



Podcast: Saint Thomas and Christians of the East, 3rd July 2021
Mgr Daniel McHugh

Journey of Faith - Life from Holy Mass - with Monsignor Daniel McHugh

Hello, I am Monsignor Daniel McHugh.

I am writing this Podcast on the Solemnity of St Peter and St Paul. While they were to die for the Catholic Faith in Rome, St Thomas, also one of the Twelve, was to go in a different direction to the East through Persia to India with the good news of Jesus Christ.

We don't have the same detail of the journeys of Thomas and his companions as we have through the Book of the Acts of the Apostles of the journeys for St Peter and St Paul, who eventually arrived in Rome to the West. However, we are blessed today to know more of the journey of Thomas through Eastern Catholic Christians now living among us.

Dr Subhi Zora, a Sub Deacon in the Chaldean Church, and originally from Mosul in Iraq has written about the history of Churches there, and St Thomas travelled through Mesopotamia, the land between the great rivers Tigris and Euphrates, through Persia into India. The Faithful in the Chaldean Catholic Community in Iraq, and the Syro Malabar and Syro Malankara Catholic Communities in Kerala, India, look to St Thomas and his companions as their first Evangelizers in the first century.

Pope Francis recently visited Iraq and celebrated the Eucharist in the Chaldean Rite, as I have done by the invitation of Fr Andrawis Toma, who celebrates Mass for the Chaldean Catholics in the Midlands. I have also celebrated Mass with the Syro Malabar and Syro Malankara Catholic Communities. Father Terin Mullakkara is Parish Priest of the Rosary, Saltly, in Birmingham, and he told me about the 7 communities in Kerala who will be marking the Feast of St Thomas on 3rd July with Baptisms in pools of water where St Thomas Baptised, when he took the Faith there.

We often think of St Thomas as the one who doubted that Jesus had Risen. And, in his Homily on St Thomas, St Gregory the Great, speaks of the gift that Thomas is to all who need assurance of the Resurrection of Our Lord. On the second occasion that Jesus appeared to the Apostles Thomas was there and saw for Himself. The Scripture record his words: "my Lord and my God". Another commentator reflects that Thomas was absent from the Community of the Disciples and that was why he missed the opportunity to discover the Risen Jesus for himself. The good news for us in the West is that the Catholic Bishops in the East have sent Priests to us to accompany their people so that they can still experience the Community of Faith they had back home, where Jesus is present in the Liturgy and Sacraments in different languages and Rites.

On this Feast of St Thomas we give thanks that, after so many years, we are getting to know more about the Apostolic work of St Thomas, and experience the Faith and

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Devotion he planted among Christians of the East. We thank God for their Faith and Witness among us, that lead us to more insights into the teaching of Jesus.

St Thomas died a martyr for the Faith near Madras, India and his body was taken to Edessa (present-day Turkey) in the 4th Century.

The reading is from the Holy Gospel of St John 20:24-29

The prayer is the Collect of the Feast.

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