

Fr. Ryan Homily May 10, 2020

Readings: Acts of the Apostles 6:1-7, 1 Peter 2:4-9, John 14:1-12

Happy Mother's Day to all moms who are out there. I pray it is going to be a wonderful day for you and even if you can't connect with all your family in person I hope you can at least do so virtually by talking on the phone or facetimeing someone. Even though the world has certainly gotten a bit strange lately, we can still celebrate the love of our moms. And sometimes people who are not physical mothers they can kinda feel put out by today, you know it's for everybody else but not for me. But look, if you give spiritual life to someone, you're a spiritual mother. When you pray for people spiritually, you are a spiritual mother and that way you can have thousands of children. Spiritual children through your prayers giving them life. So never despair that this day isn't for you. It would be like saying Father's Day isn't for a priest. Of course it's for me too because there's a spiritual fatherhood and a spiritual motherhood. So again, always know that reality and a very blessed Mother's Day to everyone. When we come to our readings this day what Jesus tells us, it's so beautiful, he says in that first line let not your hearts be troubled. Have faith in God, have faith in Me. And so what he does is tells us how to deal with our troubled hearts. And as I've talked about our troubled hearts can come from so many different various things, from struggles in our daily lives, from fears that we face in our lives, from the fear of the future. Our hearts are constantly troubled by things and he tells us what conquers that trouble and that fear in our life. And what conquers it? It's FAITH; it's faith in Him. And unfortunately I think that can simply become a platitude, have faith. Right, for us we don't really connect it or have it. So how do we deal with that? Very few people I have ever met are not troubled with something in some way. It could be what's going on in the world, how it's affecting us, could be our own sinfulness, whatever it is. So let's take it for granted that we're troubled by something that's going on in our lives. That's where we're at. And Jesus he talks about what is going to combat, what is going to destroy that is faith. If we go back into the Gospel, Thomas is asking Jesus how do we know the way. Basically, he's asking how do we do this? How do we survive the trials? How do we know the way to do it? And Jesus's response is I am the way. It's so simple. It's so simple we overlook it. Just stay with Me, depend on Me. Two examples that I'd like to share that maybe to grasp what Jesus is trying to get us to understand and both of them are

movies. But both of them are about real people. And the first movie is Hacksaw Ridge which tells the story of this man Desmond Doss. Desmond was an American soldier during WWII and what's unique about Desmond is that he refused to fire a gun. He wanted to serve his country but he would not commit an act of violence. Because see growing up Desmond had a rough home life and his father was an alcoholic brought on by his own experience in WWI. And one time his dad took out a gun, fired it and nearly killed Desmond and his mom. And as a young boy Desmond actually struck his brother and his mother kinda walked him over to this picture that they had on the wall of their home with the Ten Commandments and Desmond looks right at the words Thou Shalt Not Kill and he really took that to heart. And he saw how destructive violence could be in his own home. And so on principal, principals that were formed by his own Catholic faith, he refused to pick up a weapon even going into battle. And at first his fellow soldiers hated him for it. They did not trust Desmond, they beat him in the barracks for it, they called him a coward, told him he wasn't man enough for his fiancé. And there Desmond's faith was being tested. And because it's being tested, his faith is being forged. And despite all the hate and the ridicule and temptation to forget those principals, Desmond stayed true to them, he never fired a bullet his entire time in WWII. But as a medic, he saved countless people. And by the end of that film the soldiers who called him a coward at the beginning said they would refuse to go into battle unless he was at their side because they saw how courageous he was and being willing to lay down his life to save them. It's an amazing movie. He received the metal of valor when he came home. Hacksaw Ridge. It's a violent movie, it's a war movie but it has to be to see the contrast, and how non-violent Desmond was. And here's my point in bringing all that up, Desmond Doss was already who he should be at the beginning of the film, it wasn't about him growing or about him learning something he already is who he wanted to be as a Christian. And what happened was that he had to weather the storm, the ridicule, the mocking that he received for that belief. Today in the Gospel, Jesus tells Thomas and He tells all of us I am the way, and the truth, and the life. Saying I'm giving you everything you need right now to go out there and weather every storm that could come your way. And those trials, and those hardships and those uncertainties when you experience them, they are going to reveal to you how strong or how weak your faith is. See Jesus He only makes two promises in the Gospel: He promises He will be with us always; He's never going to abandon us

and He promises that in this world you're gonna have trouble. He promises that trouble is going to enter into your life. And he says but don't fear I'm giving you everything you need up front right now to weather that storm, to stay true to me in the midst of that trial because in those moments that you experience, those moments of trial your faith is gonna be forged, it's gonna prove itself. And what Christians from the time of the Acts of the Apostles what they knew and what we sometimes need to be reminded of is that trials are normal. Insecurity is the rule, and it's not just the rule, it's necessary. Trials are normal, insecurity is the rule, and not just the rule, it's necessary. So we shouldn't be surprised by trials, those trials reveal where you stand. How strong is your faith? Trials tell you that. Those trials purify, they're giving you a chance to change if you don't like where your faith is at a particular moment. And those trials strengthen. Because of them you can become more rooted in Christ. So don't question why the trials are there, Jesus told us that they would be, but what are you learning about your faith because of that trial. And again, Jesus gave us all the tools we would ever need at the very beginning. What we call it in the church is the deposit of faith. We call it the deposit of faith because it's been handed on to us, it's been "deposited" if you will. Everything that any of us need for our salvation is already here. We have it, but am I putting it to use or am I just letting it sit there. Second example real quick is another movie, much little more recent, and this one's more of an art house film. I just saw it a few weeks ago and the director is Terrence Malick, if you know what some of his other movies are. And again, it's about a real person named Franz Jagerstatter and like Desmond Doss, Franz also lived during WWII and at the beginning of the film, he's already the man that he should be. So again, it's not about him growing, him learning, it's about what he has to endure. See Franz, he was a Roman Catholic living in Nazi occupied Austria, but he refused to pledge allegiance to Hitler. And because he was a farmer, he was allowed for a time just to go home. They didn't press the issue because he's a farmer, they needed food, they let it be. But even then, his entire village ridiculed him for not serving his country. And his wife and him were spat upon, his kids were outcasts in the community. Eventually Franz was called up to active duty but because he refused to fight, he didn't believe in the Nazi cause, he was thrown in jail. The movie is mostly watching him endure the struggle to remain true and eventually at the end, he's martyred, he's actually put to death because he won't give in. he was a conscientious objector accused of treason by the Nazi's and because of his

unwavering believes, because of his Catholic faith, Franz Jagerstatter was martyred. And today we would refer to him as Blessed Franz Jagerstatter because he's on his way to becoming a saint in the Catholic church. And he's on his way to becoming a saint because when Jesus said I am the way, the truth, and the life, Franz listened, and he made Jesus his and his families everything. When Jesus said in this world you will have trouble, Franz listened. And he deepened his prayer life, he didn't let his security in this world but in Jesus. It's an amazing movie, it's called A Hidden Life. As I said in the beginning, I don't know anyone that I've ever met that isn't troubled by something. What's troubling you? Where do you need to hand yourself to Jesus who says He is the way, and the truth, and the life? When we reflect on a person like Desmond Doss or Franz Jagerstatter who were not crippled by trials but forged by them. We ask am I immersing myself in these resources that Jesus has handed over to us? Am I drenching my life in prayer and in the Word of God as they did? Do I say throughout the day something simple like Jesus I trust in you, Jesus I trust in you, Jesus I trust in you. Friends what is the source of our security? Because we're learning all over again that this world is not secure and we live in a time of great insecurity but in a world that's broken we have hope because of Him (points to Jesus on the cross). In the midst of insecurity our peace isn't passing it's permanent because of Him. In a world of insecurity our faith isn't fragile it's being forged because of Him. And in a world of incredible insecurity we have overwhelming trust in his inextinguishable presence. Where does our faith arise from, a faith that can see us through any trial or any hardship? It's knowing the one who calls Himself the way, the truth, and the life, allowing Him to live in your soul and making Him your way, your truth, and your life. Even as we live in a life of an always passing, always fragile world.

Amen