

The 6 Sundays of Easter, for more than 1500 years, known by the Latin name, which comes from the appointed Introit for the day. Today, Quasimodo geniti. Latin for, **In the same way as newborn babies**. From 1st Peter, **As newborn babies, desire the pure milk of the Word**.

Quasimodo geniti, the same way as newborn babies scream out their lungs for their mother's milk, that's the way we should long for the sweet Gospel of our risen Lord. Babies don't seem to care if mom's tired; like babies demanding to be fed, no matter what time of day, that's the way we all should constantly be crying out for absolution, preaching, the Sacrament from Christ's ministers.

Quasimodo, perhaps you've heard this name before; there's actually an interesting connection here. In Victor Hugo's novel, a crying baby is discovered on the steps of the cathedral. Incredibly deformed, twisted face, hunched back, not even his mother wanted him. So he's taken in by the church, baptized, given the name of the day which he was found, then raised within the confines of the cathedral to become its bell ringer – Quasimodo, the hunchback of Norte Dame. Only within the church could such a deformed, twisted up, grotesque man find sanctuary.

Evening of the very 1st Easter, there were some other Quasimodos, desperately seeking sanctuary and refuge. Christ's disciples huddled together within a locked room, these men no more appealing than Quasimodo the hunchback -distorted by sin, deserted their Lord, deformed to their doubts and fears, the Lord graciously appears. He seeks out His own in love.

Our Lord doesn't chastise them for their failures, fears; but compassionate. He doesn't say their fears, their sins are reasonable, excusable, just forget about it, put it behind them, let bygones be bygones. No! Christ absolves them; forgives them. **Peace be to you**. Peace, you're forgiven. Peace, an absence of fears and wrath, peace with God, **peace that surpasses all understanding**, which gives wholeness and eternal life. Live this way.

And to help them believe His Word of Absolution is true, Christ shows them His pierced hands and side, the very wounds by which healing comes. These are the things that make for peace with God the Father, the wounds that satisfy the penalty for all men's sins. The One who conquered death, is alive in the flesh to give out His life to a dying world. His words and wounds turn disciples' sorrow to joy, their fear to peace.

You are just like the disciples, same situation. You believe, yet tempted with fears and doubts. This gathering here, of spiritual Quasimodos. Everyone of us, hunched over, hideous in our sin toward God and love

toward neighbor. Filled with grotesque, twisted priorities. Our souls distorted, deformed by love for the things and the ways of this world.

However, Jesus does not recoil and wince at the sight of you people. Rather, like Quasimodo, He receives you into His church, baptizes you; comes in love, compassion to bring us peace. He doesn't just gloss over our sin or say it's no big deal. He won't ever say, it's okay you meant well; I know you can't help but sin, don't be so hard on yourself. No! He absolves. **Peace be with you.** Forgiveness. **Do not fear**, your sin, death, are answered.

The resurrection appearances of Jesus still continue in His church. Now in a different way, a way Jesus Himself instituted. He said to the disciples, **As the Father has sent Me, I also send you. He breathed on them "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven."** The disciples' ordination day. Sent, with His authority, to forgive sins in His stead, sent with His authority to administer His Sacrament, to unite you literally to His resurrected life, for you to be sure, you have what Jesus has promised, by His authority. Christ establishes the Office of the Holy Ministry, vocation of pastor, in which He comes to the end of time, to bestow His real presence, and authority and power and love to you, His dear quasimodos; still speaking **Peace be with you.**

That's the way of our Lord, the way of grace. He doesn't abandon His people in their fears or doubts. He stretches forth His scarred hands to embrace. He takes your doubts and fears, your shame, your bitterness and He makes them His own. And He takes His faith and His life and His joy and His glory and He makes them your own. He doesn't always remove your outward trouble. He gives you something far greater, the peace of Him. A peace that surpasses all understanding. He may leave in life your dysfunctional family, your disease, your struggles, your pain -but He will not leave you with a heart empty of His peace, forgiveness of what you need the most, nor empty of His promises to see to your good and be with you.

Do not disbelieve, or live in fear. Terrible things might happen. But Jesus lives. Face today, the future with confidence. Pain, sorrow, even death are all temporary. The death, resurrection of Jesus, the most significant thing in your life. It makes everything new. **Peace be with you.** Death cannot hold Him, it will not hold you. One day, you will stand before Christ; see as Thomas did those sacred wounds that healed you. You will see Him standing there, can touch His hands and side. Thomas provides a great example and confession for you, as you fall at Jesus' feet and cry out **—My Lord and my God! The Lord is risen.**