

Homily for the Second Sunday of Easter (A)

St. Joseph's Neier/SFBRHS

April 26-27, 2014

Rev. Kevin Schmittgens

Central Idea: We can doubt like Thomas for a bit, but eventually all of us get to the point where we need to take the leap of faith.

Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe.

I hate being taken for a fool. I am such a skeptic. I know that is strange for a priest to admit, but it's true. Of all the things I hate in this world, the thing I detest the most is being bamboozled, lied to, tricked, duped.

Someone I know emails me constantly with stories of incredible outrages. Can you believe (fill in the blank with your favorite politician or special interest group) they are trying to do this or that?! After a little internet surfing, usually on snopes.com, I find out that this is usually nonsense, an urban legend. It wasn't true in 1999 when the story first surfaced and it still isn't today.

For those of you who don't know, my brother Tom passed away last October. One of my fondest memories of him is that I was driving home from school a couple of years ago and he calls me from out of the blue. "Hey, I won \$50,000 on a scratch off ticket today," he says. Then clever Kevin remembers, ah, it is April 1st. Yeah, right! You did not. I am not falling for this. I wasn't born yesterday. Very very funny. The only problem, it really was true. He really did win \$50000! In fact, I contend that is the perfect day to win the lottery, no one will believe you and then they won't ask you for any money.

(story of Geoff Sater class of 1994 – fake brownies)

We live in a society which is at one and the same time deeply skeptical, dubious and disbelieving, true sons and daughters of Doubting Thomas, and at other times incredibly gullible, easily fooled and naïve. It is wacky that we can be both at the same time, but welcome to life in 2014.

The difficult, yet oddly freeing, truth of human existence is that no matter who you are, believer or unbeliever, atheist or Christian, doubting Thomas or gullible Gertie, all of us, eventually, whether we want to or not, have to take a leap, a leap of faith. It could be something as simple and everyday as driving down the street, trusting that the other drivers aren't drunk or crazy or murderous, or all three, or as life changing and daunting as picking a career path or getting married. Navigating the seas of disbelief and trust is one of the most vital of all life choices. So what happen when your leap,of faith literally

has someone's life on the line? What if were two people, two people you love with all your heart? What if it were your newborn daughters?

That is the dilemma that the parents of Kathleen and Charity Lincoln faced almost fourteen years ago. Kathleen and Charity were ischiopagus tripus, conjoined twins, one of only seventeen in recorded scientific literature at the time. They were joined at the hip and they shared part of their large intestine and one of three legs. Their two livers and bladders also appeared to be fused. The girls faced each other and the one twin would keep taking the other's binky. She was known as the Pacifier Bandit. But seriously, what kind of life would they have bound together as they were?

The parents, Greg and Vaneice had to make a staggering decision: to separate their infant daughters or not. It was, by all accounts a delicate and tricky operation. The Lincoln's had one non-negotiable condition, both girls needed to survive. One daughter would not be sacrificed so that the other could have a normal life. Can you imagine living with that your whole life? They knew that they would be putting their seven month olds through a grueling ordeal, an ordeal that was far from a slam dunk, a sure thing. But ultimately, Greg and Vaneice Lincoln took their leap, they decided to go with the surgery and trust in both God and an army of 30 medical professionals who were called in to perform a medical miracle. There were pediatric specialists in urology, orthopedics, plastic surgery, and radiology, to name a few.

Step one was to implant plastic devices in the girls' chests to stretch and expand tissue in the area. And then on October 1, 2000, the surgery began. Kathleen's team wore yellow hats, Charity's team wore purple hats, to keep everyone from getting confused. Each girl would get an ovary and a fallopian tube. They would split and share their liver, their bladder and their intestines. They would only have one leg apiece, the third leg would be lost. And because they have no hip socket or stub, a prosthetic leg could not be fitted. Can you imagine? Thirty hours later, Greg and Vaniece Lincoln would see their twin girls *apart* for the first time. They still have some mighty obstacles to overcome, and yet, as far as I know, they seem to be doing just fine, leading as normal lives as possible. They should be starting high school this year. And each February they get **two** separate birthday cakes.

The decisions in our lives may not be as dramatic and monumental as the Lincoln's, but we all, eventually, will find ourselves at a crossroads, at a bridge or maybe even on a cliff, where the next move is simply and plainly a leap, a leap of faith. We do so, no doubt, with open eyes and open minds. We're no fools! But we also do so with open hearts, filled with trust and hope. We need to be savvy and aware, but if we are too distrusting, too skeptical, too suspicious, we are doomed to paralysis and fear. We can have a bit of Thomas' doubt, but eventually we need to just leap and say: My Lord and My God.

My favorite quote about this is from another Thomas, the monk and writer Thomas Merton. It is one of my favorite lines, a line that has helped me when I had to leap. It goes like this:

*My Lord God,
I have no idea where I am going.
I do not see the road ahead of me.
I cannot know for certain where it will end.
Nor do I really know myself,
And the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually
doing so.
But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you.
And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing.
I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.
And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road
though I may know nothing about it.
Therefore, I will trust you always though I seem to be lost and in the shadow of death.
I will not fear, for you are ever with me,
and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.*

I know it is terrifying, but as the Risen Jesus told Doubting Thomas: do not persist in unbelief, believe.

It is the only way to truly live.

No foolin'!