

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius  
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on The Second Sunday of Easter  
April 3, 2016

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What happened in the Upper Room is why you and I are here in this church right now. The events that took place on Easter Sunday evening were the launching pad for the Catholic Faith. If the Resurrection happened but was not *communicated* there would be no Church then or now. And if the followers of Christ had not experienced the *fact* of the Resurrection there would have been no Gospel to proclaim, and no Pentecost with its sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Catholic Faith would have been stillborn. The Upper Room was the scene of two decisive events: the *fact* of the Resurrection was established, and the Risen Lord created the apostolate to *communicate* that fact.

Neither St Luke nor St John tells us explicitly that it *was* the Upper Room where these things happened. But there is no reason to think otherwise. These men were hiding in a place they all knew. That place was the Upper Room, the *Cenacle* where the Last Supper had taken place. And in that room before the appearance of the Lord there was only one plan on the table. In a word: *skedaddle!* The apostles were planning to slip out of Jerusalem at night, one by one, to avoid arrest in any mopping-up action following the crucifixion. The gospel events appointed for Mass today took place later that evening.

The Resurrection faith had been born that morning at the empty tomb. We commemorated those events on Easter Day. That faith was an inference from the absence of the Lord's Body, and from the peculiar way the grave clothes had collapsed on the stone ledge. (It was as if the Lord's Body had somehow been removed from *inside* the shroud.) But an inference is like circumstantial evidence in a court of law. It does not lead to a conviction. For religion circumstantial evidence is a non-starter! And an inference certainly does *not* explain events subsequent to the encounter in the Upper Room on Easter Sunday night.

For those subsequent events St Peter's conduct is *Exhibit A*. Several weeks after the Crucifixion of Christ Peter is seen boldly addressing the whole Jerusalem leadership. And the scene is perhaps no more than a few city blocks away from where the Lord's Body had been buried! Peter takes on all comers. "This Jesus whom you crucified is both Lord and Christ." So let the high priest tear his clothes again if he wishes. Christ is Risen. Deal with it! This is the *same* Peter who denied

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Jesus vehemently on the day of His arrest, and who on Easter Day night before the Lord's appearance, was among those huddled behind locked doors planning their escape from Jerusalem. Clearly it was not from the fact of the empty tomb or collapsed grave clothes that Peter and the others were so dramatically emboldened. It was because they had together experienced the visible appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ risen from the grave.

Two thousand years later you and I can rely upon the very existence of the Catholic Church, her life and worship, and her consistent proclamation of the Gospel, as the strongest evidence of the fact of the Resurrection. But what about the apostles? Whatever may be the faith or lack of faith of subsequent Christians and skeptics, the record is clear those eleven men in the Upper Room were convinced by their own experience that Christ is Risen. That experience gave them the certainty of absolute conviction. That conviction explains the subsequent events, the heroic preaching of St Peter, the conversion of St Paul, the steadfast courage in the face of suffering and death on the part of many, the spread of Christian faith far and wide and among all races and cultures. And here is where you and I come in! Once the Apostles had accepted the fact of the Resurrection and the Risen Lord commissioned them and sent them out, their work was to be in the closest proximity to His Own ministry from the Father. Just how close? "As the Father has sent Me, even so send I you." Christ's provision is that those who believe the apostolic witness will have the *same* experience and the *same* benefits of those who were in the Upper Room! Jesus is talking about us when He says, "Blessed are they who saw not and have believed."

You and I have another link to that Upper Room. Because of the experience there, at the very beginning of Christianity, the ancient day of worship, the Sabbath, was changed to Sunday. If Jesus had simply lived a life of unparalleled holiness and love and had died in a supreme act of self-sacrifice on the Cross, as a remembrance of Him perhaps some of His followers would have adopted *Friday* as the Lord's Day. No one would have appointed Sunday! *Sunday was the day everybody went back to work!* But Christ Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week, and so you and I worship Him on Sunday as our participation in that Upper Room

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experience. Sunday-by-Sunday we have a sacred trust placed in our hands. It is the saving truth of the Risen Lord Jesus Christ!