

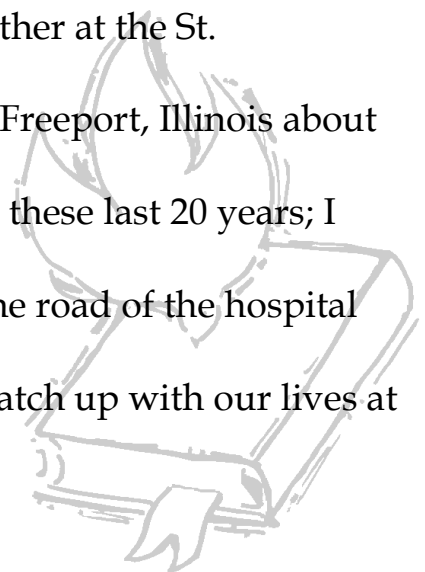
Homily
2nd Sunday of Easter - C

Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
April 13-14, 2022

Acts 5: 12-16
Ps 118: 2-4, 13-15, 22-24
Rev 1: 9-11, 12-13, 17-19
Jn 20: 19-31

As I was getting ready for today's homily, I was sitting at my desk and reflecting on my ministry in life. I was thinking about the times I have been true to the faith of God and times in my life when I have been in doubt, times that we colloquially refer to as "Doubting Thomas" moments.

As I was reflecting on those moments of faith, I was praying from the Office of Readings and looking straight ahead at my desk when I noticed a picture that a friend of mine had made for me as an ordination gift from 1996. The person who gave me this gift is named Theresa, a person whom I have known since working together at the St. Vincent/St. Joseph Special Education Center in Freeport, Illinois about 20 years ago. Theresa and I have kept in contact these last 20 years; I took the road of the priesthood, she has taken the road of the hospital technician, working in Des Moines, Iowa. We catch up with our lives at



Christmas Time each year, but this particular week, I thought about Theresa when I looked at this gift.

The gift was an embroidered prayer of the “Our Father,” which she framed and signed for me on the day of my ordination. To me, the sign is both a reminder of my faith life and a token of our mutual friendship. Whenever I need a reminder of the purpose in my faith life, it is images like this picture or the rosary or a crucifix or even time in this church that bring me back to my purpose in life and the promise I made to my spouse, the Church, in keeping faithful to her holy teachings.

As I was reflecting on this homily today, it dawned on me that today represents the last day of what the Church calls “the Easter Octave,” the last day of an eight day period where we intensify our prayer in order to recall the significance of why we sit here today. As I thought about this day, I became saddened over the “Doubting Thomas” moments that overcame me in my reflecting, thinking about how the Church would not be full this weekend because the moment of Easter had passed and the general public has moved on to other things in life instead of

focusing on the only thing that mattered, namely their salvation and Christ's resurrection. I thought about the fact that this reading from John's Gospel, the reading about Thomas, is the same text we read every Second Sunday of Easter, reminding us that even as a resurrection people, we are still filled at times with skepticism and doubt about the presence of God in our lives and the true response that we need to offer to this presence. And like the Lamentation Psalms that I often read in the Office of Prayers, I started to find a little despair, a little bit of that Lenten Feeling that took me out of the Easter Celebration.

And then I turned back to that picture and that image of friendship. I started to remind myself that the reason I have the images of Christ adorning the walls of my room is to remind me of what should always be obvious to me – that Christ loves me immensely and through faith, prayer, study and service I should see this presence of Christ during my good times and in my bad. The image of that “Our Father” brought me back to the reality of faith and reminded me that what God has given

me in the world is good, something that should be embraced instead of shunned.

The reason why we focus on the Thomas reading from John every Second Sunday of Easter is to close the Easter Octave not by focusing on the doubts that occasionally fill our hearts but instead on the response that Thomas presents to Christ, a response that should fill our minds and hearts each time the image of the Lord presents itself to us. His response *must* be our response: *Kyrios Theos – My Lord and My God*. As long as that image of Christ constantly stays present in our lives, then the response becomes a mantra that we constantly pray. As long as we have this images adorned in our houses, as long as we focus on Christ constantly before us, then the words of Thomas resonate in our hearts. As long as we follow the commandments and keep holy this Sabbath Day by coming to Church and truly making the Sabbath the Day of the Lord, then the image of Christ remains ever present in our lives.

Around the world, the Second Sunday of Easter has been designated as “Mercy Sunday,” a tradition introduced by a religious sister from

Krakow, Poland named Sr. Faustina. It is on this day, the last day of the Easter Octave, that this image of the Lord becomes a mantra in our prayer, through the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and the recitation of the prayer of the Divine Mercy. You can easily find this prayer on the internet or in a bookstore, a prayer that is supposed to make Christ ever present in our lives.

The Church teaches us that the faith of God is found through the reading of the Bible, in service of others, and in the prayers of the Church, reflected very well by the Divine Mercy Prayer we recite today. The challenge I offer all of us today is that we make this presence of Christ felt in our life by adorning the walls of our homes and offices with images that make us understand our purpose in life. For if we understand this purpose, then the Feast of Easter transcends these eight days, these 50 days, and becomes a constant reminder of our ultimate goal in life, to share in Christ's resurrection by joining him on the last day in the eternal feast of Easter.

Let us never doubt our faith in God. Let us remind ourselves constantly of the presence of God in our lives so that our constant response in life echoes the words of St. Thomas in today's gospel – *My Lord and My God!* This is our prayer.