

PEACE BE WITH YOU!

(John 20:19-31; 1 Peter 1:3-9)

Let Us Pray:

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our Easter celebrations continue!

Most people today disagree and say: “**Last Sunday was Easter Sunday! Easter is over, it’s done with!**”

It’s true! Last Sunday we did celebrate the resurrection power of God the Father who raised Jesus from the dead.

It’s true! Last Sunday was Easter Sunday! And today is the 2nd Sunday **OF** Easter! That’s a fact!

But, praise be to God, the truth is that today our Easter celebration continues! And so I greet you with the ancient Easter greeting and I hope you will respond with a full voice:

Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed!

Today is Easter Sunday! Every Sunday is an Easter Sunday! You see Easter does not end when the chocolate Easter eggs and the chocolate Easter bunnies are consumed and decorations and cards packed away! Sadly, for most people this is the end of Easter, because for them that is all that Easter was about.

It just goes to show how well the aggressive secular culture and the advertising industry has done its work in brain-washing people: That a silly story about Easter bunnies, [bunnies laying chocolate eggs of all things!] is accepted as the true meaning of Easter, **BUT the saving work of a loving God is despised and rejected!**

Today’s Readings explain very clearly what Easter is all about, and how it’s still very relevant today, for all people, and in all circumstances.

The Gospel tells us of the historical fact that the risen Christ came to his disciples in the midst of their turmoil and fear. He came in the midst of their **doubt** and their sense of **guilt** for having denied and deserted him, and their **fear** of what would happen to them because everyone knew that they had been his disciples, he came and said to them: “**Peace be with you!**”

Three times Jesus offers his peace to his disciples in today's Gospel reading – pointing out his wounds of crucifixion. The enemies of Jesus had done their worst to him. They had tortured him, mocked him, and humiliated him. And they crucified him! – [**crucifixion**, as St Paul explains in Galatians 3:13, quoting Deuteronomy, was to be cursed, or forsaken, by God: “**Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.**” This is why Jesus cried out on the Cross: “**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**”] But Jesus was raised from the dead and came to his disciples and showed them that he lived despite the worst that could happen.

Christ's resurrection is an historical event that happened in the past! That's a fact! But his resurrection is not only an event in the past! Christ's resurrection is an event that affects us **TODAY!**

And so, just as the risen Christ came to his disciples huddled together in fear behind locked doors, so he also comes to us today, isolate as we are because of the COVID-19 fear! **He comes today into the midst of all our fears and anxieties** and says:

"Peace be with you!"

Easter is not about Easter chocolate bunnies, but rather that: **Christ, the Lamb of God**, who died for us, is Risen!

And he still is risen! As the apostle Paul [Rom 6: 9-10] put it so well:

“For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.”

He comes to each one of us today, isolated though we be, with his peace! He comes just as he did then! He comes to you and me today through his Word, and says: **“Peace be with you!”**

His **“Peace be with you!”** was and is:

- More than a **greeting** to be followed by another good-bye.
- More than a **wish** that you will “have a good day.”

His Word of peace is the declaration of a present reality! What he says **IS!** This is the same Word that spoke “**Let there be...**” at creation, and there was! This is the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ who died and rose again, who is speaking to us today, and he says: **“Peace be with you!”**

Because Jesus lives no powers whatsoever can separate us, from him and from life in him! Some powers might force us to be isolated from one another, but **NOTHING** can prevent Jesus from coming and being with us!

Our **First Reading** [1 Peter 1:3-9] explains what this peace is all about. It's about the certainty of **who we are** and **what is ours**:

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.

Through **Baptism** we became participants in Christ's resurrection, as we were participants in his death to sin, and so received his peace.

Not only did Christ come to us in baptism. But the good news of Easter is that he still comes to us today as we worship in his name and says: "**Peace be with you!**"

He comes to **STRENGTHEN** and **ASSURE** us and **SEND** us on a mission:

To live as his REDEEMED holy people. A task for which he also empowers us by saying: "Receive the Holy Spirit." This means that we now:

- Live by the **Spirit**,
- Live the **new life** we have in Christ,
- Live in **God's peace**.

I leave you with the words of Jesus - the words he spoke to his disciples just before he went out to the Garden of Gethsemane and from there to his cross and his death, and his victorious resurrection!

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you, not as the world gives do I give to you, Do not let your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. Believe in God, believe also in me. **Amen**.

Sermon by Pastor John Simboras
19 April 2020