

Homily
2nd Sunday of Easter - A

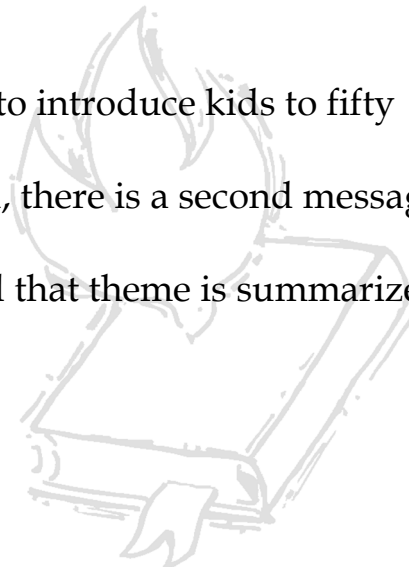
Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
April 18-19, 2020

Acts 2: 42-47
Ps 118: 2-4, 13-15, 22-24
1 Pt 1: 3-9
Jn 20: 19-31

I would not, could not, in a box
I would not, could not, with a fox.
I will not eat them in a house.
I will not eat them with a mouse.
I will not eat them here or there,
I will not eat them anywhere.
I will not eat Green Eggs and Ham,
I will not eat them, Sam I Am!

No los quiero en un cajón
un zorro en un rincón.
Tampoco en un caserón.
y menos con un ratón.
No los como aquí ni allá o más allá.
Pues no me gustan nada
No como huevos verdes con jamón.
¡Pues, no me gustan nada, Juan Ramón!

I believe the good doctor wrote that book to introduce kids to fifty simple words that kids could learn. That said, there is a second message that specifically applies to today's gospel and that theme is summarized by one word: *doubt*.



Doubt seems to be an obstacle in our lives. In many ways, doubt serves as an obstacle for trying something new or trying something different. On the other hand in the world of faith, doubt plays a role that has been with us since the beginning of time; we sometimes we cling the world of the new and improved instead of holding fast to the tried and true (this comes from our second reading from 1 Peter).

In our gospel, Jesus keeps trying to reinforce the basic teachings of faith that have to be repeated over and over because sometimes we forget, sometimes we don't care or, like St. Thomas in today's gospel, sometimes we do not believe. For this reason, we return to this reading every Second Sunday of Easter because no matter how many times we preach this message, people turn away. Like a child who gets distracted from doing what they are asked to do, all of us of the faith act the same way towards the simple teachings of our Lord.

At times, we forget about how simple our own faith life can be. As every age evolves and grows in this relationship with God, we learn more and develop more as we continue to understand who God is and

how God directs us to live in order for us to reach our ultimate destiny. This is why God offers us the gift of *condescension* – speaking to us in a manner in which we can understand (see Catechism #101). Jesus purposely speaks in story so that we can comprehend the simple lessons he wants us to learn. At times, we do not choose to pay attention to that lesson – in some circles, the human attention span lasts about seven minutes (according to <https://time.com/3858309/attention-spans-goldfish/>, the attention span actually lasts about eight seconds!). This is where we lose our way with God – when world crises happens, our attention is so directed on the things of the world that we forget the ways of God and then we forget about who God is and begin to doubt what God can do for us.

Towards this pursuit of understanding our Lord in a fuller way, sometimes we have to go back to the beginning, to our simple experiences with God as if we were a child (which our humanity is, in many ways), to speak to our Lord in simple and uncomplicated ways as our Lord does for us with the stories and parables with which he teaches

us in the scriptures. This faith of ours can be as complicated as we want it to be without losing sight that it also can be as approachable and accessible as it is to a child.

In that light, I parallel today's gospel reading, as I facetiously refer, to "The Gospel of Dr. Seuss." Written with only fifty unique words for a child to learn, the story of Green Eggs and Ham is one of those classics that every child should know and read, because the basic values taught in that book transcend different generations. Let's face it - all of us at one time or another have questions or doubts about the realities of society, whether it be something economic, social, or spiritual. We are told information that we sometimes have to question, information about the economy or the way we raise our children to name a couple. And if we have doubts, we ultimately don't believe. We're like that guy in the story who won't try something because he doesn't understand.

The key to the Seuss book, our lives, the key to the gospel, is *trust*. Do we trust someone else enough that we can place our lives in their hands and take a chance? Risk is such a daunting thing in our lives and it has a

great potential of damage, but it also has a great potential for joy. Take, for instance, a dating relationship. If you ever want to find that special person in your life, you have to take that risk. You must expose yourself to another person and trust that person enough to accept you for who you are. And as we know in life, there are some relationships where the trust factor pays off, and some relationships where it doesn't.

And then there's Christ. Here's a God that comes down on earth with no other motive than to give love. He floods us with love by healing us, saving us, dying and rising for us, and giving us this meal so that we can be nourished. All he asks of us is to trust him enough to follow his example of loving God and loving our neighbor. But like the guy in Dr. Seuss, we are hesitant; we do not want to trust, because caution is the way of the human being. I cannot imagine any of us giving into anything without condition, but that is what God exactly is asking us to do.

If we trust, if we take that chance and give in to the Lord, what we get back is phenomenal. Unfortunately, we act like Thomas – we ask for

proof or some tangent sign that God exists before we give into him. We want to see the hands and the feet, we want to see the nail marks before we take that chance with Christ.

Within the gospel of John, how many times does our Lord relate to a simple, beautiful relationship between he himself and his divine Father? How many times in this gospel do the supposed faithful believers of the faith either doubt or reject his teachings, us knowing that our Lord never abandons us even though time and time again, the faithful abandon Him? In my own faith life, I often turn to the sixth chapter of John's gospel where the supposed faithful who seek out our Lord after they have been fed ultimately abandon our Lord when he explains to them the simple truth about everlasting life, only to turn to the few that did not doubt him and the words of St. Peter that serve as a counter to the St. Thomas story in today's gospel: "To whom shall we go? You have the words to eternal life" (John 6: 68)?

It is that doubt that proves to be our downfall. Ultimately, if we depend on some kind of scientific fact to prove or understand God, then

we will fail, because our God is not found in science but in our hearts.

The seed of God cannot be proven but lived. In all the books that Thomas Aquinas wrote about God, he ultimately writes that the truth about God extends beyond human senses and that ultimately, to understand the deeper truths about God requires the leap into faith and the mystery of God's being. Of course, the same reality can also be found when paralleling our understanding about God to that of children in a sandbox, of a married couple invested in a deep love or in any relationship where two people share a loving relationship without prejudice and with an open heart. The call to knowing God is the call to faith and that requires us to take a leap into something that we often cannot explain or describe but is something that we know and deeply wish to enter.

So many times in my own priesthood, people I have encountered have experienced doubt about the faith or the direction we were taking in the parishes I served – sometimes I had doubt about those directions myself! There are a few parish stories I have embraced in my own parish

journeys that I want to share with you. In the last parish I served (St. Patrick's in Joliet), I was called to minister in one of the poorer communities of the area. Although we were not blessed with large collections, we learned that where one door was closed, certainly another door was opened for us.

In one instance at the parish, the faithful had asked me to build an adoration chapel, handicapped facilities, some type of social area and so on for the faithful of the community I served. The faithful of our parish realized that the monies to provide for these necessities would be thin, although a couple people from our community provided seed money to begin these projects.

What happened as a result of this seed money was a giving from our parish community that would not have been possible without a great deal of faith from those who believe. Upon hearing that these projects were in need of help, a group of specialized volunteers came forward to remove ceilings and walls, to install lighting and plumbing and to provide furnishings from the places where they worked or from

warehouses of old church furniture that was collecting dust. When our local funeral homes heard that we were in need of a handicapped ramp, they donated the finances to make this possible. When a local funeral home heard that we were building an adoration chapel, they donated a \$20,000 organ that was in need of repair. Some folks in need of community service repaired our brick exterior for free, a project which would have cost the parish an additional \$25,000.



As a result, we were able to create a \$55,000 bathroom for \$2,500 (we know this cost \$55,000 because our neighboring parish built an almost

identical bathroom at the same cost). We were able to take \$40,000 donated for an adoration chapel and build one which our diocese estimated at a cost of \$250,000 (*pictured* – this caused the diocese to audit us because they wanted to know where we got the money – I didn't

know whether to be insulted or complimented for our accomplishment!). The generosity from various other groups continued all because they realized that the only motivation for these projects was the greater glory of God.

Some time back, the producers of ShalomWorld Television asked me to share these experiences of faith with their viewers, asking me to tape twelve episodes (or what they call “a season”) consisting of my stories published in my series of homilies. The books are called Stories on the Journey: A Homiletic Biography, which reveals my experience and understanding of God through the stories I have experienced with you and good, holy folks like you. The books are available on Amazon.com and here at the parishes I currently serve. Information about the books and the television series can be accessed on the parish websites as well (www.stpatrickmotence.org or www.stannestanne.org or www.sacredheartpembroke.org).

I wrote these books because you asked me to, to take the gospel message and relate it to the stories of our moms and dads, brothers and

sisters (even ourselves!) that make God relatable in our lives, removing the doubt that God only exists *way out there* (if at all) and brings the presence and message of God that is right here, right in front of us. We need to remind ourselves that God is very much present in that tabernacle and, if we know this, then the Church that is filled at Easter and Christmas can be filled on every other Sunday if we remove the doubt that exists in our faith and understand that God has never stopped loving us, even at times if we have stopped loving God.

So, my prayer for you is that you turn away from the doubts of faith and turn to Christ's love. May we always share the prayer of Dr. Seuss with the people of the world, a faith that proclaims (with a little adjustment to the words of the good doctor) ...

*I want to share God in a box
I want to share God with a fox.
I shall now, shall now in a house
I shall now, shall now with a mouse.
I want to spread love here and there,
I want to spread love everywhere
I love to share faith when I can,
Thank you, thank you, Sam I Am!*

Los *compartiría* en un gorro.
Y los *compartiría* con un zorro.
Y los *compartiría* en un caserón.
Y los *compartiría* con un ratón.
Y los *compartiría* aquí o allá.
¡Los *compartiría* en cualquier lugar!
¡Me gusta compartir la fe, el don!
¡Gracias! ¡Gracias, Juan Ramón!

Thank you, God, for your gift of love! This is our prayer.