

*Quasimodogeniti*, the First Sunday after the Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord, 2019 A. ✠ D.

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

The beloved disciple chronicles the miraculous appearance of the risen Lord in the upper room on the Day of His resurrection. He writes that you know the Truth. He testifies that the doors were shut. And he tells us why – out of fear. The doors were shut for fear of the Jews. All the men in the locked room were born Jews. They were all descended from Shem, all genetic sons of Abraham. But so were Joseph and Mary. And so was Mary’s Son, the Christ. And just three days before, it was the Jews who demanded that He be crucified.

Pilate caved to their demands for political convenience. He set a murderer free. An innocent Man was put to death. The Innocent died for the guilty. The epithet on His cruciform altar labeled Him: King of the Jews. And now, bewildered by the reports of the women, confused by what they had seen, alone, without the One they called Lord, they were afraid of the Jews.

They were afraid of what the Jews had done to Him. They were afraid of what the Jews might do to them. The world in which they had lived their whole lives suddenly seemed like a dangerous, threatening place. Their own people likely sought to do them harm. They cowered in a locked room.

Truth be told, the world hasn’t changed much since the Eleven sought refuge behind sealed doors over two millennia ago. Consider the Christians in Sri Lanka, who while celebrating the resurrection of Christ were attacked by men whose god teaches them to murder. We tend to think of martyrs as an historic truth. But as recently as last week, our brothers and sisters in Christ are being put to death for their faith. And it is happening throughout the world.

Many more Christians are ridiculed and excluded, counted as dimwitted and archaic. Christians are considered bigoted and closed minded. Christian adoption agencies are forced by our government to place defenseless children in perverse settings. Our state, Michigan, has now refused to work with, or fund, Christian adoption agencies that won’t place children in perverse households.

And as bad as it seemed to the Eleven in that locked room, as bad as it seems to us today, our Lord Himself taught that it will not get better, it will get increasingly worse, when He said “For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be...” So the Eleven were behind locked doors for good reason. What the fallen world did to Christ, it would gladly do to them, and to each of us.

Perhaps you have known how the Eleven felt. Perhaps you have known fear, or doubt, or anxiety or hopelessness. Perhaps pressures from your job, difficulties with your finances, differences with your family, marital struggles, medical worries, or mounting stress has driven you into your own locked room in fear. Perhaps such afflictions, such threats, have caused you, like the Eleven, to doubt what you once believed.

Then take heart, dear Christian. Hear the Testimony of the Beloved Disciple. For into that locked room, that room filled with fear and doubt and anxiety, the crucified Christ, now risen, miraculously entered. Yes, the Jews demanded that He be crucified. And yes, the Romans put Him to death and buried Him in a sealed tomb. But now, on the third day, He lives. And as He

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miraculously left the sealed tomb, so does He miraculously enter the sealed room. He is Master of all creation.

His Words to them, His Words to the Eleven, cowering in fear, are Words for you: “Peace be with you!” Not fear, peace. Not doubt, hope. Not anxiety, comfort. Not mourning, joy. Not dread, rejoicing. For the Lord is risen. He has conquered sin. He has conquered death.

He is there for you in your darkest hours, just as He was there for the Eleven. He is there that with the eyes of faith you see His pierced hands and riven side. He is with you that you know that He died for your sins. He is with you, alive, living and reigning, that you know that in Him you have justification, eternal life, and heavenly treasures that the world cannot take away.

He is with you that you know that His Way is Truth, over against the falsehoods of a fallen, sinful world. Here is with you to bring you comfort and strength in your struggles, even in your darkest hours. He is there to bring to you the sure hope that is the center and substance of the Christian faith, the only true faith – Christ crucified and risen for you.

He knows that you wrestle with doubt, the doubt that comes with your flesh. He Himself suffered temptation. But He did not forsake Thomas when he demanded proof, rather in mercy He appeared to Him and elicited from Thomas one of the clearest confessions of Christian faith in the Scriptures – “My Lord and my God!”

And that is your confession, you who are baptized into Christ, you who sins are removed by the washing of regeneration, you who hear and believe His Word, you who trust in Him for deliverance and salvation, you join with Thomas in declaring of the risen Christ “My Lord and my God!”

Your Lord has fulfilled His promise. He has not left you alone. He has filled you with His Spirit, the Spirit of Truth whom the world cannot receive, the Spirit that dwells with you and is in you and abides with you forever, the Spirit that testifies of Christ, the Spirit that testifies of your vindication, the Spirit that convicts the world, the Spirit that guides you into all truth.

And the Lord does it all through the Office He instituted in that upper room. As He brought them peace, as He brought them hope, as He brought them comfort and joy He breathed on them, and instituted the Office of the Holy Ministry, that through Called and Ordained Pastors, as through means, the Holy Ghost be given to men, the Spirit that works faith where and when it pleases God in you who hear the Gospel.

The Truth is that you are saved by grace through faith. And that men may obtain such faith, that you might obtain such faith, the risen Lord entered that locked room and breathed on the Eleven, instituting the Office of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments.

So in a very real way the same Lord enters this room, this room set apart for holy use, where you come to receive the hope and joy and comfort that the risen Christ promises. He comes to you this day as you hear His Word, as you receive His Holy Absolution and your sins are forgiven, as the faith you received in Holy Baptism grows and is made strong, and as He shows Himself to

St. John 20:19-31

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you under the signs of Bread and Wine. And blessed are you who have not seen and have believed. For believing, you have life in His Name.

Do not be afraid, dear Christian. Peace be with you. The tomb is empty. Christ is risen! A blessed Easter.

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