

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

23<sup>rd</sup> April 2017

'SS Thomas — Faustina — George'

*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!*

All sorts of things seem to coincide today: it's the Second Sunday of Eastertide, with its Gospel recounting the doubting of St Thomas the Apostle; it's 'Divine Mercy' Sunday, when we celebrate the devotion promoted by the Polish nun of the 20<sup>th</sup> c., St Faustina; and it's the feast of St George, patron of England, a senior Christian soldier of the Roman Imperial Guard who died in 303AD, as a martyr, for refusing the emperor's edict outlawing Christianity. Each of these three saints, Thomas, Faustina, and George, have much to teach us about putting our trust in God, and putting our Resurrection faith into action.

**Thomas** is a great saint for us ... because he helps us in our doubts and he helps us to have faith. We will always have doubts ... not a problem (part of having faith, and maturing our faith ...). Life will always be a mixture of doubt and faith — sometimes we will glimpse God moving and working in our life; at other times, especially during

times of suffering or sadness, we may find it harder to see how God is working. When Jesus appears to him, and shows Thomas His wounded hands and side, he realises he had been wrong to doubt, and He expresses His faith in Jesus: "My Lord and my God." The opposite of his doubting is in fact the truth: and Thomas proclaims the only possible consequence of seeing the Risen Jesus: He must be the Son of God, "Lord and God." It's on the basis of this that St Thomas gives the rest of his life to the mission of Jesus to the world: like the other apostles, He is willing to trust the Lord Jesus, who has triumphed over sin and even death, to preserve him and lead him into the spread of the Gospel. The evidence of the Resurrection was life-changing for him and for the others: he could trust in the Lord in everything that was to come.

The Divine Mercy devotion, promoted by St **Faustina** who died young in 1938, also has at its heart the deep-rooted element of trust in God. The very motto painted at the base of the Divine Mercy image of Jesus is, "Jesus I trust in You." 1900 years after St Thomas learnt

that he could indeed trust in Jesus, so St Faustina was being reminded of the same— not just for herself, but for the world. This Divine Mercy devotion was something that Our Lord led her to promote in her short lifetime, and the Polish Pope, St John Paul II, brought it to the attention of the world when he canonized her, and declared that the Second Sunday of Easter was also to be known as ‘Divine Mercy Sunday.’ The heart of the Divine Mercy devotion is that we can trust in the Lord to be merciful to us, totally forgiving of our sins when we approach Him honestly and fully in Confession. We need have no fears, nor any reason to hold back from the mercy that pours out from the heart of Jesus. In fact, to re-connect it with the Gospel of today: see how the Risen Lord doesn’t chastise the apostles when He appears to them — he doesn’t upbraid them for their scattering and lying low when He was arrested, tried and crucified; nor does He criticize Thomas for His lack of faith. Our Lord simply utters words of great tenderness and mercy, “Peace be with you!” — words of forgiveness and encouragement for His beloved followers. That same

Divine Mercy is available to us too, as Jesus rises and casts off the smothering effects of sin and death. He says also to us, “Peace be with you.” In St Faustina’s diaries she records Our Lord as promising:

“I desire that the Feast of Mercy be a refuge and shelter for all souls, and especially for poor sinners. On that day, the very depths of My tender mercy are open. I pour out a whole ocean of graces upon those souls who approach the fount of My mercy. The soul that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion shall obtain the complete forgiveness of sins and punishment. On that day all the divine floodgates through which grace flow are opened. Let no soul fear to draw near to Me, even though its sins be as scarlet.” (Diary 699)

Finally, St **George**. He, too, put great trust in the Lord as He lived out His faith in Jesus. 3 centuries after the death and resurrection of Our Lord, the Roman Empire was still trying to eliminate followers of Christ like George. He was a highly respected soldier in the Guard close to the Emperor, but held Our Lord in higher esteem than his pagan Emperor. Forced to choose between death and denying Jesus, he knew in whom he could trust; he knew who would have the greater mercy: Our Lord, who defeated sin and overcame

death. We too, can follow St George, our brave patron saint of England and — like Thomas and Faustina too — have no fears whatsoever in handing over our whole life's purpose and direction to Jesus. He will send us out on mission in His name, and He will bless us in this, whatever the hardships.