

Healing in His Rays
2nd Sunday of Easter (A)
(Acts 2:42-47; Jn 20:19-31)

It is deeply moving to meditate on the story of Thomas meeting the Risen Lord. Jesus invites Thomas to touch his wounds—to put his hand into his side. The Resurrection did not take away the injuries Jesus received. For all eternity, in heaven, the Son of God will be marked by the five wounds inflicted upon his body by sinful man.

By those wounds we are healed, in his wounds we find refuge, and touching his hands and side we meet God who knows our sufferings because he has taken them upon Himself. And it is through these wounds which God permitted Himself to suffer that He most clearly manifests to us His love and Mercy.

The message of Jesus Christ is the message of God's Mercy. It is a message proclaimed in many different ways. For instance, the ancient litany of God's mercy which we recite at the beginning of every Mass; or the Sacred Heart devotion; and in our own day through the Divine Mercy devotion.

The Second Sunday of Easter has been designated Divine Mercy Sunday. Through St. Faustina Kowalska, a Polish nun who died in 1938, Our Lord asked that this devotion be promoted throughout the Church. The message is not new, but the emphasis highlights the urgency of our problems today, which can be solved only by the grace that come from Jesus, risen from the dead.

The Divine Mercy devotion involves a chaplet which can be prayed on Rosary beads, a Novena which begins on Good Friday, and a special remembrance of Christ's passion each day at 3 O'clock. Through it we ask God's Mercy; we try to *be* merciful; and we try to trust completely in Jesus.

As he did for the apostles at the beginning of the Church's mission to bring forgiveness of sins to all nations, Jesus appeared personally to St. Faustina in the glory of his resurrection, showing her his hands, his feet, his side.

We hear in the Gospel that those are blessed “who have not seen, and yet believe” (Jn 20:29). Nevertheless, our faith is helped and strengthened when we are given a vision. Such is the vision of the Divine Mercy, which St. Faustina had painted. It shows the risen Jesus appearing in the house suddenly and mysteriously, not entering by doors (Jn 20:19). In the glory of the resurrection, light comes from within Jesus – compared to him everything else is darkness and shadows. He is touching his heart, from which come two rays of red and white. These rays represent the Mercy by which we are healed, the blood and water that flowed from his wounded side, now transfigured and glorified. Jesus fulfills the

prophecy of Malachi: “*For you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in his rays*” (Mal 4:2). At the bottom of the image is the phrase, “Jesus, I trust in you,” echoing the invitation Jesus makes when he greets the faithful: “Peace be with you” (Jn 20:19,26).

St. Faustina tried many times to have the image painted correctly, but no human artist could satisfactorily capture the beauty and glory of that divine vision. As a devotional aid to faith – limited and imperfect – the Divine Mercy image can help us contemplate the resurrection appearance of Jesus to Thomas and the other apostles, but it will remain for each of us to grow beyond this painted vision for our human eyes, to see the risen Lord in the clear vision of faith. As the other St. Thomas (Aquinas) would write a thousand years later in his famous Eucharistic hymn, *Tantum Ergo Sacramentum*: “*praestet fides supplementum sensuum defectui*” (Faith for all defects supplying, Where the feeble senses fail).

The Divine Mercy devotion helps us appreciate the experience of St. Thomas the Apostle, who doubted until he was able to touch Christ and see the love which was manifested through his wounds. For us it is in the Eucharist that we experience this vision. In both resurrection accounts recounted by St. John, Jesus appeared on a Sunday, the first two Sundays of the new era (Jn 20:19,26). In fact, the risen Jesus has continued to appear to his disciples every Sunday since, in the context of the Mass. At the moment of consecration, devout Catholics, recognizing him suddenly in their midst, silently repeat the words of St. Thomas, “My Lord and my God” (Jn 20:28).

We are now in the great Easter season, during which countless Sacraments are being celebrated, as the Risen Lord once again brings new life to his Church: Baptisms, first holy Communions, Confirmations. And with all these celebrations of first sacraments come the *cameras*. St. Faustina eventually gave up the attempt to accurately depict our risen Lord as she saw him in the special grace of her vision. But at least she was being obedient to Jesus, who asked for this devotional vision as an aid to faith. This is a far cry from our modern practice of taking cameras to church, seeking to “capture the moment” of a sacramental encounter between the risen Lord and a soul, and of course missing it entirely.

As we renew our faith in the Lord, and seek the vision of him this Easter season Risen and alive in our midst, let us banish cameras from our midst, prohibiting this profane intrusion into the Mysteries (sacraments), and open our hearts instead to see the vision which no camera can capture, and no human eye can see without heavenly light: wounds transfigured, healing rays.