

CHILDREN'S STORY HOUR

What Thomas saw

By Janaan Manternach
NC News Service

"I just don't believe it," Thomas cried. "You'll never convince me."

"But Thomas," Peter insisted, "we have seen the Lord! I saw him Monday morning. So did Mary Magdalene. Cleopas and his wife saw him on the road to Emmaus Sunday afternoon."

"You must have imagined you saw Jesus," Thomas countered. "I saw him die Friday on the cross. I was nearby when they put his body in the tomb."

"But Thomas," James interrupted. "We all saw Jesus alive right in this very room Sunday evening. Just one week ago Jesus stood here alive. He showed us the wounds in his hands and in his side. We saw him. It was no ghost. We didn't imagine it."

"I say again what I've been telling you all week," Thomas answered. "I will never believe Jesus is alive unless I place my finger in his side where the spear pierced him and touch the nail wounds in his hands."

Thomas' friends were frustrated with him. They could not understand how Thomas would doubt them. Surely he knew they would not be making this all up.

They really had seen him alive. They knew they were not talking with a ghost. Jesus was alive.

"Let Thomas doubt all he wants," John finally said.

"There's nothing more we can do to convince him."

Suddenly Jesus stood in the room with them. The doors were

locked. None of his friends knew how Jesus had gotten in. But they were so excited to see him again that they couldn't care less how he came in.

"Peace be with you!" Jesus said to his friends as they crowded around him. "Shalom!" they answered, which means "peace."

Jesus looked directly at Thomas. "Take your finger, Thomas, and examine my hands. Put your hand into my side where the spear struck me."

Thomas was dumbfounded. He cautiously came close to Jesus. Jesus held out his hands to Thomas. Thomas ran his finger over the scars on Jesus' hands. He trembled as he reached out to touch the wound in Jesus' side.

"Stop your doubting, Thomas," Jesus said gently. "Believe."

Thomas looked into his eyes. He felt embarrassed that he had been so strong in not believing that Jesus was alive. But he no longer had any doubts.

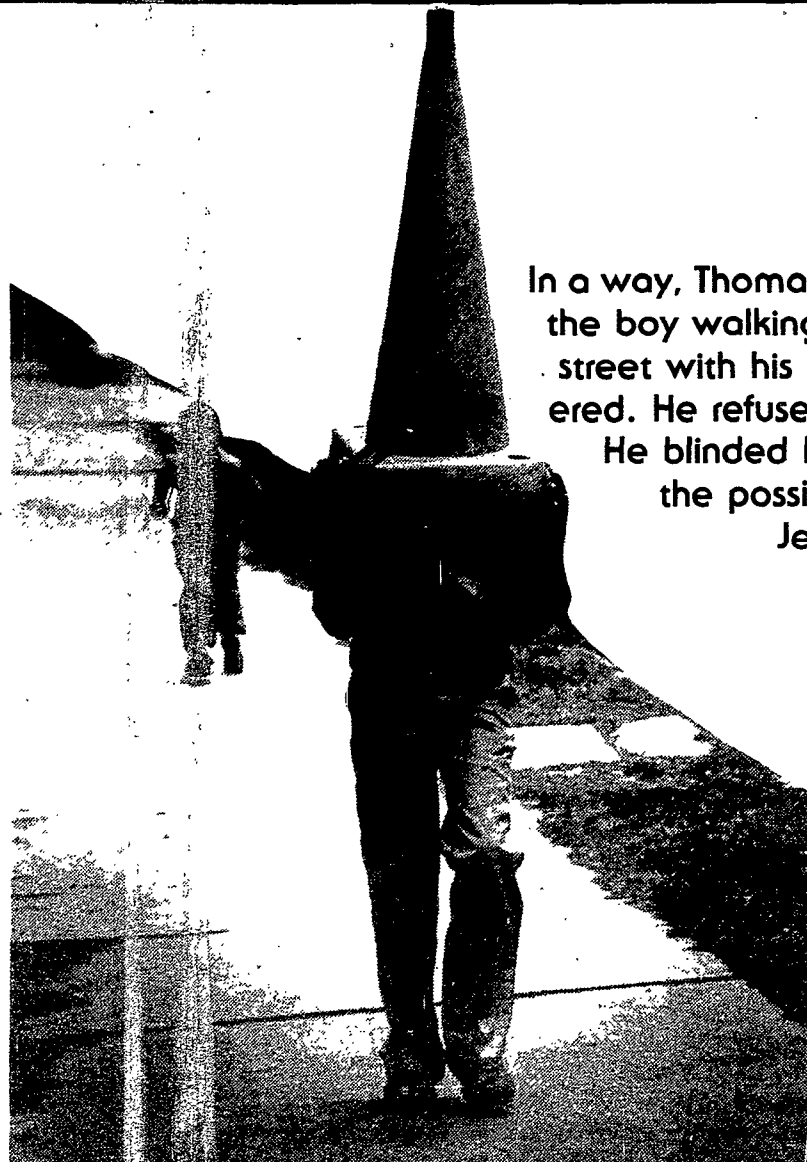
He could see in Jesus' eyes that Jesus was not angry with him for doubting.

"My Lord and my God!" Thomas said softly. He hugged Jesus.

"Thomas," Jesus told him, "you believe now because you see me. How happy are those who believe even though they have never seen me!"

Story Hour biblical quotes — this week from John 20:24-29 — are paraphrased.

(Ms. Manternach is the author of numerous catechetical books and articles for children.)



In a way, Thomas was like the boy walking down a street with his eyes covered. He refused to see. He blinded himself to the possibility that Jesus lived.



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HOW ABOUT YOU?

- Imagine that you are Thomas in this story. People tell you Jesus is alive. How would you feel? What would your face look like?
- Draw a picture of Thomas. Try to show how he looked when he saw Jesus. Is he surprised? Happy? Shocked?

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"The Golden Egg Book," by Margaret Wise Brown. This is a book for small children and adults to read together. The story is about a little bunny who finds an egg. Something is alive inside the egg. The bunny can hear it, but he is unable to see what it is. Meanwhile, the bunny falls asleep. While he sleeps, a duck emerges alive from the egg. The duck awakens the bunny. "Where is my egg?" the bunny asks. "And where did you come from?" "Never mind that," said the duck. "Here I am."

"So the bunny and the duck became friends and no one was ever alone again."

This is a story about being together and believing in each other. After reading it, parents and children might talk about the fact that they are together and that they can believe in each other and trust each other. (Golden Press, Western Publishing Co., Inc., Racine, Wis. 1978. Hardback, \$2.95.)