

## ***“Resurrection Peace”***

“Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.” That’s what Jesus did on that first Easter Sunday when He appeared to His disciples and the others gathered together – and that’s what the Resurrected Jesus Christ does today, in the midst of us, that we might know and believe the great Gospel of the Resurrection of the body.

Everything that was written about Jesus in the Old Testament had to be fulfilled. What they had foretold about Christ’s suffering, death and resurrection – had come to pass. Jesus suffered. He died. But now He is alive – standing right before their very eyes. They could see and touch Him – they could hear His, “Peace to you.”

In last week’s Gospel reading we heard about Thomas demanding to touch the body of Jesus before he would believe – and we heard how Jesus patiently teaches him, leading him to the truth – that one does not have to see and touch to believe.

The emphasis last week was on the Word of God. Thomas had God’s Word – and so do we. There is no need for you to touch, to put your finger in the nail holes. Jesus says, “Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed.” (St. John 20:29)

Today the emphasis is different. What Jesus said last week is true, but what He says to you today is also important. Today, He opens your minds to understand how very important the BODY is – both Jesus’ resurrected body, and yours.

It begins with the Incarnation of our Lord. What’s that? That’s what we celebrate at Christmas – when God’s very own Son, took on human flesh and blood. When Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary – God became true man. “In the flesh” – incarnate. There’s a reason why Christmas and Easter are the biggest celebrations in the Church – it’s because of the Incarnation – it’s because the human BODY is so important!

It means something that God Himself has taken on the same flesh and blood as you have. In the person of Jesus Christ, God has “flesh and bones” – just like YOU – because YOU are so dear to Him.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ teaches us that the BODY is important. The body of Jesus is not disposed of, left in the grave, or even left behind on earth – it is resurrected to life on the third day, ascends into heaven, and will come again on the Last Day.

In our day and age, there is so much confusion about our bodies (and that is not good). So, by the Scriptures (God’s own Word) – Jesus opens our minds so that we might know and believe what is truly “good” with respect to the body He has given to us.

You can see the fingerprints of the devil all over this confusion – for what God says is “good” – the devil tries to convince us that it is “evil.” This notion that the BODY is evil, something to be gotten rid of, only a temporary thing – this notion that one is only who God intends them to be when they are finally free from the body ..... is simply, a lie.

God formed Adam from the dust of the ground and breathed into him the breath of life – God created the woman from the side of Adam – and so also, He created YOU. He created YOU as one who has both body and soul.

Your body and soul (like everything created “very good”) – has become corrupted by man’s fall into sin. You know this very well – because your body also bears the burden of sin. You get sick. You endure physical and mental afflictions. You know what pain is. At times you are simply worn out, tired – like Adam, who toiled by the sweat of his brow. All of this is the result of sin, the curse that man’s sin has brought into the world.

And so, God’s Son takes on human flesh and blood – He comes to take your place under the wrath and curse of sin – He comes to be burdened with your sin (and the sin of the whole world) – all so that YOU may be saved (both body and soul).

Christ suffers in His body, because your body suffers. He is loaded down with the sin of the whole world (not just the sin of those who believe in Him) – all so that He might take it to the cross – shed His blood to pay the debt of sin in full – and then give up His life so that He might defeat death, once and for ALL.

Here in our text, the Resurrected Christ comes into the midst of His Church and says, "Peace to you." In showing His body to the disciples and all who are gathered there that Easter evening – He is opening the Scriptures to them, and to us.

He who once was dead is alive – showing that sin and its death have been taken away. He who lives eternally, never to die again – lives as one who has human flesh and blood – showing us it is "very good" to be human, to have both a body and a soul. He shows His resurrected body to His disciples – because His body gives them peace.

The same Resurrected Christ comes and stands in the midst of us – His Church gathered here this day. You do not see His flesh and bone – you cannot touch the nail holes in His hands – but He is here, with His flesh and blood – true God and true man – for YOU, and for your salvation.

Here is my Body He says to you – take and eat. Here is my blood – take and drink. With His Resurrected-and-never-to-die-again Body and Blood – He forgives all your sin. The flesh-and-blood-God-man Jesus Christ comes to YOU – to save your flesh and blood – to save the whole of YOU.

In the Lord's Supper, what the Apostle Peter speaks of in our reading from Acts 3 is Christ's words for YOU. "Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord." (vss. 19-20).

The Resurrected Christ comes to resurrect YOU – refreshing you in body and soul – bestowing the peace that comes with the forgiveness earned by His Body and Blood.

So important is YOUR BODY – that Jesus not only saves it now from sin, death and the devil – but when the Last Day comes, He promises to save it eternally. He will return to resurrect your body – so that YOU, the WHOLE of YOU – may live with Him eternally in heaven, with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.