

Morning Prayer 11th April 2021

The Second Sunday of Easter

Service with Tini Horning



Personal preparation before the service begins.

Please take time to remember where you are,
and why you are here.
Give thanks and become still
in the presence of God

PRELUDE

GATHERING IN

Among the poor,
among the proud,
among the persecuted,
among the privileged,
Christ is coming to make all things new

In the private house,
in the public place,
in the wedding feast,
in the judgement hall,
Christ is coming to make all things new

That the kingdom might come,
that the world might believe,
that the powerful might stumble,
that the hidden might be seen,
Christ is coming to make all things new

Within us, without us,
behind us, before us,
in this place, in every place,
for this time, for all time,
Christ is coming to make all things new

Song: SoF 304 (i) Jesus, stand among us, in Thy risen power

1. Jesus, stand among us,
in Thy risen pow'r,
let this time of worship
be a hallow'd hour.

2. Breathe Thy Holy Spirit
into every heart,
bid the fears and sorrows
from each soul depart.

3. Thus with quickened footsteps
we'll pursue our way,
watching for the dawning
of eternal day.

CCLI Song # 2648383

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Let us pray with words from Psalm 133

Behold how good and pleasant it is ♦
to dwell together in unity.
It is like the precious oil upon the head, ♦
running down upon the beard,
Even on Aaron's beard, ♦
running down upon the collar of his clothing.
It is like the dew of Hermon ♦
running down upon the hills of Zion.
For there the Lord has promised his blessing: ♦
even life for evermore.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning,
is now and shall be for ever.

The Collect for today, the Second Sunday of Easter

Risen Christ,
for whom no door is locked, no entrance barred:
open the doors of our hearts,
that we may seek the good of others
and walk the joyful road of sacrifice and peace,
to the praise of God the Father.
Amen.

The first reading is taken from Acts 4:32-35

Let us prepare ourselves for the word of God
Our hearts and our minds are open

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

This is the word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

The Gospel reading is taken from John 20:19-31

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John
Glory to you, O Lord

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"

But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Homily

“Peace be with you”

Texts: Psalm 133, Acts 4:32-35, John 20:19-31

True Confession....I REALLY enjoy cheesy romance movies. In the US there is a channel that shows them nonstop—Hallmark and in Germany you can find them on Sunday evening on “Herzenskino.” You can usually tell in the first 10 minutes how the movie will end. Even though there will be a staple conflict somewhere toward the end of the movie, you can for the most part lean back and let your mind go on auto pilot for a while, just enjoying the show.

Another maybe more embarrassing confession... sometimes that’s how I catch myself unconsciously reading the Bible. Like some or most of you, I grew up hearing the Gospel stories. I can even picture the felt figures and the children’s Bible that accompanied them. Having heard them multiple times, I could look at the title of a passage and think, “Oh yeah, this is about so and so. This is what happens and this is what I should learn from it.” SHOULD is a key word here. It doesn’t mean that I actually automatically change my behavior and it also could bring with it a light or heavy feeling of guilt along with it.

The first 1-2 days of prepping for this homily I found myself falling into this trap. I opened my Bible to the assigned readings and thought, “Doubting Thomas and the first church.” Got it. I read the first few sentences, knew how the passage ended and realized that my brain went on a semi-coffee break as I skimmed the passage. The main messages I had filed away from the passage were: I SHOULD learn from Jesus’ words to Thomas believe in Jesus without necessarily seeing His work in my life (John 20:19-31) and I SHOULD share all that I have with others (Acts 4:32-35.)

Luckily however, I stuck with the texts and let the words “marinate” in my mind. Choosing to dig deeper into the text, I found myself camped out at a statement made by Jesus: **PEACE BE WITH YOU**—one that we hear

every Sunday and one that appears not once, but THREE times in John's text. What did this mean to the disciples and what does it mean for us now?

In order to understand what it meant for the disciples, let's look at what was happening when Jesus said it each time and to whom he said it.

1. The first time (John 20:19) Jesus appears to the disciples in a locked room in Jerusalem on the day of His resurrection. They were hiding away, fearful that the Jewish leaders would find them and harm them. They had heard from the women who had been to the tomb that Jesus had risen but had yet to see Him. I wonder what was going through their minds. Were they doubting their faith, questioning their decision to give up their old lives to follow Jesus, and/or wondering what their future would look like?

Jesus enters (coming through a locked door) and His first words upon seeing His disciples after His death and resurrection are "Peace to you." Jesus spoke peace to His disciples who were probably extremely exhausted and scared out of their minds.

2. The second time occurs a short time later (John 20:21) in the same room but with the disciples in a totally contrasting emotional state. Jesus has showed them His wounds and they are overjoyed. Talk about an emotional roller coaster! Just a few minutes or, at the most, hours earlier they were filled with fear, desperation and worry. Now they are on cloud nine. Again, Jesus says, "Peace be with you."

This time he doesn't stop there, but continues on to give the disciples a mission. They are to follow in Jesus' footsteps and go into the world to share the Good News of the Gospel in word and deed.

Jesus' first "Peace be with you" seemed to apply to the current situation, fulfilling a real and essential need in their own situation. Now, it seems that

Jesus is mentioning it again in order to equip them for their future ministry.

3. The third mention of “Peace be with you” comes in the same location but a week later. The disciples are still in a locked room in Jerusalem. It appears that not much has changed EXCEPT that Thomas is now with them. This is where lots of questions pop up for me. What happened in that week? Did the disciples honor the mission Jesus had given them? Why was Thomas not there before? Were they still afraid? In this somewhat new and similar situation, Jesus enters again through a locked door and says, “Peace be with you.”

Before I jump deeper into the meaning, I invite you to think about a time where you have sensed true peace. Where were you? What did it feel, sound, taste like? Who were you with?



This is one of my “peace-filled” places—Camp Luther, a family camp in Ohio that my family has visited every summer since I was born. The theme song of the camp perfectly describes this special place, “There’s a place on the shore, where God’s people are gathered. Quiet pines, gentle breeze. Sunsets glowing and peaceful. Beautiful Luther, a place apart....”

I love those moments where the peace and love of God is tangible all around you—in the beautiful

sunset, the light breeze over the lake, the warmth of my family sitting on the swing beside me...

As much as I love this camp, I loathe leaving it. Even to this day, I am an emotional basket case on the morning we leave. I foresee our family being thrown back into everyday life where there might be pockets of peace hidden throughout the day, but they seem to be covered up by the worries and to-dos of the world.

Could there be a way to hold on to this precious peace? It seems to be important. Jesus did mention it to the disciples 3x within a short time span.

I dug a bit deeper and researched the meaning of the phrase and was floored by the meaning of the word, peace, in this passage. The Greek word is **εἰρήνη eiréné** and, according to Strong's Concordance, means: **“the tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and content with its earthly lot, of whatsoever sort that is.** (Read this again to let it sink in)

Ok....I don't know about you but that sounds like a WHOLE LOT more than the peace that I just pictured! First, this peace brings a tranquil spirit. That I had in mind. However, it goes on to mention assurance of salvation through Christ. SALVATION is a “churchy” word that is big in meaning and hard to understand. Basically, it means that we are saved from the consequences of sins/missing the mark behavior which would (without Jesus' death and resurrection) result in our separation from God. In this passage Jesus not only offers us this assurance through His statement of “Peace be with you” but also gives the disciples the Holy Spirit—the third part of the trinity, GOD within them.

This peace also leads to fearlessness and contentment, regardless of the circumstances—two things that I think are SUPER relevant for not just the disciples, but also every one of us.

We all have our own unique situation or “earthly lot” as the definition mentioned. Maybe your situation mirrors that of the disciples at the beginning of the passage—one of anxiety, worry, uncertainty and fear. In these Corona times, I can imagine a lot of us can find ourselves here.

Maybe however, you see yourselves at an emotional high, similar to the disciples after seeing Jesus’s wounds. You might have just experienced God’s power in a big or miraculous way. If so, GREAT!

It could be also, that you identify most with Thomas. You are open to believing in Jesus—in need of some kind of proof that He is there, seeking answers.

For all of us one thing is true, regardless of the situation, we need this peace. And, you know what.....it is AVAILABLE...ALL THE TIME! Jesus said to His disciples earlier in John, “Peace I leave with you. My peace I give you.” (John 14:27)

It can be quite difficult to actually believe and sense this peace in our daily lives, especially when circumstances are hard. It can be helpful, therefore, to draw on this peace that can be so powerful and have a great impact, not only us individually, but also on those around us.

I can imagine that it was this peace, amongst other things, that compelled and defined the early church described in our first reading, Acts 4, 32-35. These Christians were unified. They shared everything and their faith was contagious—their numbers increased daily. I so wish I could see that! They must have been assured of their salvation and overjoyed in Jesus.

At this point, however, I find myself falling into the trap of the word SHOULD again. I SHOULD experience more of God’s peace. I SHOULD fear nothing and be content in all things.

If you are with me, I invite you to CHOOSE to come out of that downward spiral and instead trust and remember that the Holy Spirit lives inside us and is ready and willing to offer us His peace as often as we need it. Let's boldly ask Him to reveal that peace clearly in our lives, just as Thomas boldly shared his need to see Jesus for Himself.

This might start first with head knowledge of knowing that His peace is with us. I hope and pray, however, that the head knowledge will take root in our hearts and lead to a tranquility of spirit that is content, fearless, attractive, and perhaps contagious to those around us.

In just a few minutes we will pass the peace to each other. I know these words have gained new meaning in my eyes and made me hungry for a new level of peace. It's a bit like passing the peace 2.0. May we each move even a baby step closer to experiencing the assurance of salvation, contentment and fearless that comes with the **εἰρήνη eiréné peace.**

Amen.

Song: SoF 407 O Breath of Life

1. O Breath of Life, come sweeping through us,
revive Thy church with life and power.

O Breath of Life, come, cleanse, renew us,
and fit Thy church to meet this hour.

2. O Wind of God, come, bend us, break us,
till humbly we confess our need;
then in Thy tenderness remake us,
revive, restore; for this we plead.

3. O Breath of Love, come, breathe within us,
renewing thought and will and heart:
come, love of Christ, afresh to win us,
revive Thy church in every part.

Intercessions (by Iris)

Let us pray for the Church,
for the world,
and all those in need.

Lord Jesus,

We pray for the Christian Churches.

We have wounded your body by creating countless denominations. Let us find our way back to you and the questions that *really* are important.

Let the light of your resurrection fulfil us with joy and enthusiasm and help us proclaim your life and love in word and deed.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Live-giving God,

We pray for your creation.

You have placed in this world of untold miracles and mysteries.

Help us to appreciate and protect what you have given to us and our fellow creatures.

Let us fulfill our responsibility for our world

- not from an attitude of duty, although that would befit our mission,

- but from a spirit of awe that can't help but care.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Caring God,

We pray for those in despair and darkness, that they may find the hope and light of Christ.

Mental illnesses increase from year to year.
People feel that there is something wrong but it often
takes years to find effective help.
Sometimes there is no help at all.
Lord, open our eyes to the suffering of our neighbour.
Help us to sensitively support those who can't help
themselves any more.
And: Give us the humility to accept our own limits, too,
and reach out for help if needed.
You did not create us as lone warriors.
Help us to carry each other's burdens in communion.
Then all of us will be able to see your light again.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Resurrected Jesus,

We pray for those in fear of death, that they may find
faith through the resurrection.
Give them trust that you are the firstfruits of those who
have fallen asleep.
Hold them in your arms and give them peace.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Our Lord,

We bring before you our community, the upcoming
AGM and the visa procedure for our new minister.
In silence we pray for the people on our hearts.

Let's pray together:

Merciful Father,
accept these prayers for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

We conclude the intercessions by asking for Prince
Philip who passed away on Friday:
God of our lives, We give thanks for the life of Prince
Philip, For his devotion to Her Majesty The Queen, For
his dedication to global community and God's creation,

4. We know His death was not the end,
walk, walk in the light.
He gave His Spirit to be our friend,
walk, walk in the light.

Chorus

Walk in the light,
walk in the light,
walk in the light,
walk in the light of the Lord.

5. By Jesus' love our wounds are healed,
walk, walk in the light.
The Father's kindness is revealed,
walk, walk in the light.

Chorus

Walk in the light,
walk in the light,
walk in the light,
walk in the light of the Lord.

CCLI Song # 4806051
Christopher Tambling | Damian Lundy
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The Blessing



We ask for God's blessing with words from the letter to the Ephesians:

The Father may strengthen us
with power through his Spirit in our inner being,
so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith.

We, being rooted and established in love,
may have power,
together with all the Lord's holy people,
to grasp how wide and long and high and deep
is the love of Christ,
and to know this love that surpasses knowledge —
that we may be filled
to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Amen.

The Conclusion

The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil,
and keep us in eternal life.

Amen.

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Postlude