

Sunday, April 8, 2018

## **The Risen Christ Brings Us Peace**

The Rev. Joseph Duggan

*Spirit of the Living God Fall Fresh On Us!*  
*Congregation Repeats!*

I love the post resurrection accounts when the Risen Christ appears to his disciples. Jesus always seems to show up when people least expect him. They often seem to be found with anxieties and fears. In every story the Risen Christ comes among the disciples to bring peace. The Risen Christ does this in a profound way with Thomas.

In the Gospel today Thomas moves from doubt to belief, from anxiety to calm.

I love the way the Gospel has this generous space for doubt juxtaposed to life and resurrection. Doubt is a form of grief.

Like Thomas we may have some doubts as we grieve on this last Sunday here at Saint Francis.

We may be anxious that the Risen Christ will never show up in the same way as the Risen Christ showed up to us in this place.

We may be anxious that when we leave here we will be separated from the Risen Christ.

In this last week before we close let's place our fingers with our own doubts in the side of the Risen Christ.

The Risen Christ wants us to be free. The Risen Christ wants us to be free of anger, free of grief, free of regrets, free of could have beens, free – you name it in your way.

I am a little anxious about going to Madison. You may be anxious about your future too.

At the same time I am at peace because I followed the Spirit to Madison and I am trusting the Spirit will meet me there. Increasing numbers of parishioners have told me they are at peace too.

I wish I could bring all my friends from Sacramento, all of you and around the country with me, but I cannot. I have heard some of you say if only all of us could go to the same parish and always be together.

I wish I could preach forever before this congregation. The single most important part of my ministry has been my preaching when I have had a chance to show you my heart and the heart of the Risen Christ as I have come to know God. I suspect for each of you there is that one thing that you will miss more than anything else.

I am at that place when I have stood before Christ and placed my fingers where I needed to place them, where my doubt is. Thomas only had to put his fingers in the side of Christ once in order to believe. Sometimes I have to return and place my fingers in the side of Christ again.

My doubts sometimes feel like they will overcome me, but when I just trust the power of God I always flourish.

Thomas gave the Risen Christ the opportunity to heal him. You are all invited this morning to place your whole selves and all your doubts into the side of Christ and be healed. Do so as often as you need to do so in order to flourish with and through the Risen Christ.

God wants you to flourish.

The Risen Christ wants you to flourish.

The Risen Christ wanted Thomas to flourish so he said to him do what ever you need to do, so that you may believe, so that you are able to trust me.

Yes put your fingers in my side if that is what it is you need to do to believe that I am Risen and you have new life within you.

You are being called forth this week to put your fingers into the side of this church and believe.

Put your fingers wherever they need to be so you may believe that new life is within you and all around you. I am happy to be your conduit to God, your channel and vehicle of God's grace.

Do not hold back.

If I can help you make some type of peace let me do so.

If God can help you do so then give yourself over to God.

If the Risen Christ can help you let it be known.

The power of today's Gospel is to let the power of resurrection not be compromised by any of our doubts, fears or anxieties.

The Risen Christ understands our doubts, fears and anxieties.

The Risen Christ is constantly among us seeking ways to help us get over our doubts, fears and anxieties.

What might be your means to get over your doubts, fears or anxieties if at this time you have any?

Thomas was bold; he said I will not believe in new life unless I place my fingers in your side.

Can you clearly state to the Risen Christ, I will not believe in the new life ahead of me, unless...?

The work of Thomas is the work we all have to do before we leave this place.

We have to strive for peace so that we can allow new life of resurrection to enter our lives.

Our doubts, anxieties and fears serve as obstacles to our experiencing resurrection. The Risen Christ knew that he could not be the impediment to Thomas' new life, so he called forth Thomas to pursue the resolution of his doubts and come to peace so he could believe.

Friends, let us do whatever we need to do to remove any impediments in our way of embracing the new life we have within us and before us.

I truly believe that our best years of life with the Risen Christ have yet to come. I believe this because we have seen death right up close and we have not been overcome by death.

We believe that Jesus is Lord and even when we don't feel this goodness and power, we know that Jesus hunts us down and says, "Put your fingers wherever you wish and let me help you believe." Nothing can separate us from the love of God.

The challenging part of all of this as that journeys like you and I are on we cannot do together. We need to stand before the Lord alone just as Thomas did. As we stand alone, we are not abandoned. We are alone with the Alone as a Jesuit friend once said.

More than any friends we have Christ, the Risen Lord who embraces us and invites us to this most intimate place for us to heal.

This week the Church will be open every day from 10am to 3pm. Come to sit, pray, touch holy windows, put your fingers and hands on the altar, touch the Risen Christ.

Come to this place and shed your tears in front of the Risen Christ.

Come to this place and ask the Risen Christ to heal you of whatever in you needs to be healed.

Come to this place and read your favorite scripture that always brings you comfort.

Come to this place and write.

Come to this place and take a picture of something you don't want to leave solely to your memory.

Come to this place and rest.

Just come meet the Risen Christ.

At Noon every day whoever is here we will gather and pray the Noon office from the Prayer Book.

I will have the healing oils with me every day if you want to be anointed.

As the Risen Christ invited Thomas to come forward so that he may be free so too the Risen Christ invites you to come to this place and be free.

The Risen Christ is present among us.

The Risen Christ invites us.

Like Thomas, we have to decide what we most need from the Risen Christ and then seek it. In every post resurrection account the disciples do find peace after they were in the presence of the Risen Christ. I am confident you will find this peace too.

You will find peace here this week and the Risen Christ will find you wherever you go and meet you with the peace that only Christ can give. The peace is not in the walls of this beloved place. The peace we need is found when we place ourselves fully in the side of the Risen Christ.

God Bless You!