Rector's Blog 29th October 2026

I'M NOT SURE, BUT I THINK I MIGHT BE CERTAIN….

I'm reading a book recommended to me by a friend. It's called *A Different Journey* by Brian D'Arcy, an Irish Catholic priest, journalist and broadcaster (as well as friend of the Showbands of Ireland – but that's another story….).

I was reading a chapter about a previous (now Canonised) Father who had served the same community that Brian did and the following words struck me:

Thomas is often referred to as "Doubting Thomas" as if doubting were a sin. ***Doubt is not the opposite of faith; certainty is.*** *Thomas wanted to see the wounds of Jesus. And when he did, he believed totally : "My Lord and my God" he said, before giving his life to spreading the Gospel" (p135)*

The words that arrested my attention are the ones in bold.

Doubt is not the opposite of faith; certainty is.

I have grappled with why that statement sounds wrong to me (and what is right about it).

So here goes.

In the early sessions of the Alpha course Nicky Gumbel (the main speaker in most of the videos and former Vicar of Holy Trinity Brompton from whence the Alpha course emanated) describes his own journey into faith. He was a barrister and so his legal training and instincts required evidence. Evidence of the existence of God, of the claims of Jesus to be the Son of God and of the significance of his death and resurrection.

Evidence that the mechanics of salvation work. That we are indeed sinful by nature and yet that by the sovereign work of God through the death of Christ that we might be ransomed and forgiven. Evidence that Jesus not only existed, died and rose again, but that it is proven by the testimony of reliable witnesses accurately recorded.

Nicky came to faith by reading the New Testament – through the night – and coming out with a conviction that what he had read – the Gospels and the letters that attested to its meaning and application – were true.

But he goes on to explain that the head knowledge he had in grappling with the evidence turned into something else. The logic was that Jesus' claims about himself as being the Son of God, that he was resurrected from human death and that he really is the source of life only had three possibilities.

1. He was wrong but believed them to be true – in which case he was deluded
2. He was wrong and knew it was a lie – in which case he was a fraud; OR
3. He was right!

Nicky explains that the moment he realised that these claims were true – *"That head knowledge, the intellectual case based on evidence, moved from my mind down to my heart".* Nicky recognised that he could have a relationship with the living person called Jesus (by the presence of his Holy Spirit).

This testimony, and experience, is important when examining the claim that certainty is the opposite of faith.

But before that, what do we mean by doubt? It might be that the word itself is unhelpful.

The Cambridge Dictionary definition of doubt is this:

> *(a feeling of) not being certain about something, especially about how good or true it is.*

This is not the same as having questions. We all have questions, because not every aspect of our faith will make perfect sense to us. At a detailed level we will probably have questions that remain unanswered.

But that is not the same as having doubts. Of lacking certainty. Doubts do not necessarily call into question the **"goodness or truth"** of Gospel claims or the person of Jesus.

Therefore, I think that certainty about the goodness of God and the truth of the Gospel claims about who Jesus is and how his death will lead to a new creation in which believers will be resurrected too in a perfect existence with the absence of evil **is an entirely valid expression of our faith.**

I can be certain of that.

Because these are exactly the claims of the Gospel and the testimony of Jesus.

I can have certainty about the nature of God, of his loving and patient character, of his power over all creation. That he is slow to anger, compassionate, abounding in love but also that he is our judge. I can have certainty about this **because he has told us** (Exodus 34:6-7).

We sang the song last week *Blessed Assurance*. The idea is that we can be certain of the nature of the Gospel claims. The same assurance that allows us to proclaim in the Communion service:

Christ <u>has</u> died:
Christ <u>is</u> risen:
Christ <u>will</u> come again.

Has, ***is*** and ***will*** are statements of certainty.

No doubts about either their truth or their goodness.

And that certainty provides one further thing – **Hope**.

Christian hope is not like normal hope – "I hope it won't rain tomorrow" means it might but my preference is that it won't! **Christian hope is a knowledge of what God IS going to deliver.** A perfect life in his presence and a merciful judgement consistent with his nature.

If you are reading this and have faith – keep having questions, keep enquiring. Keep discussing and exploring. Keep asking God and talking to your friends and family.

But be certain of the basis of your faith.

God will deliver. God is delivering. God has delivered.

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord.
9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.
10 As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,
11 so is my word that goes out from my mouth: ***It will not return to me empty,*** *but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. (Isaiah 55:8-11)*

And that is a promise!

Every good and true blessing

Your brother in Christ

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