

## Second Sunday of Easter (Quasimodo Geniti) - April 16, 2023

**Readings: Ezekiel 37: 1-14; 1 John 5: 4-10; John 20: 19-31**

### ***The Wounds of Christ Give Us Life***

*"For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood"* (1 John 5:7). These three point to Christ and flow from Christ. Jesus shows His disciples His hands side, from which blood and water flowed, saying *"Peace be with you."* He presents the wounds which turn our fear to gladness and which restore us to the Father. Jesus breathes on His disciples and says, *"Receive the Holy Spirit"* (John 20:23). His breath, His words are Spirit and life. They raise up our dry, dead bones and give us new and everlasting life (Ezek. 37:1–14). Christ now gives His ministers to speak His forgiving, Spirit-filled words to the penitent in His stead. Our Lord continues to come to His people, presenting His wounds to us in the Sacraments of water and blood. He bids us to touch His side at His table, to receive His risen body and blood in true faith, that believing we may have life in His name.

### **Sermon Transcript**

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

So we got some wonderful texts that are very vivid in our minds. First, the text of Ezekiel with the dry bones. We're all familiar with that story. We sing the songs dry bones and everything like that. So it's very, very clear and vivid. But it's really interesting to see it get connected to the Gospel because what in the world did this dry bone thing have to do with Jesus appearing to the disciples? And as we talk about that, we of course have to remember "Doubting Thomas". And I put Thomas "doubting" in quotes because it's interesting how we remember Thomas, how he got stuck with this moniker. I mean, Peter doubted Jesus multiple times, even denied him three times, swore that he did not know Jesus. And yet, is he called "Doubting Peter"? Absolutely not! Jesus told Peter and the disciples that He was going to go to Jerusalem, He was going to suffer, He was going to die, and in three days, He would rise again. And Peter said, God forbid that. That's not what You're supposed to do. And of course, Jesus turns around and says Peter, or actually He said, "Satan, get behind Me." Now, in another instance, at least when Jesus said that He was going to go to Jerusalem and die, do you know what Thomas' response was? "Then let us go with Him and die with Him." Does that sound like "Doubting Thomas"? No, Thomas gets a bad rap because let's face it, every single disciple was a doubter. After all, where were they on Easter evening? They were in a room that was locked for fear of the Jews because they doubted that Jesus could do anything because He was dead. And all the stories about Him coming to life were just weird and they didn't understand it, and they doubted, every single one of them. And when Jesus does show up that first time, when Thomas is not here, what does He do for them to understand and begin to believe that He is who He says He is? He shows them the scars on His wrist and the scar in His side. Exactly what Thomas said he needed to see and touch to believe. Thomas just said the quiet part out loud. He just said what everybody else was believing and thinking. I don't get it. I don't believe it. I don't understand it. And let's face it, as much as we would like to be and say, oh yeah, we're John and we're James and we're Peter even or whatever, we're all Thomas, we're all doubters.

I mean, look at what John says here in 1 John. He says, "For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world." It does not say will overcome or in the future, someday you will be overcoming. It says, you are

already overcoming the world and you have victory, which is your faith. But is that victory and that overcoming the world based on how strong your faith is and how well you understand and believe? No, because let's face it, how many times do we spend in our life, how much time do we spend in our life fretting and worrying and doubting and afraid and uncertain? How much of our time do we go, God, why is this happening to me? I don't know what to do. I don't trust that it's all going to work out. I'm anxious. I'm worried. I'm afraid. I doubt Your ability to carry me through.

Thomas just said the quiet part out loud for all of us. We all are doubters, but God gives us the faith. And again, it is not the strength of our faith because Scripture also makes it very clear that if you have faith like a mustard seed, I mean just a itty bitty little bit, you can move mountains and that He will save the bruised reed and the smoldering wick.

There's going to be a lot of people that get into heaven... what do they say? By the skin of their teeth. Whereas the feet are dragging through the flames of hell as they just barely make it in. Why? Because it's the strength of their faith. No, because it's the strength of whom they have faith in. And that is our hope as well. That is all of our hope is the strength of the One who has conquered and given that victory to us. And that is Jesus Christ, our God and our Lord.

And the disciples did not understand it at that time because they had not fully received the Spirit. They didn't know what was going on. They'd spent three years with Jesus and they still didn't get it. They needed the Spirit to make them alive, just like the dry bones in Ezekiel. Without the Spirit or the breath of God, they were simply humanoid things standing there. But when the breath came, they became alive, just like Adam and Eve. They were formed out of the clay by God, but they were not alive until what? Until God breathed into them the breath of life and they became a living being. What is that breath? In the Latin, it's *espíritu*. In the Greek it's *numata*. In the German, it's *geist*. In English, it's the Holy Spirit, the Holy Ghost, or we might say even the Holy Numata. The Holy Spirit is the breath of God. It is the thing, the Person that gives us life. And we have the testimony of the Spirit. When Jesus breathes into us the breath of life, it testifies. The Spirit testifies and helps us and gives us understanding of the gift that is given to us.

And so John says, "There are three things that testify to the truth of our faith, the power of God that He has overcome the world, and therefore we are also overcoming the world. And that is the Spirit, the water, and the blood." Now, what in the world is that referencing? When we think about it, we go back to what do we know? What gives us hope? What have we said the reason is that we are here to celebrate? It is that Christ died. Yes, we're in the Easter season and He has risen. Yes, He has risen from the dead. But what did He rise from? His death. He wouldn't have to rise if He hadn't already died. His death is the point because in His death He forgave our sins. And in that death, the whole reason for the piercing on the side was that was proof that Jesus was dead. See, the Romans knew how to give out punishment and death. They were experts at it. The crucifixion was an extremely slow execution. It was meticulously created to draw out the suffering. But when they died, you think the Romans took any chance on that? No. They made sure. So on the day that Jesus died, the two other thieves, their legs were broken out of a gift to the Hebrews so that they wouldn't be on the cross too long, so they would die quickly. But Jesus, they found already dead. And to make sure and to make it clear, they shoved the spear up His side and from His side flowed what? Water and blood. Now, from this we know very clearly that He was dead. When they put the spear in His side, it's not like tentative like poke, poke. Is He moving? No. It's right into the chest all the way through. He was dead. And the Spirit testifies to that. And the water and the blood testified to that, that God died for us.

But it's more than that. Just like Ezekiel wasn't talking about actual physical people coming to life in this great army. Admittedly, when Jesus died, the graves were opened and people did rise from the dead, at least temporarily. But ultimately, what is Ezekiel talking about? That we will be filled with the Spirit of God and that we will be made alive in Christ because of the water and the blood and the Spirit. They testify to our life. Well, when we speak of water in the church, what comes to mind? Baptism. In the water, connected with the Word, through the power of the Spirit, we are made alive in Christ. We are adopted into the family. The sign and seal is there and the whole cosmos is clear this is my child whom I love, who has overcome death and the grave and sin because I have overcome death and the grave and sin. If we have been buried with Christ in our baptism, dead in our sins, how much more will we also be buried or connected to Christ in our baptisms to the resurrection? The Spirit, the water, and the blood testify to this. Now again, when we think of the blood, when we speak of blood in the church, what do we think of? The Lord's Supper, where we receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ for salvation and the forgiveness of sins through God's Word and the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is the sacraments. It is the Word of God that testifies through the power of the Holy Spirit that we are overcomers in this world because Christ has won the victory for us. Victory over sin, victory over death, victory over the grave. We are free because of Him. And He gives us the reassurance over and over and over again so that we may be sure. Are we a "Doubting Thomas"? Yeah. There are times. Is our faith weak at times? Absolutely. But the key is the person in whom we have faith is strong. And therein lies our hope, our promise, and our salvation.

Peace be with you. You have been forgiven. Christ has died. The Spirit, the water, and the blood testify and make it clear. Every day we remember, we are baptized. We are His child. Every week we receive the body and blood. Every Sunday we hear the words in His stead and by His command, I forgive you all of your sins. We are overcomers. We are free.

May His grace and His mercy and His peace be and abide with you always, now and forevermore, unto life everlasting. Amen.