

II, Easter, C, 2007
St. Raphael, Springdale, AR

Folks we live in an age of great technological advances, cutting-edge science, and a relentless stream of information. Knowledge of nearly everything is at our fingertips, we just have to walk over to our computer and “google it” as they say. Now, I’ll confess to you that I’ve come into this brave new world rather reluctantly, in fact, to be quite honest, I’ve been dragged in kicking and screaming. One day a friend and I were debating the value of traditional things versus modern innovations. And my friend exclaimed, exasperated with me: “Oh, John, you just like things because they are old!” And I shot back the reply: “No, I like things because they are timeless.” I was more surprised than he was with that reply. But you see, scientific knowledge, as good as it is, isn’t everything; in fact, sometimes, worldly knowledge blinds us to the wisdom that comes from faith, sometimes knowledge can obscure our sight of the eternal. Have you ever noticed how sometimes you have to leave behind the lights of the big city in order to be able to see the stars? Sometimes you have to leave scientific knowledge behind so that by faith you can see heaven.

In the gospel today, we see that this reliance on scientific knowledge is nothing new; it was alive and well at the time of Jesus. Luke recounts that the first time Jesus appears to His apostles, Thomas is not present. When the others tell him about Jesus’ resurrection, Thomas refuses to believe until he can conduct a scientific experiment: touching Jesus’ hands and side. If Thomas

had lived today, he might have said: “Hey, give me those latex gloves. I’m going to do a forensic test that I saw last night on CSI-Miami and see if Jesus really rose from the dead.” But when Jesus appears again, Thomas doesn’t need his experiments, he just believes. Did you notice what Jesus said to Thomas? He said: “Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.” In other words, Jesus invites Thomas to have faith, not to limit himself to what he can see. With faith one sees beyond the limits of this world and glimpses the stars, with faith one sees that which is timeless.

Last week in the Washington Post there was an astonishing story. Joshua Bell, one of the world’s best violinists decided to do an unusual experiment. During morning rush hour for 45 minutes he dressed in jeans, T-shirt, and baseball cap. He stood at the entrance of one of the D.C. metro stops and played a mint condition Stradivarius violin, costing over \$3.5 million. He put a hat out for donations. Do you know what happened? At the end of the 45 minutes of playing, people had thrown in \$32.17, and while over 1000 people had walked past him, not one had stopped to listen. I’m sure if that had been Dc. Chuck, they would have had closed the entire metro, but not for poor Joshua Bell! Here was arguably the greatest violinist in the world, who packs concert halls where people pay \$100 a ticket, but last Tuesday morning not one person stopped to listen. You see, in a world dominated by science, technology and information, we often miss the timeless right in front of our eyes, or in this case, right in front of our ears. Science

and technology cannot teach us everything, and the most important things can be seen only by faith.

For the past few months, I've mentioned reasons why I'm excited about our new elementary school. Today, I'd like to give you another reason: at St. Raphael's we will teach our students how to grasp the timeless in the midst of the world. Of course, we will have the latest computers, of course they will enjoy the most modern curriculum, and of course they will interact with different cultures. But besides all that, we will also teach them that learning doesn't stop with what you can see. We will form their faith, which will open up vistas that science, technology and the internet cannot begin to fathom. We will give them the best of this world, but also introduce them to the best of the otherworld. They will come to Mass and learn that's not merely bread and wine on the altar, but the Body and Blood of Jesus. They will learn to obey the 10 commandments because they are the surest road to happiness. They will learn to love their neighbor, even if they are dark-skinned, starting with their pastor! They will learn that modern advances, like the lights of a big city, can sometimes blind us to heaven.

Today we celebrate the second Sunday of Easter, and we ask Jesus to deep our faith in the resurrection, like He deepened Thomas' faith. Here at Mass, you won't need your laptops or I-pods, your Blackberry or your Blue-tooth; you just need an open mind, an eager heart, and a mustard seed of faith. As we march

forward into this brave new world, let us not rely too much on what we see, but rather on what we don't see. And remember: we Catholics don't like things just because they are old, we like things because they are timeless.

Praised be Jesus Christ!