

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on The Second Sunday of Easter
April 12, 2015

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The old nickname for the Second Sunday of Easter is *Low Sunday*. It was originally so named because of its contrast with the celebration of Easter Day. In recent decades this moniker sadly became a commentary on the falling off of *Mass attendance* from one week to the next!

But there is a newer and far more positive name attached to the Second Sunday of Easter. It is a name spreading rapidly throughout the Catholic Church. *Divine Mercy Sunday*. This name and the observance are based upon the request of Our Lord Jesus made to a certain Polish nun named Faustina Kowalska. Sister Faustina is now *Saint Faustina*, and the request was to establish a feast to concentrate on the greatness of mercy Jesus lavished upon His Church as seen through His death and resurrection. The Second Sunday of Easter was part of the Lord's request to Faustina. The gospel appointed for Mass on this day has in it the great example of the tender care and mercy shown by the Resurrected Lord to Saint Thomas the Apostle.

In the Upper Room on Easter Day evening the Risen Lord drew attention to His side. For whatever reason, St Thomas was not present. So one week later the Lord returned so Thomas could have the same opportunity afforded the other apostles. *There is not one word of reproach in this episode*. Thomas was singled out not because he lacked faith but because he had been absent. His faith, like that of the other apostles, had to stand upon the evidence of sight and hearing. When you and I recite the Creed we affirm, "I believe in One Holy Catholic and *Apostolic* Church." We are acknowledging our faith is nourished and guarded by the apostolic witness. That is the witness of those chosen by Christ who were to be eyewitnesses of His Resurrection. Of course the Lord goes on to say, "Blessed are they who have not seen yet believe." *That is where we come in!* But the faith of the Catholic Church is based upon apostolic testimony. Wherever else Thomas had been on Easter Sunday, he had to have his part in that witness.

Here then is the revelation of Divine Mercy: the Risen Lord desires not to lose one of His own but, like the good shepherd, comes back for him and gently offers the same assurance. "*Bring thy hand, Thomas, and put it into My side.*" Why the side?

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From the side of Christ was poured out the ongoing life and sustenance of the Catholic Church right down to our day and this Mass.

In the Easter gospels we see Jesus revealing His Glorious Truth to His friends in ways each could receive it. The beloved Disciple needed only see the collapsed grave clothes. For Mary Magdalene it was the personal voice of the Master calling her by name. The ten apostles saw the sacred wounds and believed. Thomas was given a week to consider their testimony. Then, invited to examine the same wounds, Thomas took the next step beyond what they had all declared. It was Thomas who said, "*My Lord and my God.*"

In all these Easter events we see the characteristic meekness and charity of the Risen Lord. His zeal and pastoral solicitude brought slowly widening victories of faith. That same zeal and charity is waiting for you and me. That is the message the Lord inspired Faustina Kowalska to tell us. Jesus asks us to pray for His mercy, to be everlastingly thankful for that mercy in our lives, and to show that mercy to others. The faith of Christians which expresses itself in mercy, is the gift of the Risen Lord.