

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

3<sup>rd</sup> April 2016

'Doubt no longer but believe'

Acts 5: *signs and wonders worked ...*

Ps 117: *this day was made by the Lord*

Apoc 1: *I was dead and now I am to live for ever and ever*

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

This Second Sunday of Easter also has another name. Since about the year 2000 it has also been given the name “Divine Mercy Sunday.” This followed after Pope John Paul II canonized the Polish nun, St Faustina Kowalska, in that Jubilee year. Sr Faustina had a lifetime of visions of Our Lord, but in particular was drawn by Him in the early 1930s to promote a new devotion of the “Divine Mercy.” Although she lived only a few years more, dying at the age of 33, the devotion has gained widespread following across the Catholic world, with some estimates reckoning on some 100k Catholics regularly praying the ‘Divine Mercy’ prayers. Since this is the ‘Holy Year of Mercy,’ and since the opportunity was offered to us, I have invited a Polish priest from the Polish chaplaincy in Ealing to come and visit us in four weeks’ time, to explain to us more deeply about St Faustina and the Divine Mercy devotion. I wasn’t able to get him for this weekend itself, but have

chosen the 30<sup>th</sup> April/1<sup>st</sup> May for him to visit our parish.

The image of Jesus’s ‘divine mercy’ is the one here at the front of the sanctuary. This image was painted under the direction of St Faustina, and features rays of both red (symbolizing His precious blood) and pale (symbolizing the water) flowing out from His sacred heart: these are symbols of the Eucharist and of Baptism, the great foundational sacraments of the Church. All this represents the mercy of Jesus, His love and tenderness for mankind, and His desire to care for us with forgiveness. And beneath the image is always written the simple prayer, “Jesus, I trust in You.” What more basic a prayer can there be, than simply to express our Catholic faith in words of complete trust in Jesus our Saviour? So much of what worries us in life can be crippling if we do not have trust in God to bring all things out well, such that we reach heaven to enjoy God’s eternal happiness. “Jesus, I trust in You,” is the prayer at the heart of this Divine Mercy devotion, and it’s a prayer that each of us could easily use, daily.

The apostles themselves, not least in the face of Jesus’s

death, struggled at times with that trust. The resurrection of Jesus throws all sorts of things into relief, and not least of these is the issue of doubt and faith. Jesus had appeared to the apostles — there was no doubt about His Resurrection ... they had seen Him. And yet, when they tell this to Thomas who'd been out at the time he refuses to believe. Even with all the benefits of three years with Jesus — hearing all His teaching, seeing His miracles and the love and compassion to everyone He met ... Thomas was not at all ready for the resurrection. Jesus had told the apostles several times that He must suffer and die, but would rise again, and yet they didn't understand. Not surprisingly, since it had never happened before. And yet in his doubt he was quite wrong — so he falls at Jesus's feet and worships Him, "My Lord and My God." He could have had full confidence in the message of the apostles, who were filled with the joy and spirit of Jesus, confident in the truth of His message and of His divinity, affirmed by His rising from the dead.

St Thomas is a great saint for us ... because he helps us in our doubts and he helps us to trust in Jesus and 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.

But the fact is that we can be wrong, sometimes very wrong ... we can be stubborn like Thomas, and refuse to believe the Church ... but he is a saint and an example to us because he changed his mind and acknowledged the truth. He came to see that what the apostles had spoken to Him was indeed right. We too need to have this Easter faith and trust — that the Risen Jesus has bestowed on the Church His life-giving and truth-giving Spirit. And this is what animates the Church. The Church is not just an assemblage of followers of Jesus — but the God-willed custodian of the mind of Christ on earth. She is the bearer of the truth ... and is guided in all matters of faith and morals by the infallible Holy Spirit. We can afford to believe her — we should, and we must obey her ... because if we refuse to believe, we are likely to be very very wrong. If we do believe, then we are led to the risen Jesus, "My Lord and my God." Happy and blessed and on the truest path to heaven are we even though we have not seen, and yet — on the strength of the apostles of Christ and the Church through all the ages — we yet believe. *Jesus, I trust in You!*