

Reginald Heber (1861) Holy, Holy Holy

Long before Reginald Heber penned the words to this famous hymn, the prophet Isaiah had a vision and heard the call of the angels — “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” Hearing the chorus, Isaiah crumpled in abject humility and adoring worship — “Woe is me!” Years later, Reginald Heber felt this same awe at God’s holiness, and wrote this hymn in response to what he experienced. Heber, who was a minister in the Church of England, composed the poem for Trinity Sunday. The poem lay forgotten until after Heber died at the age of 43. His wife found the poem in a collection of papers, and shared it with musician John B. Dykes (1823-1876). The song was published with music in 1861. God has used this song to impress millions of people with the truth of his holiness

From the Second Lesson: *“Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.”*

Homily:

Last Sunday we celebrated Easter and the glorious resurrection of our Lord and Savior. Jesus, at His resurrection, defeated sin. He accomplished the greatest victory that ever could be, yet after His death, His disciples were afraid and went into hiding for fear of persecution.

Even though the victory over death and sin was won, the disciples were terrified. They were shaken to their core, and while Mary Magdelene, Simon Peter and John had seen Jesus resurrected, the rest of them had not. Jesus therefore undertook to re-assure them that He yet lived and that His Church must now go on

After the resurrection, Jesus spent forty days on earth before he [ascended](#).

Luke writes in the first chapter of Acts that Jesus

"presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God."

The Lectionary readings appointed for the next few Sundays of Easter explore the post-resurrection appearances of Christ, and also the promise of a future resurrection.

- We will go back to a **closed room in which Jesus suddenly appears**...but Thomas isn't there. He doubts. Jesus later appears to him. Poor Thomas, forever cast as "doubting" even though his doubts were a helpful thing that eventually led him to worship Jesus and say, "My Lord, and My God."
- Then we have **breakfast with Jesus and Peter**. Peter had denied Jesus three times and, after the Resurrection, had returned to fishing. Jesus restores him and gives him a mission: "Feed my Sheep" and "Follow me." (He also prophecies that Peter will be arrested and martyred. Tough breakfast conversation.)
- We revisit **Jesus' teaching on himself and his mission** as well. He is preparing his disciples, and us, to take the power of his Resurrection to the world.

At this point in the Church's development, the Apostles could not stop their work and mission to go into hiding. Jesus could have sent them a messenger--that, after all, is what both words "angel" and "apostle" actually mean, a "messenger"--but instead He chose to appear to them Himself, to attest personally to His resurrection, and to give them their commission to go out and convert the whole world.

Those Apostles would be called on to testify to the world as to what they had seen and known of Jesus, and to build a Church on that testimony. It made sense, then, that they should be able to testify of having seen Jesus first-hand after the Resurrection.

So it came to pass that a group of the disciples were meeting a week after the Resurrection. They were afraid, but it is certain that their conversation and their thoughts centered on what had happened to Jesus, and what, in consequence, would become of them. What will we do now, they must have wondered. How do we continue Jesus' work when He is no longer here among us?

Suddenly, Jesus appeared in the midst of them.

Again on the first day of the week, one week after He rose from death, He came to the disciples. Despite the doors' being locked, He came into the midst of them. In doing so, He gave His proof to His promise,

"For where two or three come together in my name, there I will be with them."

To put their minds at ease, he then greeted them, *"Peace be unto you."* Despite what had been done to Him, in loving reaction to their fears, the Lord gave them His blessing of peace. We use the same greeting to each other in the Mass each week: "The Peace of the Lord be always with thee."

Despite all the world can do, and in spite of whatever travails we may face, we yet greet each other with this blessing from our Lord. Nor should we ever forsake our meeting together, our worship and gathering together. Just as these early Christians continued to meet together despite their quite real fear that they would be persecuted by the Jews.

From this greeting we draw courage, faith and joy, knowing that Jesus stands beside us still.

At the time, it was being said in Jerusalem among the Jews that the disciples had somehow overpowered the guard posted at the tomb, that they then had moved aside the stone, and that they had stolen Jesus' body away. Yet, there Jesus was, alive, and speaking to the disciples in person.

The reaction of the disciples was as we might expect. Confusion, doubt, and excited joy began to take over their hearts. As even more proof of just who He is, Jesus showed the gathered disciples the still-open wounds on His hands and side from the nails and the spear. The disciples then were *"filled with joy at seeing the Lord."*

This Sunday in the Church year is sometimes called "Low Sunday", because after the excitement of Easter, and no doubt as well the fatigue of feeding and entertaining family, of travelling and of visiting, people are tired, and may want to take a brief respite.

There is, however, no time for respite now. Our Lord has given us our "marching orders," and there is work to be done. There is a whole world to convert to the

faith and to bring to Jesus. His people are everywhere, needing our care, our teaching, our ministry.

“As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.” The Father sent the Son to live as one of us, to make possible our salvation. Now, in turn, Jesus sends us forward to spread His message to the world, and to care for His sheep everywhere.

To the early disciples, the commission was somewhat different. Theirs was the task of planting the Church and growing it. They accomplished this task by spreading the message of the Holy Gospel in person, first among the Jews, then to the wider world of the Gentiles.

To convey unto the Apostles, and through them to the rest of the disciples, the power and authority to accomplish the great task He assigned them, and us, Jesus, *“breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.”*

With this great commission, that they go forth to spread the Gospel, and with His grant of the power and authority to do that work, Jesus firmly established His Church, and gave it a mission. The Church remains, and so does the mission. We are still called upon to go forward and make disciples, led always by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

So with renewed strength, vigor and joy in the Resurrection of our Lord, and in His great mission for us, let us resolve to continue without failing to do His work here on earth each and every day until the Word has been brought to every person in every corner of the world.

Let us pray.

Dear Lord, let us without fear take up our cross to follow You and to do the work You have left for us. Let us be about those tasks assigned us without shirking them, and without fear, trusting always in the indwelling of the Holy Ghost to accomplish all that has been given us to accomplish. This we ask for the Glory of Your Holy Name. Amen.