

## Friday of the Fourth Week of Eastertide: Votive Mass of the Five Wounds

Antioch in Pisidia is not the same place as the much larger Antioch in Syria. Antioch in Pisidia lies, instead, in the Western part of modern Turkey. It had been heavily colonised by the Romans during the reign of Augustus, with many Italians settling there, and Latin was the primary language spoken, rather than Greek. From being a somewhat troubled and relative backwater, it eventually became the Metropolitan See of the region. A transformation begun during Saint Paul's visit there, recorded in today's First Reading.

Saint Paul, visiting Antioch in Pisidia's synagogue, delivered a stirring "salvation history speech", attesting that Jesus, crucified and killed, had appeared after his resurrection to many eyewitnesses.

Saint Thomas, one of those many eyewitnesses of the Risen Christ, had asked of Jesus at the Last Supper, "...how can we know the way?" (*John 14:5*). In his encounter with the Risen Lord, he was shown the marks of the nails and the wound in the side: the Five Wounds. He was commanded, "*Do not be faithless, but believing!*" (*John 20:27*) In that later post-resurrection meeting, our Lord was showing him, that, "*I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but by me!*" (*John 14:6*) There's no other means to get to the Father; only through Jesus, and only through him crucified!

Perhaps, though, we can forgive Thomas his perplexity, because it's all rather paradoxical, isn't it! Jesus is the Way leads up Calvary's hill; he is the Truth that is questioned and denied by the pragmatic Pilate, who was asked "*to have him killed*" (*Acts 13:28*); and he is the Life which appeared to end in an ignominious death on the Cross, in fulfilment "*of all that was written about him*" (*Acts 13:29*).

The Five Wounds devotion recalls that the Good Shepherd (who is Life itself) lays his own life down, and is wounded for us; so that his wounds might heal our own. It reminds us that his Five Wounds reflect the truth of both his death, and his overcoming of death; that only through him, the Wounded Lord, can we see the Father. The Five Wounds reveal both Jesus's humanity and his divinity, that the God-in-the-flesh is Love, that Love which withholds nothing. The Five Wounds show us that only in dying to self can we live to God.

Ours is not some esoteric religion, a weighty compendium of abstract concepts to live by. It's not some self-help, find-yourself, live-your-truth, power of positive thinking type of cult. Our faith is about Eternity breaking into history, *the Word made flesh*. The Five Wounds aren't just metaphorical symbols, they are real and remain resplendent in the glorified Body of Jesus, as he ascends into Heaven and shows those same Wounds to the Father; and those Five Wounds, in heaven, plead for us with the Father. So too, in our own encounter with the Risen Lord, as his Wounds heal our own, we, like Saint Thomas, cannot help but to fall down and cry out, "*My Lord, and my God!*" (*John 20:28*)