

✠ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. ✠

Although the doors were closed, Christ appeared to his disciples. Easter Sunday, out of fear of the Jews, having heard the report of the women, the disciples are afraid. Afraid for their lives, afraid of what will be done to them. Although the doors were closed, Jesus appeared to his disciples. And he says to them, Peace be with you. He gives to them his peace.

Not how the world sees peace. For the peace of God means the cross. The peace of God means blood outpoured. The peace of God comes in the form of his church. It is not so limited as a mere lack of conflict among men. The peace that Christ gives is a peace between God and man. The peace that Christ gives is a peace promised in the Incarnation. Now, in the resurrected flesh of our Lord, is complete the words of the angels. Peace on earth, goodwill towards men.

Now, in the giving of the peace of the resurrection, the words of the angels are fulfilled when they appear to sinners and cause fear and trembling, and they say, Do not be afraid. Now is complete the words of the angel to Mary as he announces the birth of Christ. For now, because of what happened Easter morning and Good Friday, God is pleased by man with man to dwell.

But Christ does not merely say, Peace be with you. He breathes on them and he sends them out. He sends the eleven out into the world, instantiating and beginning his church. He gives to his Church and to her pastors the power to forgive and to withhold sins. Just as life was breathed into the nostrils of Adam and the spirit was given, so now Christ breathes out the spirit of life upon man once again. Sinners are brought to life; the dry bones of the valley of death are brought back to life. He breathed out a spirit upon those who denied and rejected him, who scattered from the cross. And he gives to these men the power to forgive sins and He sends them out to preach to all the world..

And so they told Thomas, who was not with them, was not with them. And Thomas does not believe. And it is of no small significance that Thomas is called the twin. For Thomas really is our twin. Like Thomas, we have heard the faithful preaching of men. We have read the scriptures. And we are called to believe without seeing. But in our flesh, in our desires, we desire more. We desire to be given special precedent. We want to see the things of God, to see, not just to hear. We denounce the word and say it is not enough. Even though we have the scriptures and the words of our pastor, we put our Lord to the test. Thomas says, unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails and place my

finger into the mark of the nails and place my hand into his side, I will never believe, echoing the same sentiments man still says to this day.

Eight days later, another important number, eight days signifying the new creation. In the fullness of time, in the day of the Lord, for in seven days the Lord created the heavens and the earth and on the seventh day he rested. And the eighth day is a day of new creation. Eight days later, the next Sunday, the disciples were inside again, still afraid. Although they had nothing to fear, for the Lord had appeared to them and given them his peace, his absolution promised them the same resurrection that he had received. Yet in their earthly flesh, they also became Thomas' twin. Doubting the Lord, putting him to the test. Not believing, but disbelieving.

And to them again our Lord appears. Once again, coming through the locked door. In his bodily flesh, Christ works miracles still. And he stands among them and he says, Peace be with you. And turning to Thomas, he says, Put your finger here. See my hands. See my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.

We see here in the picture of Thomas how our Lord deals with us. He uses the folly of man to proclaim his glory. Now, Thomas stands as a comfort for us. He stands as a sure sign of God's promise to those who doubt and struggle. Thomas's failure becomes a blessing to the rest of us. For Christ brings the wounds of the cross to him. He stretches out his hand to those doubting and struggling and comforts them. He grants faith to the faithless and hope to the hopeless. And Thomas responds, My Lord and my God. Here in the flesh. Here in bodily form is his Lord and his God.

It is the same prayer that we say when we kneel behind this altar and receive during the consecration of the Lord's body and his blood. As the host is lifted up, as the chalice is elevated, the whole church cries "My Lord and my God". To you, he gives not just his mere word, but the blessed sacraments. To you, like Thomas, he invites you to come to his table to taste upon your tongue his body and to drink his blood.

But unlike Thomas, all your eyes behold is mere bread and mere wine. But there is Christ. There is Christ present for you, there is the body and blood of God working forgiveness of sins, life and salvation at the hands and distributed from the hands of your pastor, who has the authority to forgive and retain sin.

Blessed is the one who has not seen and yet believed. Blessed are you who come to this table and receive his supper. Blessed are you who come to this table and receive his sacrifice in faith. Blessed are you who confess with your twin Thomas, my Lord and my God.

Not because you have seen, but because you have heard:

This is my body.

This is my blood poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins.

Not because you have seen, but because you have heard the proclamation of your pastor, the peace of the Lord be with you always.

Blessed are you who have not seen and yet believe.

✠ In Jesus' name, Amen. ✠