

[Readings: Acts 4:32-35; Ps. 118; 1 John 5:1-6; John 20:19-31]

Why do you think believers believe? Do you think it's just always been a part of their family and that makes it easier? Or maybe it was important to have a friend who inspired them along the way, or a great priest or a good teacher or maybe a great book? It's a good question, isn't it?

Let me ask you another question: why do YOU think God wants YOU to believe? The answer to that question comes in the last line of today's Gospel reading. God wants you to believe, "so that you may have life in His name." That's the goal. It's what you and I were made for: life in His name. In other words, Jesus desires great things for you and me. In fact, that very last line says that the Gospels are written "so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through this belief, you may have life in His name. In other words, you were not made for an ordinary, mundane, run-of-the-mill, unenthusiastic life. You were made to have life in His name. God did not make you and me to be some second-rate-version-of-yourself. You were not made for comfort. You and I were made for greatness, not to be lackluster, half-hearted, stumbling, bumbling, and fumbling. He created you to have life in His name. That's exciting.

After all, as He does in the Upper Room on that great Easter evening, Jesus has breathed His breath on us. He has pronounced, "Receive the Holy Spirit," right on top of your head at your baptism and at your confirmation. And because of that, you are capable of far more than you know. You can be braver, stronger, more patient, and more peaceful than you can even see right now.

For Bob, he hated his job. Most folks would say it was a great job. It was a high-tech job, software design, and good pay. He was really good at

it, but he found himself slogging through the day, drudging through life with no joy. And he knew, because of the restlessness inside of him, that God had something else in mind. He knew he was made for greatness, and it wasn't doing this.

So at age 45, in the middle of his career, as a husband and father of three kids, Bob quit. He scaled back the life of his family dramatically, and he went back to school got a degree in teaching. And two years later, he became the middle school, social studies, and history teacher at the local parish school. And he's never looked back. Bob believed and has found life in His name.

For Julie, greatness came in a different form. By the time she was a teenager, she was already an out-of-control alcoholic destroying anything, anybody, and any relationship in her path. But slowly, over time, as she came to believe in Jesus and surrounded herself with other people who also believed, Julie turned her life around. She grew into a healthy relationship with her husband and four children.

She began organizing, and still does every week, a group of women in her hometown who get together to encourage each other in faith, and to hold each other accountable for their behavior and decisions in trying to stay clean and sober. Fourteen women and their families now look very, very different because Julie found life in Jesus' name. Instead of destroying, Julie now encourages and a builds up.

But believing isn't easy, is it? Just ask Thomas.

At first he doubted, and that's usually why we remember him. We forget that when Jesus was ready to return to Jerusalem to encounter His passion and death, Thomas was the only Apostle to say, "Then let us go with Him, so we can die with Him." If there's one thing I hope you take away from the story of Thomas, I hope it is this: your future is not

determined by your past. Thomas moved from doubt to trust, and that trust propelled him outward across the world to share what he had discovered, establishing the Catholic Church all the way in India. The full title of Thomas should be: Doubting, Pouting and Shouting Thomas!

Today is Divine Mercy Sunday. Jesus gave the Divine Mercy Devotion to St. Faustina Kowalska almost 100 years ago in Poland, before the outbreak of World War 2. Jesus also gave her instructions on painting an image of the Divine Mercy which we have hanging on the wall here in our sanctuary.

I think we can honestly say that whatever we are experiencing right now is, in some mysterious way, a gift of God's mercy, however severe it might feel in the present moment. Sr. Faustina calls it "God's severe mercy." When my two closest friends were taken away from me last year within two weeks of each other, I called it God's cruel will.

It stings, and as such it is natural for us to focus on the question of "why?" And so we ask: "Why, God?", "Why now?", "Why them?", "Why me?" But, as I have learned from almost 70 years of life and of faith, "Why?" is the wrong question to ask.

If you and I are truly interested in moving forward and not getting stuck, we need to remember that on this side of eternity we "see indistinctly, as in a mirror" (1 Cor 13:12). We do much better to ask the more spiritually productive questions of "What?" and "How?" "What is God asking of me in the present moment on this Divine Mercy Sunday?" And then to ask ourselves "How?" "How is God going to get me through this?" Jesus says to us, "Behold, I am with you always!"

How do we begin to answer the questions, "What?" and "How?" I would like to suggest three answers.

First, God wants exactly from us what He wanted from St. Faustina: greater trust! He wants us to trust in His Divine Mercy, to trust in His providential plan, and to trust in His unfailing goodness in the face of our sufferings. In her diary, St. Faustina wrote, “Suffering is a great grace; through suffering the soul becomes like the Savior” (No. 57). Jesus, help us to trust in You that this is true. Help us to trust in You, so that we might continue to become more like You! Trust.

Second, God is inviting us to [persevere in prayer](#). Turn to the Chaplet of Divine Mercy once again and pray it for those who have died because of war and terrorism, violence and abuse, natural disasters and catastrophic accidents. “Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world.” Pray.

Lastly, I believe that God is asking each of us to discover new and creative ways of practicing the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy. Remember those? We take our trust, we take our prayer and we transform the world by putting them into action!

Unbelief can be transformed into belief, fear can be turned into courage, and weakness can be turned into greatness. If God can do that with a middle-aged man named Bob, with a recovering alcoholic named Julie, with a reformed fisherman named Thomas, and with a humble religious sister in Poland named Faustina, just imagine what God might be able to do with you and me!

Trust. Pray. Do works of Mercy. AMEN! ALLELUIA!