

HOMILY ~ SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER APRIL 23/24, 2022

Many of you know that I had two careers before becoming a priest. I worked for a state agency for 17 years. I went to law school while I was working there and then practiced law for several years. When I left the state to take an attorney position, I realized from the first day on the job that this was just not a good position for me. I decided to give it six months; and if I still felt the same way, I would quit and that is what I did six months to the day. Before I left the state, they told me: "If you decide you want to come back and work here, we would love to have you back." So, several weeks before I left my attorney position, I checked with the state. They told me that they had a position for me, and they said "Yes." I did have a house payment and no other income. After I quit my attorney position, I contacted the state and they said: "We do have a job for you; however, we have a hiring freeze right now. We expect the hiring freeze to be lifted any day now."

As days turned into weeks and weeks turned into months, through prayer I realized that God did not want me to go backward. God had something else in store for me. I was praying for my old job back, but I am glad now that I did not get what I was praying for or I may have never made it here. When I quit my attorney position, I had no idea I would end up in the seminary. It took me a number of years to figure that out, but here I am.

In the Gospel Reading, we hear what we commonly refer to as "Doubting Thomas." I think it may be more accurate to call him "Disillusioned Thomas." Thomas and the other disciples did not doubt that Jesus existed; they were disillusioned because they still did not understand why Jesus came into the world. They thought Jesus was the Messiah, which meant to them that he would rule over the world and just take care of everything for them. When Jesus died, they concluded that he was not the Messiah; he was just a prophet. They had the inclination to go back to their lives the way they were before. We know that the fishermen went back to fishing, back to their comfort zone. But they did not abandon one another. They still came back to the upper room. They kept coming to church so to speak. Eventually they figured out that Jesus suffered and died on the cross and rose from the dead for our salvation.

He also came to give us an example of how to live. He does not step in and take care of everything for us, but he does walk with us and help us to be his hands and feet in the world.

For most of us here most of the time, we believe that God exists. We believe in him; however, we are sometimes disillusioned because we do not understand how God works in the world. We are never going to fully understand this because God is God, and we are not. I think many times, maybe even unconsciously, we pray for what we want and expect God to give it to us, particularly when we do all the right things. When it does not work out that way, we become disillusioned. When I left my attorney job and was faced with a hiring freeze with the state, I was sure praying for that hiring freeze to be lifted. I had done all of the right things to make that happen. I left the state on good terms. I gave the new job a chance. I checked to see if there was an opening before I quit. I thought I really wanted to go back to my comfort zone where I was successful in the past. I was disillusioned, but I kept praying and I kept coming to church. I eventually figured out that God had something else in store for me, even though I did not know what that was. My prayer did not change God, but it did change me. I still do not know exactly how God works in the world, so I can still become disillusioned; but I have figured a few things out. Our lives unfold; we are not in control of them. When things happen that I do not want or do not expect I say: "I guess this is what was supposed to happen," and I figure out how I am going to move forward in a positive way. I have also come to the conclusion that when we have struggles in our lives, we tend to want to go back to a time when we were comfortable. In most cases, we cannot go back; we can only move forward. I have also come to the conclusion that God does not want us to live in a comfort zone. God is always challenging us to grow. When I get too comfortable, I start to get nervous. What does God want me to do now? I also know that I have to keep praying, and I have to keep coming to church. That is how I will figure things out.

Love & Peace,
Fr. Jim