

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Eastertide (A)

16<sup>th</sup> April 2023

'Jesus, I Trust in You!'

Acts 2: *the whole community remained faithful to the teaching of the apostles.*

Ps 117: *This day was made by the Lord ...* 1Pt 1: *You did not see Him, yet you*

*love Him ...* Jn 20: 19–31: *Doubt no longer but believe!*

In this early part of Eastertide — especially in the Easter octave — we hear explicitly of the Resurrection appearances of the Lord Jesus: how, and to whom, He appeared in those first days. They are extraordinary accounts, moments captured in text that would have been almost indescribable in their newness and unexpectedness for apostles and others alike. Building on all the wonders of Jesus's public ministry, His Resurrection from the dead, His bursting forth from the tomb, crowns them all.

And I would suggest that several themes come to the fore in these Resurrection accounts in the Gospels. One is the initial **disbelief** of the disciples (apostles or others) as they struggle to come to terms with what has happened, and their need to be much reassured with real evidence of the Resurrection. Another is the theme of **mercy**: Jesus greets the apostles with “Peace be with you,” rather than, “Where were you?” One of His first actions, Risen, is to

breathe on them and give them the initial gift of the Spirit, by whose power they are granted to forgive sins. And think too of Jesus gently undoing the three-fold denial by Peter when they are, later, at the Sea of Galilee. Yes, mercy & forgiveness are a crucial gift of the Risen Lord. And then there's the other reiterated theme of the Lord's **feeding His people** by His own hand, the most explicit of which is the first re-celebration of the Last Supper sacrament at the house of two disciples in Emmaus, when “they recognised Him at the breaking of bread.” A further theme is the constant indications of the future **mission**: Our Lord tells the apostles that they must use their knowledge of His teaching, and their witness of His Resurrection to “go out to the whole world, proclaim the Good News, and make disciples of all nations.”

On this 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the Easter season, at least two of those Resurrection themes are clearly highlighted and interwoven: (i) we have the Sunday Gospel recounting the **doubting** of St Thomas the Apostle on the evening of the Lord's Resurrection day, and his coming to faith a week

later; and (ii) it's also '**Divine Mercy**' Sunday, when we celebrate the devotion promoted by the 20<sup>th</sup>-c. Polish nun, St Faustina. I think that we can draw a lot of lessons by reflecting on St Thomas and on St Faustina ... summed up by that phrase that is inscribed at the base of the Divine Mercy image, "*Jesus, I trust in You.*"

I. **Doubting Thomas.** We always hear the Gospel about St Thomas a week after Easter (every year, whichever cycle of readings we're on A/B/C), as it highlights both the challenge of this astonishing belief in the Resurrection, and also the necessity of it, and the firm foundation of this faith in the actual, historical event and the visible evidence seen by the apostles. In fact, it is sometimes said that St Thomas's *doubting* helps us more than if he had straightaway believed! Pope St Gregory the Great put it beautifully when he said, [preaching to his people](#) some 1,400 yrs ago:

"What conclusion, dear brethren, do you come to? Surely it was not by chance that this chosen disciple was missing in the first place? Or that on his return he heard, that hearing he doubted, that doubting he

touched, and that touching he believed? It was by divine dispensation and not by chance that things so fell out. God's Mercy worked wonderfully, for when that doubting disciple touched his Master's wounded flesh he cured the wound of our disbelief. His scepticism was more advantageous to us than the faith of the disciples who believed. Inasmuch as he came to believe by actually touching we can lay aside all doubt, for our faith is made whole. So this doubting disciple, who actually touched, became a witness to the reality of the resurrection." (*Hom. 26*)

St Thomas, then, becomes for us a wonderful model of being able to 'Trust in the Lord.' He came to see that he could indeed trust in Jesus, give His whole life to the Lord, without any more doubts. The Resurrection was real, true, beyond doubt. Therefore his whole life, and the mission ahead of him, could be anchored in that act of trust, expressed in those famous words of faith as he fell to his knees before Jesus: "*My Lord and My God!*"

II. **Trusting Faustina.** Keeping also the Sunday of '[Divine Mercy](#)' today, as Our Lord requested through His saint, Faustina, in the 1930s, is very much unified with this Easter faith of St Thomas. A

part of the Divine-Mercy devotion is to venerate an image of the Lord Jesus's mercy, the famous image (before the altar) as St Faustina witnessed it in 1931. In that image, from His Sacred Heart pour forth the life-giving water and blood which came from His body as He died: Baptism and the Holy Eucharist, through which we experience the life-giving mercy of our Saviour. And there are powerful prayers, too, that are associated with this Divine-Mercy devotion. Many Catholics already recite these prayers, especially at the Divine-Mercy hour of 3pm, the traditional time when Our Blessed Lord gave His life on the Cross. At 3 o'clock, today, after an hour of Adoration/Confessions specially offered for this feast day, we'll recite the now-popular '[Divine Mercy chaplet](#).' Here are some of the invocations associated with that devotion, as entrusted to St Faustina:

"Eternal Father, I offer you the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your Dearly Beloved Son, Our Lord, Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world. ...

"For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world. ...

"Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world."

Experiencing the divine mercy — bathing in the forgiveness poured out from the Cross and assured in the Resurrection appearances of Jesus and the sublime Gift of God's Holy Spirit — is as much an Easter practice as it is a Lenten one. Here we see that *continuity* is evident in Jesus's ministry from before His Passion to after His Resurrection, but elevated to a greater level, and then entrusted infallibly to His Church. In the Church, which was born from the sacred side of the dying Jesus, and is animated by His Risen life, we can find at almost any moment we choose, the chance to be forgiven, to hear those words which Jesus Himself uttered to so many penitent sinners He encountered: "*Your sins are forgiven, go in peace; your faith has saved you.*"

If we have not heard those words in Confession recently, we should seek out an opportunity this

Easter season to do so. Divine Mercy Sunday of the Easter octave reminds us how important that is, how refreshing, how life-giving.

Above and beyond that invitation from the heart of Jesus, we are, in fact, each one of us in the world, every member of the human race, in need of the merciful love of the Redeemer: *“Have mercy on us and on the whole world.”* Whether we are praying for ourselves, in need of mercy for our sins; whether we are praying for our neighbour in sickness or desperate need; whether we are praying for student colleagues, family or friends; or our nation, war-torn Ukraine, or the world ... we are united in acknowledging that we are all in need, but that we can trust. The Divine-Mercy devotion comes down to that evocation of *trust in Jesus* that is built up on the faith of the whole Church, from the apostles, to the countless Christians over the centuries, saints among them, to the people of God today who express their trust in God in countless ways. We can, and do, join them, reassured that we are loved and saved by a merciful God who brings us

through times of testing to forgiveness and peace.

Let’s dispel the darkness the darkness of disbelief to which even St Thomas succumbed, with the radiant light of mercy conveyed to St Faustina:

*“Jesus I trust in you ...”* (x3).