

Sermon for Quasimodogeniti Sunday – John 20:19-31

In the Name of the Father and of the Son ✠ and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

“Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am among them.” The Lord spoke these words to His disciples. He knew that the time would come when their ranks would be scant and few. The great number who witnessed His death, whether they were blood-thirsty spectators heaping insults upon Him or His compassionate crowd who mourned His death, they are now reduced to these eleven disciples who sit locked in a room behind closed doors, as said in the Gospel reading. They were scared. What will happen if they find us? Will I live through the night? Will I be able to keep my job? Will my marriage fail? Will I be able to pay my bills? The Lord brought them the only thing which could give them comfort: His own presence in the flesh- “Peace be with you.”

Liturgical scholars are wont to call this 1st Sunday after Easter “Low Sunday.” The idea was that this Sunday rounds out the octave or great eight day celebration of the Resurrection festival, which began with the “High Sunday” of Easter last weekend. In regard to church attendance statistics, the names “High” and “Low” Sunday also hold true. But remember that the Sunday after His resurrection a mere eleven gathered. This was a little group, but the Lord was present with them. Where 10 or 11, 2 or 3 are gathered in His name, Christ is present. But why?

What is at the heart of the gathering of the 2 or 3 or more? What does the Lord always give? “Truly, I say to you whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” “If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven.” The Lord’s forgiveness rests at the heart of the Lord’s people gathering together. Where two or three are gathered together in Jesus’ dear name, there Jesus will stand among them and say “Peace” to them. This word of peace was the word of forgiveness.

Forgiveness is more than just a word when it comes to God. The Lord’s grace is actually breathed out. Christ blew on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” On the sixth day, God created man in His own image and after His own likeness. No other creature was created like man. No other creature received the very breath of God in His nose, mouth, and lungs. God blew the spirit of life into His creation. Man’s soul was spotless and pure. A Soul was breathed into a body that was made not only to live temporally, but also eternally. But another breath was given ear by man. The breath of the serpent’s foul words polluted the soul of man to distrust God and His Word. You are now corrupted and unclean in every way. Satan and his minions created the ministry of death under which humanity is born to reside.

So God established another ministry. His Office of the Holy Ministry. Through this Office, the Lord accomplishes the work of redemption. Through this Office, God restores His own lost image to His own lost people. This is the plan that was set in order right after the fall into sin as God told the serpent: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between

your offspring and her Offspring; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." (Gen. 3:15) In the cool of the evening, God promised that the Seed of the woman would smash Satan. In the cool of the evening, God brings the fulfillment of the long-awaited prophecy to His disciples in a locked room. Christ crushed the head of the serpent once and for all in His death on the Holy Cross. This fact is true and can never be broken. Christ established His ministry upon this rock solid foundation. The benefits of His death and resurrection are distributed to you and me through His pastoral office of the ministry. When the pastor speaks words of absolution, it is the voice of Christ Himself. At Holy Communion, Christ is the Celebrant administering, His Body and Blood. Today, in this Holy Baptism [the Lord's Baptism] God has called Abrah into His family, where her sins are forgiven forevermore.

Your God is not a God who stays far away from His people. He enters into the lives of His disciples. Not just in an abstract spiritual way but physically. "Peace be with you ... Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." Christ still daily shows these wounds to His Heavenly Father. This is how He pleads for you. By virtue of His wounds He still pleads for you, poor sinner. "Those dear tokens of His passion still His dazzling body bears, cause of endless exultation to His ransomed worshippers. With what rapture, with what rapture, with what rapture, gaze we on those glorious scars." The flames of love still shine forth from the wounds of Christ even till this very day. His wounds still stand open so that you may hide yourself in them. God revealed Himself in flesh and blood to His disciples. God still reveals Himself in Flesh and Blood to His disciples. He is physically present with you in Word and water, bread and wine.

In the cool of the evening of your life, (that is) in the hour of your death, Christ will fulfill your every need. He will be by your side keeping His promise, just as you say: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me."

You find a perfect message in what happened in Jerusalem, some 2,000 years ago when the disciples had gathered there in dark shadows, out of fear of the Jews. Then your Savior walked into their midst as a sign that He will be the Protector of His Church. His protection and presence continue forever. Therefore let the enemy rage! Let the devil do his worst! The Defender of the Church, Christ the Lord stands strong against all this world throws at you. "Peace be with you." Amen.

The Peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. ✠BJF✠