

Quasimodogeniti
St. John 20:19-31
April 19th, 2020
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Peace be With You!

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Lord God, heavenly Father, we thank Thee, that of Thine ineffable grace, for the sake of Thy Son, Thou hast given us the holy Gospel, and hast instituted the holy Sacraments, that through the same we may have comfort and forgiveness of sin: We beseech Thee, grant us Thy Holy Spirit, that we may heartily believe Thy Word; and through the holy Sacraments day by day establish our faith, until we at last obtain salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one true God, world without end. Amen.

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

Today, on Quasimodogeniti, our Lord + Jesus Christ institutes the Office of the Holy Ministry. This Office of the Holy Ministry is not about the ministers, that is, deacons, pastors, and bishops. The Office of the Holy Ministry is not about the men who serve in this Office, but it is about our Lord + Jesus handing out His gifts of forgiveness, life and salvation through the means of grace; through blessed Sacraments of Holy Baptism and the Sacrament of the Altar—the Lord's Supper. The Office of the Ministry is Christ's Office that He put in place in order that those who cling to Him in faith might receive forgiveness of their sins. This Office of the Holy Ministry is for your benefit, for through it you receive forgiveness, life and salvation; through it you receive peace from and with the Triune Lord God.

Ten of the eleven Apostles were gathered in the Upper Room, hiding out for fear of the Jews on the day of our Lord's resurrection. This is only the third day since our Lord—their Lord—and Savior was crucified at the hands of the sinful chief priests, scribes and elders. There was still a very good chance that the Apostles' lives might also be at risk, and so they hid themselves. Their fear was only heightened by the incoming reports that the Lord + Jesus was no longer in His tomb.

It was told them that the Lord + Jesus had risen from the dead. Even though they had seen the Lord + Jesus raise three people from the dead—the widow of Nain's son, Jairus' young daughter, and Lazarus—they still found it difficult to believe that such a thing could have happened. No one had every raised himself from the grave. Such a thing would be too wonderful to behold. And so, when they had heard that the Lord + Jesus had risen from the dead—at the pronouncement of the angels attending the tomb, and the women who witnessed these things—they did not believe it. Even when two of them—Sts. Peter and John—ran to the tomb and saw for themselves that the tomb was empty, we are told that they still did not believe.

Furthermore, when our Lord + Jesus appears to them in bodily form—not as a spirit or apparition—inside the locked room with them, we are told they still did not believe. This was too wonderful of a thing for them to behold. Everything that they had known about the world and how it worked, that is, dead people do not come back to life, did not permit them to believe that the Lord +

Jesus was actually alive. It was only after He showed them the nail marks imprinted into His hand and feet, and the mark of where the spear pierced Him in His side, that they believe that it is Him. Then they were glad to see the Lord had risen from the dead.

If the ten Apostles have a hard time believing that the Lord + Jesus had risen from the dead, even when He is standing right in front of them, it is no wonder that St. Thomas also refuses to believe that the Lord + Jesus had risen from the dead without seeing, and touching, the marks from His crucifixion. Therefore, a week later, which would be for us today, since last week was the Feast of the Resurrection of the Lord and today is that feast's octave, our Lord + Jesus once again appears to His Apostles in the Upper Room. This time St. Thomas is with them and receives the same blessing that the other Apostles had received: Peace be with you!

This is why our Lord + Jesus has come on the night of His resurrection, and one week later. He has come to proclaim peace to His Apostles. He then commands them that they are to bring this same peace that He is giving to them in the Upper Room—the peace that comes from their realizing that the Lord + Jesus has actually risen from the dead—to all those who will hear those words, and with penitent hearts, believe and receive the peace offered.

This is why I say to you all often, “Peace be with you.” It is a pronouncement whenever you hear it that there is peace with you, because the Lord + Jesus has risen from the grave, and has confirmed that the sacrifice that He made on the tree of the holy cross has been accepted by God the Father in Heaven. When I pronounce to you “Peace” I am announcing to you that peace has been accomplished for you; you now have forgiveness of your sins. This forgiveness of your sins brings peace; peace to your soul knowing that you have been reconciled to God the Father, and have been justified by Him through the faith that clings to that peace offered.

This is why it is meet, right and salutary that when I declare “peace be with you” that you return that peace back to me with the words, “And with thy spirit.” This same peace can, and should, be shared with one another. We can say to one another, “peace be with you” and respond with either an “amen,” or by giving that peace back to the one offering by saying, “peace be with you.” For our Lord + Jesus explains what this offering of peace truly means: We are offering forgiveness to those to whom we say it. We are declaring to one another that we forgive them any sins that they may have committed against us. As brothers in Christ, we are offering one another forgiveness, and from that forgiveness we are offering peace between each of us; we are declaring that we truly are a Christian family that lives in the forgiveness that our Lord + Jesus won for us.

This peace drives away all fear. Even as the Apostles' fear was driven away when they realized that the Person of the Lord + Jesus that was standing in front of them was not some ghost or figment of their imagination, but was the very physical presence of the Lord, they too were glad and the fear left them. When we offer peace to one another we offer the Lord + Jesus to one another. For wherever two or three are gathered in His Name, there He is in the midst of them, and where He is there is peace and forgiveness.

We can certainly offer one another peace between ourselves; we can forgive one another the sins that we have committed against each other; we can look past each other's weaknesses, and rejoice together that our strength is found only in the works and merits of the Christ. However, our Lord + Jesus is even more gracious and compassionate with us. For in this Upper Room on the night of His resurrection from the dead, as He appeared to His Apostles behind the locked door, He gives them—and the Church—a wonderful gift. He gives them the Office of the Holy Ministry.

In this Holy Ministry He richly and daily forgives the sins of all those who believe on Him. So that when the called ministers of Christ, that is, deacons, pastors, and bishops, say to us that our sins have

been forgiven, it is as sure and valid in Heaven—with the Triune Lord God—just as it is declared on Earth by the minister. When the minister forgives us our sins—when we come to the pastor and confess our sins to him—he forgives our sins, and that forgiveness is the forgiveness not just of the pastor, but of God Himself. When the minister announces to us forgiveness for Christ's sake in the Absolution during the Confiteor, He is offering us the forgiveness of the Lord God Himself.

This announcement of forgiveness is the same forgiveness that is instilled in the blessed sacraments of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper. For through the waters of Holy Baptism, our sins are washed away through the Word of God attached to that water. "I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." With those words you were made a child of the Triune Lord God. We bear His Name and are called His own. On account of this we are at peace with Him, and He daily and richly forgives our sins, through our daily contrition—our daily drowning of the Old Adam.

The same is true of the Lord's Supper. Our Lord gives us His true and substantial Body and Blood in, with and under the bread and wine so that we might remember His sacrifice for us and believe that through this sacrifice and through the receiving of our Lord's Body and Blood we have forgiveness, life and salvation—we have peace with the Lord God. These means of grace strengthen and preserve our faith until we are called to our heavenly home, which our Lord + Jesus has gone up into Heaven to prepare for us, and we will enjoy on the Last Day.

We believe these things through the faith created in us by the Holy Ghost through the means of grace—through the Office of the Holy Ministry—but those who refuse to believe, or find it hard to believe and so do not, the Lord + Jesus retains their sins, as does the Church, and the ministers who serve under her. Therefore, the Church opens up—unlocks—the gates of Heaven to all of us who believe on the Lord + Jesus and His works and merits, and He gives them peace and forgiveness. But the Church shuts up—locks up—the gates of Heaven to all those who remain in their impenitence and unbelief. This is done so that they might learn to see that the Lord God take the breaking of His Law very seriously, and that they might learn of their sinfulness, and in contrition and penitence turn the Lord God for forgiveness.

Just as the Apostles no longer had a reason for fear when they saw the Lord + Jesus, and upon seeing Him believed on Him; just as St. Thomas also believed when He saw the Lord, we too when we see our Lord + Jesus through the means of grace, fear is dispelled within us. For through the means of grace—through our Lord's precious Word and Sacraments—we have forgiveness from all of our sins; we now have peace with the Triune Lord God, for He no longer credits our sins to us, but credits us with the righteousness of our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ.

Peace be with you! Your sins are forgiven! Let us rejoice and be glad in these words. Let us cling to them with all our faith, for they are the pure milk that feeds our souls. Let us like newborn babes drink the milk of forgiveness whenever it is offered. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

O Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, we thank Thee that Thou hast bestowed upon all true believers the power to absolve one another from their sins in Thy Name, and to this end hast in particular established the ministry of reconciliation; and we beseech Thee, give us grace that we may not from pride and self-righteousness despise Thy comforting ordinance, but, recognizing therein Thy love to us, may use it for the comfort and salvation of our souls, and by sincere amendment of our lives continually thank Thee, Who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

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

Soli Deo Gloria!