

QUASIMODO GENITI—THE OCTAVE OF THE FEAST OF THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD
Text: St. John 20:19-31

ALLELUIA! CHRIST IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED! ALLELUIA!

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

Doubt. If you are human, then you have wrestled with doubt. It plagues all of us, and when it comes to our faith in JESUS—who He is and what He has done for our salvation—doubt comes as that tiny little voice that seems to whisper in your ear, *“Is this really true? Did GOD really come and live among us and die for us? Is JESUS really GOD? Did JESUS really rise from the grave? Did JESUS really die for me?”* In other words, *“Did GOD really say...?”*

Doubt. It is the fruit of all unbelief. Doubt, all doubt, stems from our failure to fear, love, and trust in GOD above all things. Doubt is what happens when one feels he or she needs more control over one’s life. Doubt can produce feelings of fear and hopelessness as though one’s life is slowly spinning out of control.

Doubt-induced feelings of fear and hopelessness certainly invaded that little locked room where the disciples had hidden themselves away on that first Easter Sunday evening.

The disciples heard the reports of the women who went to the grave with spices. Saints John and Peter even ran to the tomb to see things for themselves. Two of JESUS’ disciples rushed back on foot from the village of Emmaus to Jerusalem in the dark, a distance the Bible tells us of seven miles, to share the news that they had seen the Lord. Still, ten of JESUS’ closest disciples could not believe the reports, and so they hid for fear of the Romans and their fellow Jews. They had seen the cruelty and viciousness meted out to JESUS three days before and they wanted no part of it. The disciples feared for their lives, and I am sure they thought that they would be the next to be crucified if only they were found.

Then behold, here is JESUS standing among them speaking sweet words of absolution, *“Peace be with you.”* JESUS did not break down the door. He did not have to. The One who burst from the tomb without bothering to roll away the stone has no need to break down locked doors. The disciples, still fearful, did not believe their eyes. Then JESUS showed them the wounds in His hands and His side in order to break down the doors of doubt and unbelief in their hearts and minds.

Again JESUS says, *“Peace be with you,”* and His words give what they say: Peace. *“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”* His peace comes amid turmoil, unrest, fear, hopelessness, and doubt. *“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”*

JESUS, the Lamb of peace, having conquered death through His innocent suffering and death, now comes in peace to bring life to His disciples and all creation.

Still, there is St. Thomas or Doubting Thomas as we have come to know him. He was missing that night and missed the chance to see JESUS. Not seeing JESUS, he refused to believe. *“Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.”* St. Thomas, another practical man, must have thought, *“This story must be some sort of cruel joke. What kind of a fool do you take me for? How can the dead raise themselves from the grave? Do you really expect me to believe such silly nonsense? Show me the proof and I will believe.”*

That is the reaction of our unbelieving world as well. Indeed, St. Thomas sounds a lot like the so-called *“scholars”* we see on nearly every Easter television special; documentaries claiming to be historically based about JESUS.

When the Body of CHRIST on Earth celebrates the resurrection of our LORD you can count on the naysayers to come out of the woodwork like cockroaches when one turns out the light. Pick up nearly any so-called news magazine and you will read story after story casting doubt on the faith of the Church. They call into question the truthfulness of the Bible with many denying that JESUS ever really lived, never mind His rising from the dead.

Book upon book searches for the *“Real JESUS”* and claims that *if* JESUS lived at all, His bodily resurrection after His brutal death is a misunderstanding of the truth by foisted upon unsophisticated peasants; that He only spiritually or figuratively rose from the grave; that in truth the story about JESUS’ birth, life, death, and resurrection is nothing more than a wonderful fable meant to simply illustrate some higher truth or meaning in life.

Worse, they often accuse the early Church Fathers of purposely lying in order to advance some moral agenda. The saddest part of all of this is that many of the so-called *“scholars”* writing these lies or appearing on these programs, call themselves Christian.

To be honest, and just as sad, St. Thomas often sounds like many of us as well. We want proof. *“Seeing is believing,”* or *“I will believe it when I see it!”* are phrases one often hears. We are natural-born skeptics. So, we search for signs that GOD is real, that He is truly with us while we look for them in the wrong place—our hearts. We judge our relationship with GOD by what we feel, not by what His Word tells us. The pastor will tell us what GOD has said and promised, and then we will tell the pastor what we really believe. But do you not know that Satan and his demons believe in GOD? Do you not know that Satan and his demons even believe JESUS is the SON of GOD? That is why they hate Him and had a hand in murdering Him. That is why they fear Him, and that is why they hate you.

You see, JESUS has come to crush the head of the serpent—Satan. To be sure, Satan got in his licks bruising JESUS’ heal with the pain of crucifixion. Satan though he had won the battle not realizing he had lost the war. JESUS crushed that old evil foe and ground him into powder!

Yes, JESUS did suffer and die, and indeed, no ordinary man has ever climbed up out of the grave on his own. But JESUS is not only true Man, but He is also true GOD. *“Very GOD of very GOD... of one substance with the FATHER.”*

Our LORD JESUS is the same true Man and true GOD who came to that pathetic little room one week later, appearing again to His disciples and St. Thomas. JESUS appeared and fulfilled Thomas’ requirement to believe, *“Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.”*

With that St. Thomas repented of his unbelief, *“My LORD and my GOD!”* Then JESUS imparts more teaching to Thomas and to all of us, *“Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”* JESUS is telling Thomas, and by extension all of us, that we are to *“walk by faith, not by sight.”* He is telling us that our axiom should not be *“seeing is believing,”* but *“believing is seeing.”* For *“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”*

So, we too, just as St. Thomas, must repent. We must hear JESUS’ Words, *“Do not be unbelieving, but believing.”* Our hearing of the Word of CHRIST is important because, *“Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.”*

We do not physically “see” JESUS among us with the eyes of flesh, yet we do see Him with the eyes of faith. He is no less present for us than He was for His disciples locked away in that little room. With the words, *“Peace be with you,”* JESUS announced His presence among His disciples. Today, He announces, through our pastors, His very same presence among us in Word and Sacrament.

In a moment you will hear of our LORD’s presence among us in the words of the liturgy, *“The peace of the LORD be with you always.”* Then, the risen JESUS will invite you to touch His hands and His side in the Eucharist. For CHRIST, through His called servants gives His true Body still bearing the scars of the wounds made by the nails for the forgiveness of our sins—scars that are marks of our salvation. Then, receiving His true Blood we touch His side. For what was it that flowed from JESUS’ side but His precious Blood?

Therefore, when the host is placed on your tongue, when His life-giving Blood is poured into your mouth, you are truly touching the Flesh and Blood of CHRIST for the forgiveness of your sins.

So it is, that here, at the altar, we repent with Thomas, *“My LORD and my GOD!”* And here at the altar, we receive the same life-giving absolution JESUS spoke to His disciples, *“Peace be with you.”* His Word gives what it says: Peace. Just as the apostles, we too know Him by His scars, and by them we are healed.

By the grace of God, here at Our Savior, there is not a first day of the week that JESUS does not come to you, His disciples. Every Sunday is a Good Friday and Easter, and every day

is a first day of the week, a new creation, when the Crucified and Risen Lord is present with His disciples with His Words and His wounds, His breath, and Spirit.

Hear now Jesus' Words of peace, *"Peace be with you, for I have died and have risen again for the forgiveness of all your sins."*

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

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Rev. Raymond D. Parent II
Our Savior Ev. Lutheran Church
Crestview, Florida
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