

2nd Sunday Easter–Divine Mercy Sunday

April 22-23, 2017

Readings: Acts 2:42-47; 1 Peter 1:3-9; John 20: 19-31

Saint Peter is recalling to the minds of the apostles and disciples that their faith is the most precious gift they have, no matter what. Recall, he said, “so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that is perishable even though tested by fire...” Saint Peter is recalling to the minds of the apostles and disciples that their faith is the most precious gift they have, no matter what. In a day and age in which such a high priority is placed upon absolute reason and practicality, would we really say that our faith is more precious than gold?

Gold has long been considered precious. Whether as jewelry since the time of the ancient Egyptians in 3000 B.C., to when it began to be used as currency in the 6<sup>th</sup> century before Christ, gold is sought after in every generation. So why do people like gold so much? It is a noble metal, like silver, meaning it barely reacts with other elements. Unlike iron, gold does not really rust, and unlike silver, it does not tarnish. We at the Cathedral know full well that copper turns green over time, but gold keeps its shine. It stands the test of time.

It has been used for centuries in chalices, monstrance’s and even in as thread on special liturgical vestments Perhaps this is one reason why it is such a noble ideal as a comparison for our life of faith, because while we know full well our faith can lose its luster and tarnish or fade, its not what we desire. But can we really say that our faith is more precious to us than gold? If we answer “Yes,” then do our lives reflect as much?

Nearly 300,000 rushed to California in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century in search of quick riches, and many left empty-handed. Instead, entrepreneurial bankers by the name of Henry Wells and William Fargo and merchants such as Levi Strauss were the ones who really cashed in!

In today's second reading, Saint Peter indicates that our faith is worth more than all that. Do we agree? And if we do, how do our lives reflect that belief? Would anyone seeing us arrive at the same conclusion? What evidence would they see in us? I ask these questions as much for myself as anyone else, because we cannot be afraid of demanding of ourselves that we produce the evidence of the genuineness of our faith.

To the modern mind set, reason and pragmatism are the order of the day, and what counts is getting things done, achieving our goals. As in the example of precious metals, secular society is most certainly *partially* correct about what is important to us. It is admirable to be driven by goals in life, and the successful person is often one who sets consistent and challenging goals for himself.

If you noticed at the end of the second reading, St. Peter wrote of the inexpressible joy that awaits us at achieving faith's goal, our salvation. The goal of our faith is salvation. News flash—that's a goal that can only fully be realized after we die, and never while on this earth. We often feel the need to see results now, and this is what hinders our life of faith. We can become so driven that we never see the ultimate goal; we are caught up in the many others goals we set.

In the midst of the many goals we do set, and need to set for ourselves in school or work, or in our families, we ought to consider setting a goal of drawing closer to God the Father this Easter season. We all have goals during Lent; what about Easter? For example, we could set as a goal to manifest joy more readily; focus on the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Seek to manifest gratitude - to family, parents, to God.

Today we celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday, a particular week set aside to focus on the riches of His mercy. By naming this Sunday *Divine Mercy Sunday*, St. John Paul II gave the highest endorsement possible to a private

revelation, in recommending this devotion to the faithful. Jesus gave the apostles a divine command as well as a divine authority to forgive sins in his name. This was the institution of the Sacrament of Penance of which so many availed themselves during the preparation for Easter. Jesus teaches us that the forgiveness we need is a gift from above.

God will never force us to believe. He did not force Thomas, but when Thomas overcame the doubt that clouded him for a time, he emerged stronger in faith because of it. He did not overcome the doubt on his own—we need God’s grace to move us to faith. However, God will not grace us with faith until and unless we freely choose to be open to it. In this respect, we have a **duty** to seek God.

Thomas eventually was able to profess with full voice and pure heart, “My Lord and my God,” and he was greatly blessed because of it. He was overcome with peace upon his realization. Rather than fret over his earlier disbelief, he wasted no time in spreading the Gospel far and wide. Tradition says he went to India, where today he is revered as the founding saint of the Church in India.

When we bow before the majesty of God the Father and the Divine Mercy of his son Jesus Christ, we will be overwhelmed with gratitude. Let this season of Easter be a season of profound gratitude.