

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on The 2nd Sunday of Easter
April 11, 2021

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Careful readers of the Bible know that in the first three gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) St Thomas is merely a name on a list. But in the Fourth Gospel, St John's, it is different. Thomas is the only apostle whose personality is described in some detail. His despondent fidelity to Jesus is revealed in his saying: "Let us go with Him that we may die with Him." Then there is his open and honest question to the Lord: "Teacher, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" And in today's gospel, the Risen Christ comes back for Thomas and wins from him the greatest praise recorded anywhere in the gospels: "My Lord and my God."

All this means Thomas is a key figure. He is a reminder that we (with our various types and temperaments) are all called to faith in the Risen Lord. St Peter was always impulsive in leaping to conclusions. The Beloved Disciple was too devoted to Jesus to be a skeptic. St Thomas would believe only on sight. No single "right" personality type is fitted to be a Christian disciple.

Our Lord Jesus never deplored anyone's skepticism. *Hypocrisy* was what He condemned. The Lord refused to give signs to those who were already hardened against him. But skepticism lays down reasonable criteria issuing from an open mind. And the fact Our Lord came back for Thomas tells us *this* apostle's demands were reasonable and worthy.

Christ is always more eager to lift people up than put them down. Each soul has a God-given purpose and destiny about which most of us have never dreamed or found too wonderful to imagine. *But Christ knows*. He came to lift us to that place. Remember that it was Jesus who insisted the children be brought to Him when adults wanted them kept away. It was Jesus who accepted the extravagant and messy anointing from a woman because it was a sign of her love. The Lord accepted her even when she was roundly condemned by the finely engraved ethical sensibilities of others. Our Lord was not annoyed with Thomas, and that is good news not only good for Thomas! It means you and I probably do not easily annoy Jesus either.

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Great things came to St Thomas, and we want those same good things. How can this happen to us? Learn from St Thomas. He laid out his honest needs; there was no hypocrisy in him and no pride. Thomas said, in effect: “I’m ready, Lord, if you wish to speak.” And the Lord Jesus (Who does not see as man sees but looks on the heart) knew Thomas was ready. Thomas was ready for what Jesus did.

We on the other hand, are so quick to forget. We are impatient for results and always looking for evidence of God’s love and “what’s in it for us.” That is why the process of sanctification often takes a long time in us, even for a lifetime. But even so, all our failures and sins can be overruled, if, as Thomas did, we permit Jesus to be Our Lord. The result will be to our own souls’ blessed and eternal welfare, and to the great glory of God.