

April 20, 2020-Monday, Second Week of Easter

'I attended Mass there long ago and prayed until I got my first job.'-Gregory Peck

Actor's Chapel

St. Malachy Church in New York City is known for its Actor's Chapel.

The parish was founded in 1902 by Archbishop John Farley (who was born on this day in 1842). Because of its proximity to Broadway's theatre district, Catholic actors, musicians, dancers, and other show business people became part of St. Malachy's congregation. Masses, confessions and missions were arranged to accommodate their theatre schedules.

By the 1930s, St. Malachy's parishioners included such Catholic actors as Spencer Tracy, Irene Dunne, and Rosalind Russell. Rudolph Valentino's funeral Mass was held at St. Malachy's in 1926. Douglas Fairbanks Jr. married Joan Crawford there in 1929. Bing Crosby's movie, "Going My Way," was filmed at St. Malachy's in 1944. George M. Cohen donated an altar railing for the church, and over the years, altar servers included Don Ameche, Jimmy Durante, and Pat O'Brien.

Despite its star-studded history, St. Malachy's faced closure many times in later years due to finances, a declining parish membership, and a changing neighborhood that soon became unsafe.

Fr. George W. Moore is credited with infusing new life into St. Malachy's after he became its pastor in 1976. He established a residence for elderly homeless people, and worked with folks with AIDS. He died at age 64 on May 3, 1991, three days before it was announced that he was to receive a special Tony award for his commitment to the poor and elderly.

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*On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." (John 20:19)*

In this week's Gospel meditation, the main theme is belief—Jesus urges Thomas to be believing, not unbelieving, and the author of John's Gospel also urges us to believe.

For many years now, Catholics have been drifting away from regular Mass attendance. People speculate on the reasons for this and there is probably a combination of reasons. But one possibility is: some people do not come to Mass because they don't believe any more, or at least because their belief has weakened.

For a long time, people took faith for granted. We assumed that we all believed in God, and Jesus Christ, and life after death. We spent our time talking about what we do as Catholics, not what we believe. It may be harder to believe today because society does not support Christian faith—it not only challenges what we do but also what we believe.

Faith is a gift of God, but it takes personal courage and conviction in order to believe. You have to take a risk.

You have to think about faith and reflect on it.

You have to be attentive to your faith and you may have to wrestle with it.

I need to take a hard look at my faith, because I can't take it for granted.

Spend some quiet time with the Lord