

Peace be with You!

The enemies of Christ had crucified Jesus before He was taken down from the cross and buried in a tomb. The tomb had been sealed with a large stone and a guard placed in front of the grave. Early in the morning on the first day of the week, women went to the tomb to anoint the body of Christ with spices. They found the tomb empty. The guard had fled and the stone was removed. The angel said to them, *“Jesus Christ is not here. He has risen!”*

That’s not the whole story. What happened after the discovery of the empty tomb? First, John says in his Gospel that Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene apart from the other women. Perhaps Mary had become separated from the other women. Jesus also appeared in a visible form several times to numerous people. He is not with us today in a visible form because after 40 days He ascended into heaven.

Our Gospel today says that the Lord appeared on the Sunday evening to the disciples. At this time, there were only 10 disciples present together. Judas Iscariot had earlier killed himself after his betrayal of Christ, and Thomas was not present at this particular time. John says, *“That Sunday evening the doors had been locked where the disciples were, because they were afraid of the Jews,”* (John 20:19). They were afraid that those who crucified Jesus would crucify them too. But what happened? *“Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you!’²⁰ After He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. So the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord,”* (20:19b-20).

Note that the body of the risen Christ was a glorified body. It was not under the limits of space and time. It did not matter that the doors were locked. They could not stop Jesus from standing in the presence of the disciples. He was not a ghost, a disembodied spirit. He showed them His hands, the scars of the nails and His side where the Roman soldier pierced it with his spear. Because crucifixion was a slow process, if the crucified did not die after a while, the soldiers broke their legs. Nailed to the cross, the crucified eventually could not lift their heads to breathe. To break the legs facilitated this process. But Jesus had already died, and so His legs were not broken. Instead, with his spear, the soldier proved that Christ was dead, because water and blood was spilled from His side.

Christ is risen, but still has the marks of the crucifixion in His hands and His side. This is the cost of our salvation. In his epistle, St. John tells us, *“And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood. And these three are one,”* (1 John 5:7-8). Where do we have water as a testimony to the Son of God? In baptism, linked with the Word of God. Where do we have the blood, also the body of the Lord? In the Lord’s Supper, because the glorified body of the Lord is not limited to only one place.

That’s good. When Jesus appeared to the ten disciples, what did He tell them? *“Peace be with you!”* That must have been a surprise to them, because not only did Judas betray Him, but they all did when they fled at the time of need. However, Jesus did not condemn them, but brought them His peace.

Therefore, the ten disciples had evidence of the resurrection because with their own eyes they saw Jesus and the marks of the crucifixion. But Thomas was not present. Maybe he was disillusioned and did not want to meet any more with the others. That did not matter though. They convinced Thomas to come again and a week later, once again the disciples were in a room with the doors closed, when Jesus appeared. Again He said, *“Peace be with you!”* Then He said to Thomas: *“Put your finger here, and look at My hands! Take your hand and put it into My side! Stop your unbelief, and believe!”*²⁸ *Thomas answered Him, “My Lord and my God!”*²⁹ *Jesus asked him, “Have you believed because you have seen Me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed!”*

From this we can learn that it is better to trust the Word of God and not always look for other evidence or new revelations. We have everything we need to know for salvation in the Holy Scriptures and the testimony of its truth and authority in baptism and the Lord’s Supper in which the Holy Spirit is active.

So we gather to hear the Word of God and receive the sacraments for the strengthening of faith. If we do not meet, like Thomas, doubts grow, but when we have the evidence of the Word and the sacraments, we have peace that passes understanding.