

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on The Sixth Sunday of Easter
May 1, 2016

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Remember always the gospel accounts we read were written *after*, and *because of*, the Resurrection. The Lord Jesus had said the Holy Ghost would bring the disciples to a remembrance of all that He did and said. *Tradition* and *traitor* come from the same Latin word **traditor**, and it means “to hand over.” The handing over of the remembrance was already happening immediately after Easter Day.

The disciples recalled Jesus saying Christians must be practical in their love of Him. This was not to dampen their joy and gladness. But the joy was to be disciplined. Christ put it to His followers that *His* test of our Christianity is, “If you love Me, ye will keep My commandments.”

It isn't that if we love Him the commandments will follow. In the case of Christ's command the converse is also true. “If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love.” In this way Our Lord was excluding no one who would follow Him. *Both* types of Christian temperament are included in the invitation: the lovers and the legalists. Those who are disposed by personality to obedience must learn to be lovers. Those who may be easily moved to love of Christ and serve their fellow man must learn to obey the commandments laid down in His gospel and Church. We have all known Christians whose idea of bedside reading is canon law! Perhaps they need to lighten up. And we know Christian free spirits who need to constrain themselves to obey the Church. In all cases, we remember it is *Christ's test* of our Christianity, and not ours, that matters.

The Lord promised that if we love Him and keep His commandments He would manifest Himself to us and make His home with us. Little vignettes in the gospels reveal the initial error in thinking God is approached *by us* and will work in us in some different way than the way He promised. St Philip originally thought God could be revealed only in some divine theophany or vision. He once said, “Lord, show us the Father.” But the perfect revelation of God was standing right with Philip in the life of Jesus. The Lord's reply was, “Philip, He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.” The life of Jesus abiding with us gives a far more perfect revealing of God than any apparitions or visions. That is how God works, and we must not look elsewhere.

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St Thomas also once said to Jesus, “How can we know the way that leads to eternal life?” And the Lord responded, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” As disciples of Christ the apostles, and we too, must learn the Master’s lessons of obedience and love and receptiveness. And that is what St Thomas did. Thomas kept mulling over the Lord’s answer, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” St Thomas assimilated what he was told and he remained close to Jesus. And one day it all came to full bloom in the great confession of Thomas in the Upper Room eight days after the Resurrection. Addressing the Risen Lord, Thomas went further than anyone else had up to that time, and declared, “My Lord, and My God.”

So the path of our discipleship is clear. Why should we ever make it more difficult? In whatever circumstances of our lives and personalities, we are to love the Lord and keep His commandments, providing Him the home He said He would make in those who do so. It is this way our lives come under the dominion of Christ’s gracious sovereignty and enjoy the Peace He promises.