

Quasimodogeniti
St. John 20:19-31
April 8th, 2018
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Receive the Holy Spirit

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

The blessed St. Thomas plays a significant role in today's Gospel. If we are following an historic timeline, the events of the Gospel from the Evangelist St. John take place the evening of the day of our Lord's resurrection from the dead, and exactly one week later. So in other words, the night that St. Thomas sees the resurrected Lord + Jesus for the first time is today. The appearance of our Lord to the other Apostles took place after the Lord's conversation with the disciples on the way to Emmaus, which is the Gospel reading for Easter Monday.

On account of this Gospel from the Evangelist St. John, and St. Thomas' reaction, he is often given the title of "doubting" Thomas. However, we are told that even with the resurrected Lord standing in front of them the other Apostles still did not believe, until the Lord showed them His hands and side. The other Apostles doubted what they saw, too. Which is ironic for this Gospel is all about belief; it is about having faith in the resurrected Lord + Jesus Christ. And, our Lord establishes in this Gospel the means that we are given faith by Him through the work of the Holy Ghost.

You will notice that this Sunday is called "Quasimodogeniti." I can assure you that this Sunday has nothing to do with hunchbacks who live in the bell tower of Notre Dame. The word is taken from the first line of the Introit, "As newborn babes." That is what "Quasimodogeniti" means, it means "As newborn babes." What do newborn babies crave? They crave their mother's milk. It is their source of life. From a babies' mother's breasts, they receive the sustenance for their life.

We too, are told by St. Peter to crave the milk from our mother; to crave the *spiritual* milk that our mother—the Church—provides for us. Therefore, the Gospel for today is all about receiving the gifts—the life-sustaining gifts—that Holy Mother Church provides to us, to create and sustain spiritual life within us. That spiritual life that our Mother provides and gives to us is created and sustained through faith; faith which is created in us by the work of the Holy Ghost through our receiving the means of grace—our Lord + Jesus Christ's Word and the Sacraments which He instituted.

Our Lord + Jesus institutes in the Gospel the Office of the Ministry. The Apostles would go out into the world and forgive the sins of those who were repentant, and would retain the sins (that is, withhold forgiveness), of those who were impenitent; who confess that they do not have any sins or have done nothing wrong. Our Lord institutes the Absolution, the giving of forgiveness to those who

confess their sins. This forgiveness brings peace; peace of conscience; peace between man and God; peace of the soul, who knows that his sins are paid for in full. When we hear those words, “Peace be with you.” It is a proclamation of, and assurance of, the forgiveness that our Lord + Jesus Christ won for you by His death on the cross. These words are so important our Lord says them three times in today’s Gospel. Twice on the first night with the Apostles (without St. Thomas), and once on the second night with His Apostles (when St. Thomas was with them). Peace is what our Lord + Jesus Christ brings to His Apostles after He is resurrected from the dead.

The Apostles, and us and all believers in Christ, can have peace—can have the confidence of sins forgiven—because of our Lord’s resurrection from the dead. Since He has risen from the dead, we now know that our Heavenly Father has accepted the sacrifice that our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ offered on the tree of the holy cross. We have peace with God the Father, because our Lord + Jesus offered His life in exchange for ours. He perfectly fulfilled the Law, and took our punishment, so that we might have peace. So then, since our Lord rose from the dead, we now have confidence that our Father in Heaven accepted our Savior’s sacrifice on our behalf. Therefore, when our Lord first greets His Apostles after His resurrection the first words out of His mouth are, “Peace be with you.”

The Apostles have peace because of what the Lord did. We too, have peace because of what the Lord did. And, we have signs given to us by the Lord that we can point to and say, “Yes, I have peace because the Lord did this for me, through these means.” The Holy Ghost works through those means to give us what the Lord + Jesus won for us on the tree of the holy cross.

We do not celebrate Pentecost, the out-pouring of the Holy Ghost upon the Church, for several more weeks, but He is alluded to in our Gospel. When our Lord + Jesus breathes on His Apostles He tells them to “Receive the Holy Spirit.” His breathe is the Holy Ghost. His breathe is the life of the Church. Just as He breathed into Adam the breath of life, when He first created us from the dust of the earth. He now re-creates us as new creations. He makes us newborn babies, who crave the spiritual milk of our Mother Church. Through that spiritual milk given in the means of grace He gives us faith to believe on Him. So that, we do not have to physically see the nail prints in His hands, and the spear mark in His side. We can believe on account of His Word, and the means of grace which impart that Word of God to us through signs.

The Gospel from St. John clearly talks about the Absolution—the giving and retaining of forgiveness from sins—but, forgiveness is at the heart of all the means through which the Holy Ghost works. In Holy Baptism our sins are drowned and we arise from the waters as forgiven new creations before God the Father. Just as most Christians are baptized as babies, everyone who is baptized becomes a spiritual newborn baby, craving the Word of God and peace from their sins and the strife in this life caused by sin in this world.

The same is true of the Sacrament of the Altar. The words are even spoken as you receive the Body of our Lord given through bread on your tongues and receive the Blood of our Lord given through wine on your lips. These gifts are given to you for the forgiveness and remission of your sins. And to further give you confidence that what you just received imparts forgiveness, the last words that you hear at the altar are, “Depart in peace.” You have peace—you have forgiveness—through the Lord’s Body and Blood given in bread and wine. The same Body that was offered on the tree of the holy cross, and the same Blood that was spilled on the cross to redeem you from sin.

All this, and more, our Lord + Jesus gives to His Apostles and us so that we might have confidence that our sins are forgiven; that we indeed do have peace. The angels proclaimed at our Lord’s birth that there would be peace on Earth, and we echo that song of praise whenever we sing the Gloria in Excelsis in our Liturgy. This peace that was proclaimed at our Lord’s birth, was won and secured by our Lord’s death, and it is given to us through the work of the Holy Ghost. All this our Lord

does for us so that we might have the faith of a newborn baby who craves the life-sustaining milk from his mother. When a baby is hungry, he has faith that when he cries out, his mother will feed him. The same is true of us spiritual newborn babies. When we cry out for forgiveness; when we cry out to our Lord and to our Mother, Church, for peace. We have faith that it will be provided for us. Indeed, we have faith that we indeed receive forgiveness, and thereby peace, whenever we remember our Holy Baptism, or receive our Lord's Body and Blood, or have preached into our ears that the Lord has won for us forgiveness through His works and merits on the holy cross. For, we have received the Holy Ghost, and He has created and sustained faith in us by these means.

Blessed are they who have not seen, but still believe. We have not physically seen our Lord's hands and side, but we see them spiritually whenever we participate in the means of grace. Therefore, we have an advantage over St. Thomas and the rest of the Apostles, for we have the Word of God, which proclaims that the Lord + Jesus has risen from the dead, and that our Father in Heaven as accepted His sacrifice for us. Hearing this we now have peace with God and have peace in our souls. Alleluia! Christ has risen to bring us peace. He has risen indeed to give us peace. Alleluia! Praise the Lord! In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo gloria!