

Quasi Modo Geniti  
24 April, Anno Domini 2022  
St. John 20:19-31

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

The joyous season of confirmation is upon us. Today, the saints at Faith in Plano are listening this year's crop of young catechumens confess the Christian faith after their time of instruction in the Scriptures and the Small Catechism. In just about a month and a half, it will be time for four of our catechumens to do the same. We look forward to that day with great joy and anticipation as the young Christians will also partake with us in the Holy Supper of Christ's Body and Blood, the most profound act of fellowship we enjoy with Christ and one another.

But we on earth aren't the only one's listening. The Holy and Triune God bends down His ear along with the angels with great eagerness and joy. Nothing is more pleasing to God than to hear "Yes. I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord. And in the Holy Spirit. I put all my hope and trust in the Triune God alone." Jesus said "Whoever confesses Me before men, I will confess before My Father who is in heaven." This confession from any sinner is exactly what Jesus was speaking of when He said to Thomas "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

These young ones have heard the gracious words of Christ and those words of truth and life have born abundant fruit. "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit." From the time of their Baptism, the Holy Spirit has graciously nourished the faith He bestowed as their parents have read them the Scriptures and catechized them in their homes, as they have been brought to the Lord's house to hear the Gospel preached, as they have been taught to pray, as they have been absolved of their sins, and as they have sat at the feet of their pastors, studying even more deeply the Bible and the Small Catechism. All this study and work has culminated in those beautiful words "I believe!"

This is a wonderful time for us all to reflect again on our continued need for the Word of God. St. Paul writes "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of Christ." The Word of God is not simply an important part of

the Christian faith, it is the very life-blood of our Christian walk. We cannot do without the word. Without the Word, we are all Thomases. We cannot believe without the Word and without faith, nothing we do is pleasing to God. Plants need water and soil and light or they wither and die. A fire needs oxygen or it will fade and finally be snuffed out. In the same way, Christians absolutely cannot survive without the Word of God constantly flowing into their ears to encourage, instruct, comfort, exhort, call to repentance, and absolve them. God has chosen in His divine wisdom to deal with us only through the external Word - whether that Word is preached to us, read in the Holy Scriptures, or delivered through the Sacraments. He does this because in this way we can be certain about it. We can say with all boldness and confidence "Thus says the Lord, not just my imagination." He doesn't rely on special or secret revelations or visions or dreams. That would only leave our salvation and His will in doubt. He has given us the Scriptures through His prophets and apostles so that there can be no doubt as to what He said and what is true. Thus we are urged by the opening words of today's appointed Introit to long for the pure spiritual milk of the Word, like a hungry infant longs for her mother's milk. Without the Word faith withers and dies. Without the constant guardianship of the divine truth we are easily led astray into all kinds of false ideas. Our hearts can be captivated by the world's warped and perverted understanding of man, of God, of morality, and of salvation. Then we will be tempted with Thomas (and, frankly, the other apostles) to say "Unless I see, I will never believe."

When we no longer hunger to hear the Word of God, when we are comfortable not taking up the Scriptures every day or when we don't think twice about not gathering with God's people to hear our Lord speak and to study the Scriptures together, then the atrophying of our faith has already begun. We are to long for the voice of our God. The psalmist compares this longing to a deer that is panting for the refreshment of the cool waters of stream. Living a life of faith in this world of unbelief and temptation is rigorous and difficult. God's children will find ourselves overwhelmed and saddened by the wickedness and unbelief that surrounds us. We will at times feel alone and pressured to conform to what the world wants and thinks. We will be tempted by the alluring and shining things of the world that promise pleasure and happiness. And Satan is always prowling around, looking for Christians who have grown weak and complacent, who do not take him seriously, who do not fear God's wrath against sin and so don't hunger and thirst for the righteousness of Christ. These are the ones

who are easy to drag away from Christ because they already have begun to wander away from the fold.

Our catechumens are in constant need of our prayers, our encouragement, our instruction, and our example. All sorts of temptations and distractions will be placed in their way in order to make them stumble, in order to draw them away from the Word. We can't expect them to remain strong and engaged in the faith if we who have been given charge over them don't. We need to demonstrate to them mercy, forgiveness, repentance, diligence in our own hearing of the Scriptures, and the good works which God has given us to do. They need to learn from us sacrifice and humility and a fervent love of the saints and the Christian faith.

The Word of God is an endless fountain pouring out living water for us to drink and satisfy our thirst for righteousness and peace. Sharper than any two-edged sword it cuts through the lies and excuses, revealing our own sin and the foolish wisdom of the world. By this Word the whole creation was brought forth out of nothing. By this Word sinners are raised from the death of sin and making living saints of God. By this Word anxious hearts are given rest and sins are forgiven. Hearing the Word is not merely an academic exercise that downloads information. It is the daily nourishment that faith needs to survive and grow stronger.

Praise be to God in the highest for the faith that these catechumens confess having heard and studied the Word of God, the same faith that we confess, the same faith which the saints have confessed since the first days of creation! There is no other faith for their is no other God and He has so graciously revealed Himself in the Holy Scriptures that we might know him and cry out with Thomas "My Lord and my God!" Let us celebrate and give thanks to God for having brought them to the day of their confirmation and pray fervently that He would continue the good work He has begun in them and give us strength and wisdom to help them continue to grow and flourish in the faith. And may He bless each of us with a constant longing for the pure and sweet spiritual milk of His life-giving Word.

(We stand.) The peace of God which passes all human understanding keeps your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus.

Pastor Ulmer