



Dear parishioners,

We are now in the Easter season. Despite these challenging and difficult days, we hope you were able to celebrate Easter day with your families (even if remotely!), and share in some way the joy of the Resurrection.

Our daily Masses continue to be live-streamed during Eastertide – you can, of course, access them by going to our parish website and following the link on the homepage. Incidentally, if you are in contact with other parishioners – whether by phone, email, zoom, skype or all the many other ways we are gradually getting used to! – do encourage them to make use of the on-line Masses, and to subscribe to these emails, which is easily done by going to our website and following the ‘subscribe’ link for the weekly newsletter. While we are necessarily kept apart in this time of social distancing, it is good for us to keep in communication as much as we can.

‘Low Sunday’

This coming Sunday is traditionally known as ‘Low Sunday’, to contrast it with Easter Sunday – the ‘highpoint’ of the whole liturgical year. Yet Low Sunday too is special, for at least two reasons. Firstly, we get to hear of the Risen Christ’s appearance to St Thomas – and secondly, it is also the Feast of Divine Mercy – perhaps especially relevant to our times today.

‘Doubting Thomas’

The story of St Thomas is well known – how he was absent on Easter Sunday, when Christ first appeared to the other Apostles – how he could not bring himself to believe in the Resurrection unless he saw with his own eyes – and how Christ then appeared again, a week later, and invited Thomas not only to see but to touch His Risen flesh. The scene is depicted with all his usual earthy realism by Caravaggio, in the painting reproduced above. Pope St Gregory the Great, far back in the Sixth Century, preached a famous sermon, in which he points out how Thomas’ doubts became, for us, an extra motive for belief. St Gregory says:

Dearly beloved, what do you see in these events? Do you really believe that it was by chance that this chosen disciple was absent, then came and heard, heard and doubted, doubted and touched, touched and believed? It was not by chance but in God’s providence. In a marvellous way God’s mercy arranged that the disbelieving disciple, in touching the wounds of his master’s body, should heal our wounds of disbelief. The disbelief of Thomas has done more for our faith than the faith of the other disciples. As he touches Christ and is won over to belief, every doubt is cast aside and our faith is strengthened. So, the disciple who doubted, then felt Christ’s wounds, becomes a witness to the reality of the resurrection.

The Feast of Divine Mercy

The devotion to the Divine Mercy is associated with St. Faustina Kowalska (1905 – 1938) a Polish nun, who throughout her life received visions of Jesus. On 22nd February 1931 she saw a vision in which Jesus appeared

wearing a white robe, with rays of red and pale blue light emanating from His heart. Jesus told her: *'Paint an image according to the pattern you see, with the words "Jesus I trust I You". I desire that this image be venerated, first in your chapel, and then throughout the world'*.

With the help of her confessor, Fr Michael Sopocko, St Faustina had the image painted, and it was first publicly venerated (according to Jesus' request) on 28th April 1935, which was the first Sunday after Easter, Low Sunday. Since that time, copies of this image have spread throughout the world, and are indeed found in many Catholic churches – including Holy Ghost (where it hangs, appropriately, near the Sacred Heart shrine). In the year 2000 the Polish Pope, St John Paul II, who had a great devotion to the Divine Mercy, canonised St Faustina and declared the first Sunday after Easter to be the Feast of Divine Mercy for the whole Church.

The Divine Mercy devotion is summed up in those words which Jesus asked to be placed beneath His image – JESUS, I TRUST IN YOU. In these anxious and troubled days, they are certainly more relevant than ever. This Sunday, and throughout this time, let us all make those words our own.

Final thoughts

While we look forward to the day when we can all gather again and worship together, let us keep one another in our thoughts and prayers. We pray also for those sick and suffering with the coronavirus – we remember those who have died, and their families – we pray for our selfless carers, and the keyworkers making daily life possible. And we bring before the Lord those in any kind of need. May the Lord be especially close to those who find isolation and loneliness hard to bear.

With our prayers, best wishes and blessing,

Fr Richard and Fr Tom

