

From the Second Lesson: John Chapter 20

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

Homily:

Last week we celebrated the glorious resurrection of our Lord and savior. All the discernment and sacrifice that Lent brought us shouldn't be forgotten now. It needs to continue and grow as we move forward in the church year.

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 the Jews.

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

At this point in the Church's development, they could not stop their work and mission to go into hiding. Jesus could have sent them a messenger. The 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 whole 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.

One week later, it so happened that a group of the disciples were meeting 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, after all that, would become of them. What will we do now, they must have wondered? I am sure they were asking themselves and each other, 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 each week during Holy Communion: "The Peace of the Lord be always with thee."

Despite all the world can do, and in spite of whatever burdens we may face, we greet each other with this blessing from our Lord. It is important that we should always take seriously our meeting together, our worship and being together in the House of God, 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 some- how overpowered the guard posted at the tomb,

that they then had moved aside the stone, and finally 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 often 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 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 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.

The Lord be with you, (and with thy spirit) 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.

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