

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on The Second Sunday of Easter
April 8, 2018

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Almighty God was so eager to give Himself for us, and to shower us with His mercy and forgiveness, that there is really only one point of divergence between the Lord's accusers and His Divine intention. They wanted to take away His life. He wanted to *give* it to them. At His trial Christ's accusers cried out: "His Blood be on us and on our children." And that is *exactly where He wants it!* But of course there is a difference. Our Lord's detractors wanted to waste His Precious Blood. The Lord desired that His Blood be the source of eternal blessings. Jesus wanted nothing more than to pour His Blood over His enemies' hearts and consciences. And so on Good Friday, blood and water flowed from the side of Christ for the life of the world.

The name and observance of Divine Mercy Sunday are based upon the request of Our Lord Jesus to a certain Polish nun named Faustina Kowalska. And as you may know, Sister Faustina is now *Saint* Faustina. The request was that this feast concentrate on the greatness of the mercy Jesus lavished upon the Church as seen through His death and resurrection. The Second Sunday of Easter figured in part of the Lord's request to Faustina. That is because the gospel appointed for Mass has in it the great example of the tender care and mercy shown to St Thomas the Apostle.

In the Upper Room on Easter Day evening the Risen Lord drew attention to His side. And because Thomas was not present, one week later the Lord returned so that Thomas could have the same opportunity. *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. An apostle cannot be absent. The very word "*apostello*" means "sent out" and he has to be sent out with *something*. The witness of the apostle Thomas had to stand on the evidence of the sight and hearing of the Risen Lord. When we recite the Creed we say "I believe in One Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church." We acknowledge our faith is nourished and guarded by the apostolic witness. This is the witness of those chosen by Christ to be eyewitnesses of the Risen Lord. This man had every right to say "Unless I see for myself." Those were the terms of his calling. It did not indicate a lack of faith. And this was acceptable to the Lord Who had called these men to be apostles. The Risen Lord Jesus Christ

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came back for Thomas. Of course Jesus goes on to say “Blessed are they who have not seen yet believe.” *That is His description of us!* But the faith of the Catholic Church is based upon the apostolic testimony, and of that testimony Thomas was called to have his part.

Coming back for Thomas shows the same Lord who once in an allegory taught us about the Good Shepherd who went out in search of the lost sheep. There is no indication the Good Shepherd prodded the lost sheep with his staff but carried him on His shoulders. One week after the Resurrection the Lord puts into practice what He taught, bringing St Thomas back into the fold. Here is the Divine Mercy desiring not to lose one of His Own. As with the lost sheep, He is gentle. “Bring thy hand, Thomas, and put it into My side.” Why the side? It is from the side of Christ that poured the ongoing life and sustenance of the Catholic Church right down to our day and this Mass.

During the Easter Season we see Jesus revealing the Glorious Truth of His Gospel good news to His friends in ways each could receiver it. The Beloved Disciple needed only to see the collapsed grave clothes. What did it for Mary Magdalene was the personal voice of the Master calling her by name. The ten apostles saw the sacred wounds and believed. One week later and considering their testimony, and invited to examine the same wounds, Thomas went beyond what all had declared and exclaimed, “My Lord and my God.”

It was the characteristic meekness and charity of Jesus that operated in all these events. His zeal for holiness and pastoral solicitude for those mired in bad news brought slowly-widening victories of faith. That same zeal and charity is waiting for us today. This is what Our 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 Christian faith, expressing itself in mercy, is the gift of the Risen Christ.