

John 20: 24 – 29

‘Thomas – Doubting?’

Have you ever had a nickname?

Do you still have a nickname?

Sometimes nicknames are kind ... and sometimes they are not.

Sometimes they stick ... other times they are short-lived.

Today’s Saint – St Thomas has a nickname that has stuck so much that people use the phrase: **Doubting Thomas** even if they’re not sure where it comes from.

Fair or not?

Let’s listen as Thomas visits a Solicitor! (*Sarah and Paul act out the following drama: ‘Handsome Thomas’*)

Thomas discusses his nickname and sees that it might be helpful to would-be believers who come after him (John 20: 19 – 31)

Thomas enters the office of a Solicitor, who beckons him to a seat ...

Solicitor: And how can I help you, Mr ... er ...?

Thomas: I want to take legal proceedings against the Church.

Solicitor: (*sighs*) Not another. (*gets out a notepad*) What is the reason for your ... er ...?

Thomas: Slander and libel. On numerous counts.

Solicitor: I see. Do tell all.

Thomas: It’s like this. I’ve been a believer for years. From the very beginning, you could say. But like many others I’ve had moments of – introspection ... Uh ... questioning ...

Solicitor: Doubt?

Thomas: (*agitated*) If you insist! But no more than any other believer!

Solicitor: (*nods understandingly*) Of course, we all have our moments of ... (*clears her/his throat*) but ... what precisely is your grievance with the church?

Thomas: Due to this single instance of perfectly reasonable – er – reflection, at a point I may add of high tension ... when many wouldn’t even have bothered to ask questions, the Church has saddled me with a name which is inaccurate and deeply hurtful!

Solicitor: And the name to which you refer ...?

Thomas: (*reluctantly*) Doubting Thomas.

The solicitor looks at him, surprised, then closes the notebook.

Solicitor: I don't think I'm going to be able to help you. I'm very sorry.

Thomas: *(desperately)* Why on earth not?

Solicitor: *(laughs)* Well, honestly! You are Doubting Thomas! I might as well try to rebrand the Blessed Virgin Mary!

Thomas: But it's not fair!

Solicitor: It's not exactly unfair. You said that you wouldn't believe Jesus had been raised from the dead – a central tenet of your faith – until you'd felt the holes in his hands.

Thomas: Sure, I said that! But I didn't actually do it, just for the record! I never needed to actually feel the holes in his hands.

Solicitor: Nevertheless, you said it.

Thomas: Only because I wasn't there! The others were all there, they all saw him – do you think they'd have believed it otherwise?

Solicitor: *(shrugs)* You weren't in the right place at the right time. I'm sorry, that happens, and dirt tends to stick.

Thomas: Does it? So how come the other disciples get off so lightly? Why does Peter get to be 'the rock' when he could have been 'Cock crow Pete'? What about John, always wanting to know who was going to be the most important in heaven, why does he get to refer to himself as 'the one Jesus loved' when he should be 'self-important John'? And Mary Magdalene, thinking Jesus was the gardener! How about 'Mary Mary quite contrary how does your gar...'

Solicitor: *(interrupting)* I get the point. I'm afraid yours is the flaw that seems to have gone down in history. What else are we supposed to call you? Do you have any other names?

Thomas: Well, there's Didymus, but only my Mother call me Didymus ... And ... er ... Judas Thomas, but Judas hasn't got quite such a hot name recently. *(Pause)* I was thinking of ... Handsome Thomas.

The Solicitor laughs.

Thomas: *(angrily)* I deserve it, don't I? For having been so badly treated all these years? It's not like I was a bad disciple! Quite the opposite! When Jesus decided to go back to Judea where they'd tried to stone him once before, who was it who said: 'let us also go that we might die with him'? It was me! Can't I be Thomas the Martyr?

Solicitor: Already taken, sorry.

Thomas: When I saw Jesus I exclaimed 'my Lord and my God', so some call me Thomas the believer – can't I make that name, you know, more official?

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Solicitor: It's just not catchy, is it?

Thomas: But look, I did nothing wrong! I believed, I was brave, I followed Jesus and when he returned, sure I had a slight lapse but once I dealt with my disbelief I was a brilliant disciple!

Solicitor: You're absolutely right. (s/he scribbles something on the notebook then tears out the page and hands it to Thomas) I wonder if this name might be just the thing to act as a lasting encouragement to the Church with all its difficulties and tribulations. With this name you could be their greatest figure of hope.

The Solicitor exits and Thomas beams in her/his direction.

Thomas: Really? Thanks! Thank you so much! That's fantastic!

(He reads the note, then looks up again in surprise)

Hang on, this says 'Doubting Thomas'! That's what I ... oh ...

He falters, then walks away thoughtfully.

<https://www.rootsontheweb.com/lectionary/2009/40-march-april-2009-b/easter-2/explore-respond/drama-handsome-thomas-aaa>