

Homily 19 Sunday in Ordinary Time 2023

Today we are going to be talking about Doubt. We all have doubts, right? We all doubt something. But when it comes to our relationship with God? Your faith... How does doubt play in there? When it comes to our relationship with God it becomes a little more difficult to admit, doesn't it?

Here's the truth... Everybody has had doubt, will doubt, or knows something going through doubt. (repeat)

So what is doubt? Doubt - To hesitate to believe, or to question. That's what it means... But here's what it doesn't mean... Doubt is not unbelief. Rather it's struggling to believe. Or as St Augustine said: "Faith seeking understanding." The truth is everybody has had doubt, will doubt, or knows someone going through doubt. Here's the good news... This is important. You can doubt and be a follower Jesus at the same time. You do not have to have it all figured out and have all your doubt worked out.

The people who literally walked with Jesus, ate with Jesus, and lived life with Jesus didn't have all their doubts worked out and Jesus still let them follow him. And not only follow him, but he used them. And that's good news. Jesus doesn't toss you out if you doubt. So today I want to look at how Jesus handled doubt in the disciples. Because everybody has had doubt, will doubt, or knows something going through doubt.

Now Peter, one of the disciples, learned these lessons of doubt that we've been talking about in a very dramatic way. This one day the disciples are on a boat when this storm comes. This storm is winning. They are paddling and struggling to break through the waves. But they are losing the battle. Then Jesus comes walking on the water. Then Peter who is still figuring this thing out has an epiphany... He realizes if Jesus invites him he too can probably walk on water. So he calls out to Jesus... Invite me out. He said, "Come." So Peter got out

of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." (Matthew 14:29-30)

That's a great prayer isn't it?... Peter doesn't know what else to say so he cries out.. Lord, save me...

Stay in this moment for a minute.

Haven't you prayed that prayer? Haven't you said that? Maybe not those same words, but you've prayed that prayer. You've been in that storm. You've felt yourself sinking. You've been overcome by the storm. That news that takes your breath away. When things don't work out as you thought. When you thought God's calling was clear, things seem to fall apart. It's in those moments that doubt can creep in... Doubt settles and whispers... Maybe it's not true. Maybe God's not good. Maybe he doesn't care about me... And you start to sink. Just like Peter did. Maybe you've been there. Maybe you are there. Maybe someone you know is in a storm like that. And Peter teaches us an important lesson on how to respond in the midst of the storms. Peter, when he saw the waves, he experienced doubt and he cried out Lord Save Me...

Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

Remember this. WHILE Peter was doubting... Jesus caught him. He doesn't scold him, he catches him. And then asks: Why do you doubt? The answer is fairly obvious isn't it? He started to doubt when he realized things might not work out. Right? When he realized things were tough, the situation was dire.

I think the common understanding is that Jesus is mad or upset. He's disappointed in our doubt. Some of you have good reason to believe that, because one time you told your doubts, you expressed what you were feeling and someone told you you can't feel that way. Just believe. They point their finger and told you stop doubting. But Jesus

doesn't point a finger when we come to him for help. He extends his hand.

There are two things to remember about this gospel 1) Doubt is normal and part of our faith journey; and 2) Jesus extends His hand when we struggle and need Him - our God never abandons us.

Doubters in pursuit of a firmer faith have plenty of models to connect with in the church, beginning with Thomas the Apostle through a long list of saints like St. Thérèse of Lisieux and figures of spiritual inspiration and guidance like Thomas Merton. Mother Teresa may be the most notable candidate for a patron saint of doubters following a revelation that in her letters to friends and spiritual mentors she had recorded decades of struggle with doubt.

Finally, we need to think about doubt as it affects the way we live because if we want to know what people truly believe, look at how they love God and neighbour. Look at how they pray and live their lives.

In the midst of doubt, how will each of us answer this question?