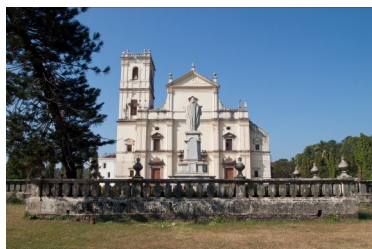


A message from Revd Malcolm Strange

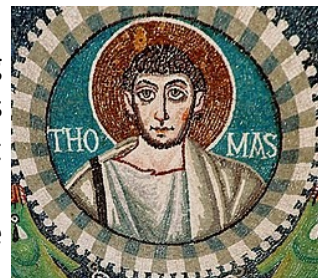
Dear Friends

I wonder if like me you were glued to the telly watching the BBC series 'Race Across the World' recently. It is a show where pairs of contestants journey across part of the world, restricted by a limited budget, no mobile phones, not allowed to fly, just using other forms of local transport that they can find, with each other and a map for company. This year they have travelled from the Great Wall of China near Beijing to Kanyakumari in Southern India, completing the journey in eight legs. The winners Caroline and Tom came out on top in what was an exhilarating and close race with many twists and turns along the way.



In leg seven they ended up in Panaji, in the smallest Indian state of Goa. Now, India has a very varied spiritual tradition which is both colourful and vibrant, but what is interesting about Goa is that it has a large Christian Community with some 25% of the population being Christians. This is reflected in the buildings, there being several Basilicas and splendid churches to explore.

While the Portuguese were responsible for the embedding of Christianity in this region, it is good old doubting Thomas who was responsible for bringing Christianity to India in the first century. His feast day is on the 3rd of July and as I watched episode Seven of Race across the world I started to think about St Thomas and his contribution to spreading the Gospel to this part of the world. He is the Patron Saint of India and the 3rd of July is celebrated as the 'Christians' Day' throughout the country.



We don't know masses about him other than he was a sceptical, questioning Galilean, a missionary to much of the East especially India and that he died a Martyr's Death in the year 72 at Chennai.



Thomas was a transformed person who, after the feast of Pentecost, felt emboldened to take the Good News of the story of Jesus to many people. He was able to let go of his past and all that held him back to be a clear ambassador for God and the Gospel of Love.

Thomas can, I believe, inspire us to face up to what has held us back in life, to let go of the baggage that weighs us down and embrace new opportunities whether we are people of faith or not. Our neighbourhoods and communities would be so blessed if people could lay aside all that divides them and embrace a fresh spirit of understanding and love for all.

So, ask yourself, are you the doubting Thomas who believes that harmony and peace in our world will never be achieved, or are you a bold Thomas who encourages the message of love which underpins all the worlds principal faiths?



Have a good summer!

Fr Malcolm – Fromside Benefice