

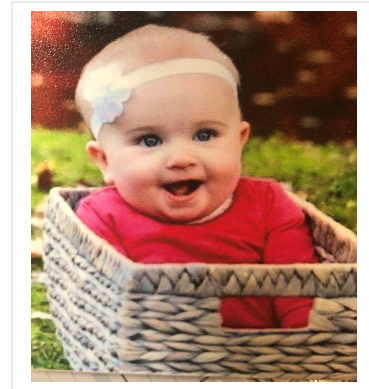
EASTER 5, A – May 10, 2020  
SCRIPTURES – Psalm 30; Acts 6 & 7; 1 Peter 2:2-10; John 14:1-14

*Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. (John 14)*

The Gospels record for us a number of astounding, jaw-dropping statements that Jesus made. Several of them are in today's Gospel reading, in fact. I want to focus upon one that is utterly jaw-dropping because He said it, not about Himself, but about others. ***“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.”*** Some will do Christ's works, and even greater ones? Really? Who could be doing such works?

Think about this. Get an image in your mind of who Jesus might be referring to; of someone today who is doing, or someone in the past who did, His works, and even greater ones. (pause...) Do you have a picture of someone in your mind? I do. In fact, I have a picture of her right here: my granddaughter, Claire!

Why is my granddaughter – about 5 or 6 months old here – my image of one who is doing the great works of Jesus? Because Jesus begins by saying, ***“whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do.”*** The works of Christ begin with faith and spring forth from faith. And, what is faith? Claire, in a basket... smiling, with not a care in the world... her eyes on her parents (her father is taking the picture)... their loving care surrounding her. Claire, safe and secure, happy and content in her basket... she is a picture of utter trust; and faith, above all, is trust.



***“Whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do.”*** How greatly does Jesus praise faith! In fact, He praises faith – trust in Him – as the greatest of works, for faith is every work and all works, all rolled into one. Jesus was once asked, ***“What must we do, to be doing the works of God?”*** He responded, ***“This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”*** (John 6:28-29) That you believe in Him. This one work encompasses all works, Jesus says. How great it is! Such faith is also great because it begins with God. By His Holy Spirit He opens your heart and brings you to believe in Jesus. For this reason, St. Paul compares faith to God's work of creation at the beginning. ***“God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,”*** he says in 2 Cor. 4:6. You, His believer, are His new creation! But, this great work of God in your heart is also a work that you do, for you are the believer. Claire: come from her parents, but with her eyes on her parents with complete trust in them – this picture sums up faith. Simple, unwavering, complete trust: this is the main thing, the one thing God wants from you and me. Such trust will enable Him to teach you and guide you, to shower you and fill you with Christ and His love... which you can then go forth and show to others.

How great is faith!! But also, like the glory of Jesus' divinity as He walked on this earth, how hidden it is. You probably don't consider yourself a great believer, or your works to be great. You know, you feel your lowliness because of your sins; and you're lying if you don't! The "smallness," the poverty of your works, is very evident to you. But, don't ever judge your works, or the works of others, apart from faith. In fact, don't judge them at all! Leave this to the One who alone can see truly, and before whose eyes nothing is unseen.

No, don't judge. Just believe your Lord. Trust Him, and so believe Him when He says, ***"Whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do."*** Do you not believe in Him? Your faith, then, is great. You do Christ's works.

Of course, what really throws us off is when Jesus goes on to say, ***"and greater works than these will he do."*** Greater works than Christ's? He walked on water and calmed a storm with a word. He healed the sick and raised the dead. He cast out demons. Of course, it was only faith which saw these as great works of God. Those who didn't believe in Him either denied them or credited them to Satan. *"He casts out demons because he is the head of the demons,"* they said. Apart from faith in Jesus, no greatness... indeed, no work of God at all... is seen.

We need to keep this in mind. We're so impressed by "great" works that we lose sight of the "little" ones, which are themselves great. Consider Jesus. Most of His life He honored and obeyed God in simple ways. He obeyed His parents as a child. Believing children who obey their parents, then, are doing the works of Jesus! (Keep this in mind, parents!) The very night that He spoke the words which are recorded for us in John 14 began with Jesus taking off His outer robe, stripping down to His undergarments, wrapping a long towel around Himself, and getting down to wash His disciples' feet. Was this really necessary at that point? They were already in the midst of their dinner, after all. And, would this really change anything? After He finished washing their feet He told His disciples that they should do for each other as He had done to them... and they soon got into an argument about which of them was the greatest! Well, such things didn't seem to matter to Him. Jesus washed their feet anyway.

- Maybe for us this would be like wearing a mask right now when around others. What a pain! And, do they really do anything? But: is this really all about you?

Later that evening Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. Do you not pray? You are doing a work of Jesus!

Ultimately, Jesus bore our sins and their punishment in His body and soul and laid down His life for us on the cross. No one thought that was a work of God. But, it was the greatest work of God, the ultimate work for which His Father sent Him into this world. It is the one work which you and I cannot do and, thanks be to God, need not do. But, every one of our good works is bound up in and springs forth from that work. It is Jesus' cross, ultimately, His suffering and death for us – and also His resurrection and ascension, for they are His Father's vindication of His ultimate work – that makes our works great. ***"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the***

***works that I do... because I am going to the Father.***” First, He went to His Father on the cross. His first words as they crucified Him – ***“Father, forgive them”*** – were to His Father. He offered up to Him His life as the payment for our sins. Then, 40 days after His resurrection, He went to the Father in His ascension. As His right hand, Jesus rules over all things for us. You can be certain, then, that as you trust in Him and receive Him in His Word and Sacraments, He will rule in your life and bring forth from you the good works that He has prepared for you to do.

Do you believe this? ***“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.”*** Do you believe that Jesus was not only speaking the truth, but was speaking about you?

Yes, you. ***“Whoever believes in Me,”*** Jesus says. Does that not include you? Don’t ever belittle yourself, then, or any of your fellow believers. Don’t look down upon yourself or any others as of little account, little value, little ability. Claire, smiling and trusting... eyes on her parents... eager to be loved and taught and guided... ready to then burst forth with all kinds of good works: ***this*** is what faith in Jesus makes of you. ***“You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession... you are God’s people,”*** Peter says (1 Pet. 2) This is not someone else. It is you who believe in Jesus!

So: ask your Savior to direct how you speak and act! ***“You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”*** Consider how you may do the works of Jesus and honor Him and your heavenly Father!

- Jesus prayed; so make time for prayer. Don’t just wait for the feeling to hit you!
- Jesus learned God’s words. Set aside time to do so yourself! Long for them as a baby for milk. God’s words are pure, spiritual milk!

Above all, Jesus lived among and with weak and lowly sinners... and He rejoiced in them! Being with them was not a burden, a tedious and onerous work. It was a joy!

And He rejoices to be with you... to live within you and bring forth great works through you. You, a great believer who is doing the great works of Jesus... get that picture in your mind... until we, with the saints before us, may see God face to face! (Hymn #644:5) In the blessed name of Jesus. Amen!