

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

Why do you think believers believe? 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? But 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 will have life in His name. That's the goal. It's what you were made for: life in His name. In other words, Jesus desires great things for you. In fact, that very last line says that the Gospels are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name. In other words, you weren't made for an ordinary, mundane, run-of-the-mill, unenthusiastic life. You were made to have life in His name. God didn't make you to be some second-rate-version-of-yourself. You were not made for comfort. You 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.

St. John of the Cross put it this way: God's purpose is to make your soul great. He desires that your life would be filled with joy, teeming with love, saturated with peace. God designed you to have a life where your relationships work better, where your work has more meaning, where your life is spent pursuing a purpose. God desires for your fear and your anxiety to lessen a little bit and for your faith and your trust to grow in their place. He designed you to give your life away and to find your life in the process, a life filled with passion and purpose. This is what you were made for. That is life in His name, and it is anything but ordinary. It is extraordinary. After all, as He does in the Upper Room on that great Easter evening, Jesus has breathed His breath on you. 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. God sees it because He made you for it. He made you for greatness. That's why we read the Gospels each week to feed your soul so that we can believe and have life in His name, and the results can be astonishing. Just look around you, and you'll see it.

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 and he got a degree in teaching. And two years later, he became the middle school, social studies, and history teacher at the parish school. And he's never looked back. He gets up each day with his purpose in mind and a passion in his step. Now, most people wouldn't find a lot of joy working with middle-schoolers every day. But for Bob, it's pure joy. 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 and surrounded herself with other people who did the same, Julie not only grew into a healthy relationship with her husband and now four children, she began organizing, and still does every week, a group of women in her hometown who get together to encourage each other and hold each other accountable for their behavior and decisions in trying to stay clean and sober. They meet early on Monday morning every week to believe and to pursue the greatness God has made for them. Think about it. Fourteen women and their families now look very, very different because Julie found life in His name. Instead of a destroyer, Julie is now an encourager and a builder-upper.

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 isn't 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.

Tradition teaches us that Thomas left that little room in Jerusalem, and he carried the Gospel all the way to India and planted a church there. In fact, in India today, there are Christians today who call themselves Christians of St. Thomas. Think about it.

There's a church in India today because of the faith of Thomas. Because of Thomas's faith, his courage, his passion, Thomas discovered greatness.

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, and with a reformed fisherman named Thomas, just imagine what he might be able to do with you and me.

I think that 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 sever mercy. 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 us?", "Why this pandemic?" But, as I have learned from life and faith, "Why?" is the wrong question to ask if one is truly interested in moving forward and not getting stuck, because on this side of eternity we "see indistinctly, as in a mirror" (1 Cor 13:12). Instead, we do much better to ask the more spiritually productive question of "What?" "What is God asking of me in the present moment on this Divine Mercy Sunday?"

I would like to suggest three answers. First, God wants exactly from us what He wanted from St. Faustina in those difficult years leading up to World War II: 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 that this is true, and help us to trust in You, so that in doing so we might continue to become more like you! TRUST.

Second, God is inviting us to [persevere in prayer](#). So let's take up the Chaplet of Divine Mercy once again and pray it for those who have died because of the coronavirus and for their loved ones, for those who are still struggling with it, for those who are working on the front lines to treat and combat the virus, and for a swift end to the pandemic.

Let us pray for all those who are struggling because of the pandemic with loneliness, anxiety and financial or job concerns, and for those who despair of finding God's mercy, especially during this difficult time when so much of the Church's healing ministry is restricted. "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?

The Corporal Works of Mercy are charitable deeds that provide for the bodily needs of a neighbor who is beset by misfortune or distress. Jesus provides the first six in his description of the Last Judgment (Mt 25:31-46): feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, visit the imprisoned and care for the sick. A seventh corporal work of mercy, to bury the dead, was added by Church tradition to achieve the number seven that represents fullness or completeness.

The seven Spiritual Works of Mercy are concerned with the well-being of a person's soul. Like the Corporal Works of Mercy, the Spiritual Works are also charitable deeds, ways to come to the aid of a neighbor in need of spiritual assistance. They are to instruct the uninformed or the ignorant, to counsel the doubtful, to admonish the sinner, to comfort the sorrowful, to bear wrongs patiently, to forgive offenses or injuries, and to pray for the living and dead.

The works of mercy, which reflect the grace of the Divine Mercy, enable the Christian to be the face and hands of Jesus to others. And they are not to be performed by a select few such as clergy, religious, church staff or those with special training. The works of mercy can and should be done by every Christian, regardless of age, gender, education, financial situation or place in life. Mercy is a trait of God, and when Christians perform a work of mercy, they reflect God to others. Not only on Divine Mercy Sunday, but every day of the year. Trust. Pray. Do works of Mercy. AMEN! ALLELUIA!