

It is Jesus himself who, after the resurrection, got in contact with the disciples in order to give them a sense of the reality and to dispel the opinion (or fear) that it was a question of a "ghost" and that they were therefore victims of an illusion. Jesus established direct relations with them, precisely through touch.

Thus it was in the case of Thomas and also in the meeting described in Luke's Gospel, when Jesus said to the startled disciples: "**Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have**" (Lk 24:39). The Gospel of Luke, as in each of the gospels, focuses on an important appearance of Jesus to the Twelve Apostles in which they are commissioned for their future ministry.

He invited them to verify that the risen body in which he came to them was the very same that was tortured and crucified. At the same time, however, that body possessed new properties. It had "become spiritual" and "glorified," and therefore no longer subject to the usual limitations of material beings and of a human body. Jesus entered the upper room despite the fact that the doors were shut; he appeared and disappeared, etc. At the same time, however, that body was authentic and real. The proof of Christ's resurrection is in his material identity.

The Resurrection was not some kind of mystical or spiritual experience of the followers of Christ. It really happened in the literal sense. In the Gospel accounts, Christ rose from the dead in his own Body three days after his Crucifixion and burial.

CCC 639: "The mystery of Christ's resurrection is a real event, with manifestations that were historically verified, as the New Testament bears witness. In about A.D. 56 St. Paul could already write to the Corinthians: "I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve..." 1 Cor 15:3-4. The Apostle speaks here of the living tradition of the Resurrection which he had learned after his conversion at the gates of Damascus. "Acts 9:3-18.

No one, not even his Apostles and those closest to him, had any expectation that Christ would rise from the dead, even though he had plainly predicted this in their hearing during his lifetime. Christ first appeared to St. Mary Magdalene and other holy women. In their grief and never expecting to see him again, St. Mary Magdalene did not initially recognize Christ. Once she did, Christ told the women to go inform the Apostles. Instead of accepting and believing the Good News, the Apostles' response was one of skepticism. In one Gospel account, St. Peter, and St. John race to the tomb to verify its empty state for themselves. (See Jn 20:3-9)

Nevertheless, after encountering the empty tomb and the linen cloths, St. John "**saw and believed.**" Likewise, the others came to believe after encountering the risen Christ in the Upper Room. St. Thomas, who was not present, would still not believe the reports until he had physically touched Christ himself. Although he is singled out as a "doubter," it is fair to say that for each of the Apostle's belief in the Resurrection developed only after a personal encounter with the risen Christ:

CCC 644: "Even when faced with the reality of the risen Jesus the disciples are still doubtful, so impossible did the thing seem: they thought they were seeing a ghost. "In their joy they were still disbelieving and still wondering." Lk 24:38-41. Thomas will also experience the test of doubt and St. Matthew relates that during the risen Lord's last appearance in Galilee "some

doubted." Jn 20:24-27; Mt 28:17. Therefore, the hypothesis that the Resurrection was produced by the apostles' faith (or credulity) will not hold up. On the contrary their faith in the Resurrection was born, under the action of divine grace, from their direct experience of the reality of the risen Jesus."

Although no one witnessed Christ rising from the tomb, the many eyewitness reports along with the empty tomb itself verify his Resurrection. According to St. Paul, about five hundred people saw Christ after his Resurrection. (1Cor 15: 4-8; Acts 1:22)

Deacon Gerry Flamm