Doubt as part of the Faith Journey

Saint Thomas is front and center on this Second Sunday of Easter, and his struggles at first to accept the Resurrection is, I think, something all of us can relate to. For faith is a journey; sometimes God feels quite close, other times we endure spiritual dryness. So how can we navigate these things?

First as a starter, we remember there's a difference between doubt and despair. Despair is where we give up on God completely. Doubt is where we question and struggle a bit but still trust - knowing God will ultimately see us through.

Second, remember faith isn't contingent upon feelings. Sometimes God feels very close. Other times we may wonder "where are you God?" when we go through difficult times. These feelings, or lack of them, can go on for a while. But in these moments, it's important to keep trusting. Silence does not mean God is refusing to act.

Third, trust. We don't know the big plan. And it can be hard to see past the short-term situation we may be in. God is working things out, and with God all things are possible. Sometimes His timeline and ours differ, but ultimately things work out because God is in control.

Fourth, believe in God but also in yourself. God has put you and me here for a reason, and when we discern our mission, we have to remember it's a marathon, not a sprint. Trusting that God has a plan, and discerning what that is, it can be tempting at times to give up when things aren't going well, or when we stumble and fall. But remember the words of the Exultet (sung at the Easter Vigil): "Oh Happy Fault!" The sin of our first parents ultimately led to Jesus. Sometimes our mistakes have silver linings; we gain insight and empathy; we become more spiritually mature and wise; we grow closer to God and understand mercy more deeply. We will sin many times, but let's not lose sight of the progress!

Fifth, have patience. Again, know that you will fail at times in your vocation; you'll make mistakes and fall back into a sin; you'll let someone down. This patience though we also need to have with other people and of course ourselves.

And lastly, look to others to help build your faith. Thomas was not alone in that room; the others were with him and helped him complete his mission. Seek people out, especially if you are having doubts about God, the future, or yourself - people who will support but also listen to you and help to run the marathon of life with you.

Life can be a bit overwhelming at times. But let us remember, as we've just celebrated during Holy Week, God's answer to sin and evil was to confront it - and He is victorious. Now it's our job to follow the apostles out of the locked room and to be God's witnesses in this world, which has so much good in it. So too is there so much good in humanity, and in you - so believe in yourself and this world by living out the virtues of faith, hope and love.

Remember doubt is no sin. It means we have an engaged faith life and are thinking. So, make friends with the doubts and accept them, but don't let them take over. Because Jesus' victory is ours too, and He will lead us to the finish line even if that line can be hard to see.

God's blessings to you!
Fr. Paul