

- Struggling with doubt is part of being human: doubts are those cracks in our confidence and challenges to our beliefs.
- Sometimes our doubts can be small: Did I choose the right suit or dress for the job interview?
- Sometimes doubt can be a little more intense: Is this the right school or job or place to live?
- And sometimes doubt can be very profound, even over-bearing: Am I ready for marriage? How can I continue to face this illness/ this pain?
- Doubting is part of life and can be harmful to us. Doubt can paralyze us with indecision. It can force us to give up on someone or something. It can cause us to miss out on something wonderful.
- We can also have doubt creep into our spiritual life, especially during times of challenge and difficulties. Those times when we can't believe what we are seeing. Those times when we just can't understand why things are happening.
- At times we might be tempted to ask: Does God love me? Is God really there? Is God listening?
- We see an example of this in today's Gospel. Peter and the disciples are in a boat that is being tossed about by rough waves. Suddenly, Peter sees Jesus walking toward them – on the water!! Or is it a ghost? Peter doubts so he asks Jesus for proof:
- *“Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” Jesus said, “Come.”*
- So Peter trusts (for now) and we read:
- *“Peter got out of the boat and began to walk on the water toward Jesus.”*
- But Peter looks at what is going on around him and starts to worry. Doubt creeps in again as we read:
- *“But when he saw how strong the wind was he became frightened; and, beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!” Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught Peter, and said to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”*
- Why did Peter doubt? Become frightened? Shortly before this boat ride he saw Jesus feed 5,000 people with just 5 fish and two loaves

of bread. And before that he saw Jesus perform miraculous healings and cast out demons. So why DID Peter doubt?

- Because he was human. And at this moment, in this difficulty, he couldn't understand what was happening, he looked around and worried, he realized he was no longer in control of the situation.
- And aren't we much like Peter. We shift back and forth between trust and doubt. Usually when things are going well it is easy for us to trust but in difficult moments doubt can creep back in.
- So how do we keep doubt from creeping into our lives, especially our spiritual life? Jesus indirectly gives Peter the answer when He says to Peter: "*O you of little faith...*"
- Faith. Jesus reminds Peter and all of us we have a gift from God our Father. We have a truth planted in our hearts by God. The truth that God loves us fiercely; that God is close by and cares; that God listens. That truth, that gift is called Faith.
- Jesus reminds us the gift of faith is our greatest weapon to combat doubt. What a timely message for us today, for our individual lives and for our lives as a country.
- Let's spend a few moments looking at this precious gift.
- Faith- if you look in the dictionary it is defined as a strong belief or trust in something or someone. Our Church teaching in the Catechism takes that definition even farther by telling us: "Faith is a belief in one true God and in His goodness and love for us without seeing Him".
- You can't purchase faith. Can't sell it or give it to someone. Can't know it by studying it. Nothing in our power can acquire it. It is a free gift from God because He loves us.
- Faith is a source of power. It gives us the strength to trust enough, to believe enough. Enough so that we don't give into fear and despair. Enough that we open the door of our life: the door to our heart and soul – and let Jesus in. Let Him work in us and through us.
- Faith gives us the power to dig down deep into ourselves – into our innermost part – where God dwells. And to know God is there and to trust He loves us and will guide our lives.
- Faith teaches us that Jesus is the visible love of God. In times of difficulty and uncertainty – times when doubts start to creep in – faith calls us to focus on and trust in Jesus, God's love for us - and not on the confusion swirling around us. Faith is unsinkable.

- Like any gift, the gift of faith must be opened, used and exercised. We need to use it, lean on it, depend on it. That happens through prayer. Especially in times of doubt. Prayer is the key that unwraps, opens the gift of faith and puts it into action.
- Our faith reassures us God does not will evil or trouble or illness – He can't, He is love.
- Our faith reassures us God is present, God cares, God is listening. Our Faith grounds us firmly in the belief, that although life may bring difficulty, God has something better planned for us – both now and in eternal life with Him forever.
- I'd like to conclude with this beautiful reflection on persevering in faith. It was written by Christine Watkins in her book "Mary's Mantle Consecration".

Perseverance

Persevere, my friend, persevere.

Continue believing in goodness, ultimate goodness, when evil has had its day.

Continue to lower your bucket into the well of prayer, even though you haven't drawn a drop.

Continue to rise each morning, though your limbs should refuse to move.

Continue to search for meaning in unavoidable suffering, when nothing makes sense.

Continue to cast your line into the sea of lost souls, though not one fish takes a bite.

Continue to perform your duties, even if drudgery should dampen your spirit.

Continue to work beyond failures, disappointments and detours – pressing toward the goal.

Persevere, my friend, persevere, for the dark night is ending, dawn is breaking on the horizon, and the sun will soon rise.