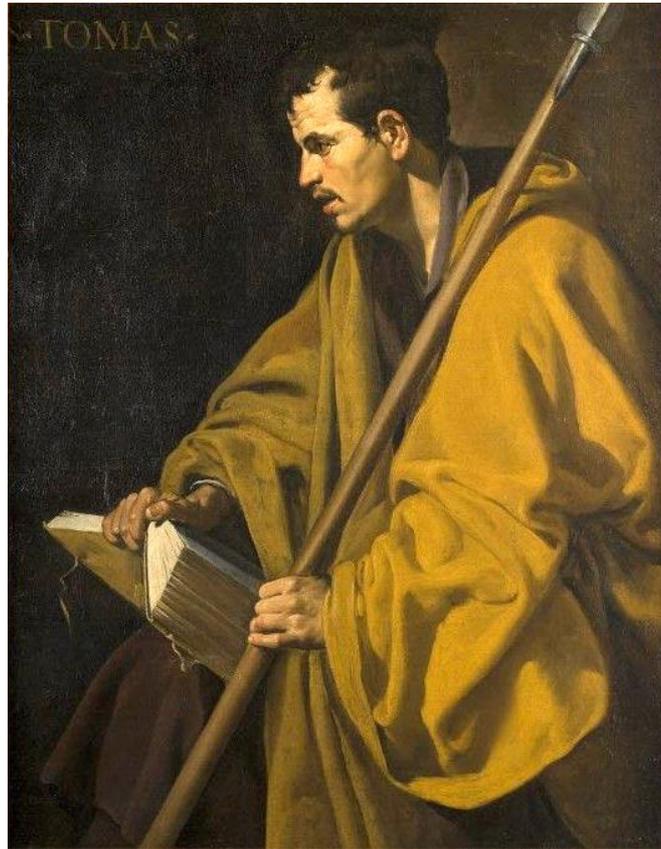
John 20

24 But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 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." 26 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." 27 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." 28 Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 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."

Following his confession of Jesus, and Pentecost, Thomas' evangelism has been closely associated with India, with later accounts suggesting he traveled to Kerala around 52 and founded seven churches there before being martyred around 72. The main source is *The Acts of Judas Thomas*, written about 180-230, and not accepted as Scripture.

A particular veneration for Thomas grew up at Edessa, in Syria, where it was believed his bones had been brought in the 4th c. The writings of Ephrem of Syria (d c 373), including many hymns, make mention of Thomas' association with the region, and he is an important figure in Orthodox liturgy.

As part of his series of images of the Apostles Velazquez depicted St Thomas with a spear, the weapon with which he was described as having been killed. (1619)



By far the most powerful image of the encounter with the risen Lord which has attached the epithet "Doubting Thomas" to the Apostle is that by Caravaggio known as "The Incredulity of Thomas" (1601-2). Its confronting physicality challenges our point of view.

