

***Second Sunday of Easter***  
***April 27, 2025***  
***Year of the Holy Spirit***

*“Archbishop Fulton Sheen esteemed the enormous value of the laity’s voice: ‘Who is going to save our Church? Not our bishops, not our priests and religious. It is up to the people. You have the minds, the eyes, the ears to save the Church. Your mission is to see that your priests act like priests, your bishops like bishops and your religious act like religious.’” (quoting Archbishop Sheen in his address to the Supreme Convention of the Knights of Columbus in June 1972.)*

In our selection of Saint John’s Gospel we hear again those famous words spoken by Jesus to Thomas: *“Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.”* My mind is drawn to those words in light of a recent homily given by a bishop to his diocese. The bishop had read a social media post where a young seminarian had stated that he wanted to be part of a priesthood which **saves** the church. The bishop correctly noted that Jesus Christ was the one true Savior of His Church. However, given what we have heard in Saint John’s Gospel, could Jesus offer others the opportunity to participate in the work of “saving” His Church? Let us take a moment and see if we can answer that question for ourselves.

We begin with this statement, Jesus Christ offered to His apostles a share of His Divine Authority when He breathed His Holy Spirit upon them in the upper room: *“And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.’”* In granting them this Divine Authority of Binding and Loosing Sins, does He not offer them a share of saving His Church? Secondly, why would Jesus give man a share in this Divine Authority? Lastly, through the words of Jesus, man is given the Divine Authority to judge, as Jesus would judge, which sins are to be forgiven and which are to be retained. In this essence, man is given a share in Jesus’ Divine Mission of Salvation. However, is this Divine Mandate reserved solely to the Church’s ministers?

It is at this point that the words of Jesus to Thomas offer us keen insight: *“Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.”* We are those to whom Jesus was referring. We believe and it is this belief which both inspires and dictates the way we choose to live. Yet it does not stop with just our lives. We believe and therefore we desire, for our love of God, to see others live lives pleasing to God. When we purchase a product or watch a program we thoroughly enjoy, do we not want to share our experience with those around us? Should we not want to share our love of God with those we know and love? Should we, also, want to share our love with God with everyone we meet? And, should we not expect those who most represent God, His ambassadors, our shepherds, to live lives worthy of imitation; saintly lives which are examples for us? Lastly, should you

not desire that I, your pastor, live a life worthy and dignified equal to the calling I have received? I ask you now, IF a bishop, priest, religious, or lay person were to live in this fashion, then how would you imagine them to be?

Allow me to offer a few points which may help all of us in deciding how we choose to live Christian lives worthy of our God. If we want to see both ourselves and others living noble, virtuous Christian lives, then we must desire to live sacrificial lives. We must desire to become sacrificial victims in union with the Sacrificial Victim, Jesus hanging upon His Cross for love of His Church. How is this achieved? **(1)** By praying devoutly – truly setting dedicated time aside daily to both speak with and listen to God. We must be willing to pray consistently, when we feel His Presence and, most importantly, when He seems distant. Our love-inspired prayer must persist even if we feel He is not hearing our petitions. **(2)** As Catholics, we believe Jesus is perfectly present in the Eucharist, therefore, we must commit to taking time to sit in His Presence. We must structure our time to arrive early and stay late, if necessary, due to our love of Him. If any other of our life's activities required those same things, would we not see them fulfilled? How much more so with God? **(3)** As Catholics, we must commit to honoring God in His family and His creation. This means we must have a love and admiration for His Mother, His Angelic messengers, and all aspects of His creation. If we do not understand why the Church holds the Mother of God in such high regard, then should we not inquire as to why? It is never enough to become complacent in our love of God. **(4)** We should require our ministers to be true fathers. We should not love our bishops and priests because they tell us what we want to hear. We love them because they proclaim the truths taught by God who is Truth. We do not need friends. We need wise shepherds. Added to this, we should desire our bishops and priests to sacrifice themselves for us. This is what the Shepherd did and what we should expect from His disciples.

Allow me to conclude with a quote from Pope Saint Pius X which, in my opinion, best describes the type of bishop and priest we need which will inspire all of us to give ourselves to the continued work of saving the Church, the people of God, in whatever way God has called for you and I. “‘Mere duty is not sufficient for a true priest. He needs something higher: sanctity,’ Pope St. Pius X said. ‘Jesus Christ requires a simple Christian life of the faithful, but of the priest He asks a life of heroism. And, therefore, if Christian perfection is an ornament, a glory and a halo for any member of the faithful, for the priest it must be his normal way of life.’” (Pope Pius X, Recipe for Holiness: St. Pius X and the Priest, 1959.)