

Discovering Joy

If you are unfamiliar with the story of Doubting Thomas, please begin by reading John 20:19-31

Our life of faith always includes an element of doubt. However, doubt is not central to our identity. When doubts define us, we can become addicted to the rush of superiority that comes from cutting down the logic of others. Defining ourselves by what we don't believe can lead to cynicism, stealing our joy.

There is a modern-day sentiment that either you are someone who believes in God or someone who believes in science. However, there can be no barrier between faith in God and science. If God created the universe, it follows that learning about creation will teach us more about the mind of God. God is revealed both through the Bible and through creation. Scientific findings will also help us in our interpretation of scripture as we learn which parts of the Bible are more poetic or symbolic in nature. Our invitation into a life of faith is an invitation into a larger room -one where we are not limited by our biology. We don't limit science to our interpretation of the Bible. Furthermore, we don't limit faith to what is explained by science. The world of faith is a larger room – one that is full of possibilities.

1. Reflecting on times of personal doubt, how do those doubts affect your faith? How can doubts help you? How do you prevent doubts from turning into a cynical nature?
2. How is stepping into faith like stepping into a larger room?
3. In the life of faith, reality is not limited to what can be explained scientifically. However, science is also a faith-filled act, one that helps us to understand the creator. What is the relationship between science and a life of faith?

In our life of faith, the Holy Spirit uses joy as our guide. We define joy as those moments when we are able to sense the inbreaking of the eternal – of God – in our everyday lives. In our baptism, we were made children of God, not because of anything we had done, but because of God's grace. As people of faith, we can try to confine God to the small box of our personal religion. We find ourselves tempted to rely on rules and traditions that give us a feeling of certainty instead of listening for the language of the eternal. Using the eyes of faith, we look for signs of God's presence. We are active in discovering not certainty, but joy.

1. It is so easy to look at people from other denominations and talk about how they are wrong and we are right. Why do we find it comforting to point out shortcomings in the beliefs of others?
2. All Christians are called to study the Bible and how it relates to our day-to-day lives. However, it is important to do so without trying to limit God's activity to our own understanding -to try to confine God the smaller room of personal theology. How do we study the Bible to discover joy and not certainty?
3. Describe moments when you have experienced joy – the inbreaking of God's presence. Have you experienced God's nearness when listening to music? When in nature? In the words of your loved ones? When someone you love approaches death?