

# Thomas the Believer - Lakota Lutheran Center

*"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." (NRSV)*

"Unless I see the mark of the nails," Thomas tells the other disciples, "I will not believe." For centuries, poor Thomas has been labeled the Doubter—but another view sees his conditions rooted not in doubt, but in a fervent desire to truly believe—to believe not in some ghost or hallucination, but in Jesus, his friend, crucified and died, now risen again. Only by seeing the wounds of the risen Christ would Thomas know this vision was the Jesus to whom he had committed his life.



And when he does see the wounds, there are no half-measures to his belief; he goes all in: "My Lord and my God!" His is the first declaration of Jesus' divinity in the gospel. Thomas may have been a skeptic, he was certainly a seeker, but he was no doubter; his was a deep faith rooted in reality, even the harsh reality of excruciating wounds.

Such deep faith, and such recognition of reality, undergirds the ministry of the Lakota Lutheran Center in Scottsbluff. Here, there is no doubting the presence of Christ. Here, there is no hiding of wounds. Here, there is faith rooted deeply in reality, even harsh realities. Life is still hard on and off the Reservations. Native Americans face a number of challenges most of us don't. Many do just fine. For those who struggle, there is an alternative to despair—there is the hope offered at the Lakota Center. Here no one denies the wounds of the historic and current experience of Native Americans. Here the Risen Christ is seen in each person who enters the door, with wounds seen or unseen. Here the Risen Christ is proclaimed through Word and Sacrament in worship. Here meals are prepared so the hungry may be fed. Here is a place where one can come and rest for a few minutes or a few hours in the middle of the week. Here is a place where vaccines, wellness checks and more are provided for the health of the community. Here is practiced Luther's encouragement to see Christ in others, and be Christ to others. Here the Risen Christ is truly present, a place where even Thomas would proclaim, "My Lord and my God!"

The Lakota Lutheran Center is one of the many ministries of the Nebraska Synod bringing the Word to life in service. Thank you to you and your congregation for your support!

Throughout the season of Easter, the Nebraska Synod will continue lifting up various Nebraska Synod ministries and serving arms that have a connection to the upcoming worship text. The text referenced here is from John 20:19-31 the Gospel reading for Sunday, April 24, the Second Sunday in Easter.

