

Quasi modo geniti  
St. John 20:19-31  
April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
St. Michael and All Angels Ev. Lutheran Mission, UAC  
Augusta, GA  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

## Receive Ye the Holy Spirit

*In Nomine Iesu!*

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

### **Sermon Text:**

“And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, ‘Receive ye the Holy Spirit: whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.’”

### **Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:**

Almighty and Ever-living God, Who hast given to them that believe exceeding great and precious promises, grant us to perfectly, and without doubt, to believe in Thy Son Jesus Christ, that our faith in Thy sight may never be reprov'd. Hear us, O Lord, through the same our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

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

My dear friends, in the beginning when the Triune Lord God created the heavens and the earth, He formed man from the dust of the earth. He breathed into him the breath of life. The Hebrew word for breath is “ruach.” It is the same Hebrew word that translates as “spirit.” Our Triune Lord God breathed into His creation—man—His very own Spirit. He gave life to mankind by imparting to Him His very own Spirit. This is why mankind is created in the image of the Lord God. We were created perfect, sinless, with perfect faith in the Lord God. We were like unto Him. We were the very image of the Lord God. We lived because He gave to us His Spirit.

When our first parents, Adam and Eve, sinned by eating from the tree in the midst of the Garden of Eden from which they were forbidden to eat, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they destroyed the image in which they were made. Mankind no longer possessed the image of the Lord God. They were sinful, imperfect, corrupt. Furthermore, mankind was no longer living, but dead. Our flesh was able to endure for a time, but eventually we all end up in the grave. This is what the sin of our first parents—which we, and all mankind, inherited—has done to us. We are conceived and born dead in our sins and trespasses. No longer is there any life in us.

It was for this reason that our Lord and Savior, + Jesus, the Christ, came down from Heaven and took upon Himself our flesh. He was conceived by the Holy Ghost taking upon Himself our flesh, but without sin. He was conceived and born alive. Indeed, He is the creator and author of life. He was like unto our first parents before they fell into sin. He was perfect, sinless, without spot, stain, or corruption. Unlike our first parents, and every human born of woman since, He fully obeyed the heavenly Father’s will and Law. He fulfilled the Law perfectly. Something that we can never do. No matter how hard we try we always break the commandments. We are often filled with doubt and our

faith wavers. How can sinners such as us be loved by a perfect Lord God? How can we ever inherit eternal life based upon our sins and trespasses?

This is why our Lord God heavenly Father sent His Only-Begotten Son, our Lord + Jesus Christ to earth to do His will. His will was that our Lord and Savior would innocently suffer and die upon the tree of the holy cross. He would be beaten, mocked, spit upon, charged falsely, and be crucified and hung upon the accursed tree. He would suffer and die the punishment that we rightly deserve. He took upon Himself all of our sin. He atoned for all of our sins upon the tree of the holy cross. He then gave up His Spirit, the Spirit that He gave to our first parents when He created man and woman, and died. He died just as our first parents did when they ate from the tree of which they were forbidden. He died just like all mankind has done since our first parents fell into sin. The only difference is that we received the due rewards of our crimes, but our Lord + Jesus suffered and died innocently. He was not guilty of the crimes of which He was accused.

After His death He rested in the grave for three days. On the third day, on the first day of the week, the day upon which our Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. John begins, He rose again from the dead. The Gospel of St. John begins on the night of the day of our Lord's resurrection. He appeared to them in the Upper Room, while the doors were shut for fear of the Jews. He appeared in the midst of His Apostles. And what did He do? On the first day of the week, on the day of the resurrection, on the day when our Lord + Jesus showed to the world that He had conquered death and the grave, He appeared to His Apostles and breathed on them. Just like at the creation.

He restored to them the Spirit which mankind had lost through their sins. He breathed on them and said, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit gives life, just as it did for our first parents. Adam was formed from the dust of the ground. The Triune Lord God breathed into Him the breath of life. The Lord God breathed into Him the Spirit, so that He lived. This Spirit is now restored to mankind. But our Lord + Jesus was specific in how this Spirit was delivered by the Apostles to the rest of the world. The world would receive the Holy Ghost through the means of grace. In this case our Lord + Jesus institutes what we call the Office of the Keys.

The Office of the Keys opens and locks the doors to Heaven. The Church has the power to forgive sins, and to retain sin. It has the power to forgive the sins of all those who repent of their sin and wish sincerely and earnestly to amend their sins with the assistance of the Holy Ghost. It also has the power to retain the sins of those who choose to remain in their impenitence for as long as they do not repent. Those who repent of their sins receive the Holy Ghost. For, the Holy Ghost working through this means of grace, through this absolution of the forgiveness of sins, creates and sustains faith in those who hear the words of the absolution. The declaration that our sins are forgiven gives us faith to believe that our sins are indeed forgiven, not just by the minister which speaks these words into our ears, but by the Lord God in Heaven.

For the minister's absolution of our sins is the heavenly Father's absolution of our sins. The minister declares to us the Gospel truth that what our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ won for us by His death on the tree of the holy cross is imparted to us by the Office of the Keys. We trust these words of the absolution because the Holy Ghost has been imparted to us through them. The Holy Ghost creates and sustains faith and life in us. We who were conceived and born dead in our sins and trespasses, are now made alive in Christ + Jesus by the working of the Holy Ghost.

This gift of life is bestowed to all those who receive the means of grace in faith. In each of the means of grace, the Holy Ghost is imparted to us. In each of the means of grace, the Holy Ghost creates and sustains faith and life in us. Through Holy Baptism, through the Holy Absolution, through the Holy Supper, through preaching of the pure Word of God, and through the mutual conversation and consolation of the brethren the Holy Ghost is at work in us imparting His Spirit to us, and making us

alive through faith in the works and merits of the Lord + Jesus. For through the means of grace we are always taken back to the work of our Lord's redemption. We are brought back to the day when our sins were atoned for. On the tree of the cross our Lord + Jesus won forgiveness, life, and salvation for us. In the means of grace, these gifts are imparted to us.

Whenever doubts of our salvation assail us; whenever we doubt that poor, miserable sinners such as we are can be saved, the Holy Ghost directs us back to the place where our sins were atoned for. He points us back to the cross of our Lord + Jesus. This is why we gladly show the crucifix in our sanctuary and in our homes, for it is by this suffering and death of our Lord + Jesus that our sins have been paid for. This is why we also come to this holy house to receive the blessed Sacraments and to hear the Word of the Lord God, for it is by these means that the Holy Ghost strengthens our faith in the works of the Lord + Jesus. It is by these means where the Holy Ghost turns us away from our miserable works and to the pure and holy works of our Lord + Jesus. By these works the Holy Ghost says to us, do not be unbelieving but believing.

This is why we are given a glimpse at our own doubts in the example of St. Thomas. The Gospel of St. John ends on the day which we ourselves find us. We are on the eighth day after the resurrection of our Lord + Jesus. It is the same day when our Lord + Jesus appeared to His Apostles a second time in the Upper Room, the doors being shut for fear of the Jews. For what is it that destroys the doubts of St. Thomas? It is seeing the Lord + Jesus. It is seeing the wounds in His hands, feet, and side. St. Thomas has his faith strengthened and renewed by seeing the atoning work of the Lord + Jesus; His suffering and death.

St. Thomas believes because He saw with his very own eyes the crucified and risen Lord + Jesus. Our Lord says, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believe." Our Lord is referring to all of us. For we only see and believe through the eyes of faith. We see and believe because the Holy Ghost has created faith in us by the means of grace. The Holy Ghost has been breathed on us by the means of grace, so that we may see the works of the Lord + Jesus and believe that we have life and salvation through Him. The Holy Ghost confirms the faith in us so that we know that our sins are indeed forgiven when that declaration is spoken into our ears.

We hear that our sins are forgiven throughout the Liturgy in which we participate. We hear that we are forgiven when the minister blessed us with the Name which we received in Holy Baptism, the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, wherein our sins were washed away by the blood of the Lamb of God. We hear that our sins are forgiven in the Absolution when the minister declares to us that our sins are forgiven for the sake of the Christ, in His stead and by His command. We hear that our sins are forgiven when we come to this holy altar and receive our Lord's true and substantial Body and Blood in bread and wine, and know that through this means of grace we receive the forgiveness of our sins, for we remember and proclaim our Lord's death by this holy meal. The minister preaches into our ears that our sins are forgiven in the preaching of the Word of God in the Sermon. And, we share with each other that our sins have been forgiven when we share with each other the faith with which we have been gifted by the Holy Ghost.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us desire the sincere milk of the Word of God as newborn babes. For it is by the pure Word of God that the Holy Ghost breathes into us the breath of life. It is by the means of grace which we receive in this place that the Holy Ghost creates and sustains in us the faith to cling to the works and the merits of our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Through the pure milk of the Word of the Lord God, we are carried through this vale of tears to our eternal home in Heaven. For we may have been conceived and born in sin, but our Lord God has come down from Heaven, and rescued us from the powers of sin and death and the grave. We now receive the Holy Ghost through the means of grace, and the Holy Ghost proclaims into our ears that we will one day join all the saints who have gone before us into Heaven, and all the heavenly host of angels, and we will sing eternally the eternal

Liturgy of the Lamb of God in His Kingdom which has no end. Receive ye the Holy Ghost, for He declares to us all that our sins have been forgiven and we have been restored to life again. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

**Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:**

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the Thee 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!*