

Quasi Modo Geniti

This day, the Sunday following Easter has many Names. This day has been called:

1. Low Sunday, because the crowds of people do not nearly come close to what we had on Easter.
2. It has also been known as Doubting Thomas Sunday because the Gospel features Thomas and statement...And His encounter with the Risen Jesus.
3. It has also been known as Hilarity Sunday. if this were the focus, then I would stand up here and tell jokes for the entire sermon time, because the devil figured he had Jesus dead, but the joke is on the devil because Jesus is risen from the dead! We are not going to do that.
4. The other day I was thumbing through our predecessor Hymn book, The Service Book and Hymnal and ran across this for the Second Sunday of Easter: Quasi Modo Geniti. That brought all kinds of memories growing up. In fact, each Sunday all the way to Pentecost Sunday has a Latin Title to it. QMG-"Like newborn Infants,"
5. Like newborn Infants long for the Spiritual Milk so that you can grow up into Salvation."

The day gets its origin from the early days of the Christian Church when new converts to the faith were baptized at Easter. They would wear new clothes, white robes which symbolized putting on Christ, the rest of the week. Then on the eight day, The Sunday following, they would show up for worship and remove their robes to the words of the bishop, "As newborn infants long for the spiritual milk, growing up into salvation." Now does that not describe what our baptized and faith journey would look like?

In Holy baptism we are born again. No matter how young or how old you are, when you come out of these waters you come out as a new infant, not physically of course, that would be weird would not it, Nicodemus? We are talking spiritual.

The letter of 1 Peter in the verses read this morning is like an exhortation to the newly baptized. Of course, when the Letter was written it was to newborn Christians, recently baptized. They have come from the old life being alienated from God, but through the sharing of God's love in Jesus Christ for them and for us too, they heard the call to follow the crucified and risen Christ. It is through God mercy and God's action they have been "born again to a living hope." They are like newborn infants. So dependent on God. It is this dependency that will get them through the rough and difficult times when their faith seems to be under attack. Even so this faith causes one to stand up and rejoice, sing, and worship.

These people have come from a life where malice and deceit and hypocrisy and envy and slander were the rule of the day. That has been put away, the old clothes of the former sinful life have been taken off and the new clothes of Christ have been put on. They are like newborn infants, so dependent on God's mercy for everything. This life and the results of Jesus' life are transformational. And this transformation is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Newborn infants need something to eat. Some take right to it others need some coaxing. But for many once they have taken to it, they long for more even if it is at 2 or 3 or 4 in the morning.

I had a parishioner who served on our mission team at my previous congregation who spoke of our church as a hospital for sinners. It is where we all come to get healed by God's Word, forgiven, and strengthened and equipped to God's work for the rest of the week. All that is true for me; and now may I add to what this hospital for sinners is and can be about, it is like a hospital nurse filled with "newborn infants" just crying out for the spiritual milk of the gospel. As we all know junk food is harmful for infants, and for that matter not good for grownups either. It is the pure Spiritual milk we need to be fed with. No matter how old you are! It is the food that we can never outgrow!

The truth is that we never really grow up or really get so mature in our faith that we outgrow our need for the pure spiritual milk of the gospel. We are always totally dependent on Jesus for our salvation and more Pure Spiritual Milk you receive, the more you want. Like a newborn infant you never stop crying for it to the Lord both day and night.

Another way to look at the church is what we find in gospel for this morning. Disciples locked behind closed doors. The beginning here does not look very pretty, does it? They look like wounded disciples. Their Lord has been taken away from them and crucified and laid in a tomb. Who will take care of them? Who will bind up their wounds? Who will feed them? How will they survive? They are afraid, like newborn infants. They are craving spiritual milk at this point.

This is not about a mature grown-up church I read about all the time that other pastors even in our own branch of Lutheranism like to brag about and ask us all to imitate. I would say if this the church that we see in John's twentieth chapter it is in big trouble. With that attitude of fear and inwardness, I would say they need a new vision, or to read a book on mission, or they just need to grow up.

But this church does have one thing going for it. The risen Jesus comes to them. If you think about it, this is the only thing going for it. And it is the only thing that really matters. If Jesus would have knocked on the door, he would have waited a long time. The disciples were like newborn infants who would not try to answer the door because their mama told them not to.

But Jesus walks right in, in the middle of their fear. right through the doors of their pathetic little sanctuary. Jesus does not knock or wait to be invited in, He just comes into his dear little children and begins to feed them the pure spiritual milk, "Peace be with you." It is 100% pure with no additives. No scolding. no conditions. No hoops to jump through. Pure grace. Pure gospel.

Oh, they had been so grown up and filled with all kinds of delusions with the lies they fed themselves. When Jesus had told these disciples that he was going near Jerusalem where the authorities were out to get Jesus and have him crucified, big brave adult Thomas stood up and said, "Let us go with Him that we may die with Him." But as soon as the soldiers showed up to arrest Jesus, they all ran, and just maybe Thomas may have been the first to run away.

Well three days later some woman came and told them they had seen Jesus alive and that they were to meet him in Galilee.

That sounds like thrilling news, unless you have abandoned him or betrayed him or denied him or Ignored him, or said you loved him but gave him a list of what you wanted him to do for you and then left when he did not do what he was told when you wanted him to. and now he wants to meet me? Oh, how like newborn infants do they long for the spiritual milk. And that is what the risen Jesus gives them. "Peace be with You."

But these little babies do not know how to respond. Or is it just too good to be true? They need a little coaxing. They do not take to the risen Jesus' presence right away. Jesus shows them His wounds, and says, "Peace be with you." They were glad. This is what brings real peace. Jesus was wounded for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace. And by His wounds we are fed. Is 53:5.

The pure spiritual comes at a price. Even if we treat it as if it were not so. It is more precious than all the silver or gold in the world. It cost the Son of God His very life. And He gladly paid it all for us and his little infants. He does want us to hunger or thirst.

The second time Jesus says, "Peace be with you." Now they have tasted that the Lord is good, and gracious, and merciful, and abounding in steadfast love. Now they are ready to go be disciples to feed others with the same spiritual milk that they themselves have craved. As the Father has sent me, so I send you. He breathes on them and says, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any they are forgiven if you retain the sins of any they are retained."

Jesus breathes into them just as the God breathed into Adam to give him life, now he is reviving these disciples with new life in a similar way. It is as if they are newborn infants were sent to go and feed other newborn infants with the pure spiritual milk of the gospel.

The first baby they go to is Thomas, who for some reason was not in church that Sunday. Listen to this encounter, the disciples say to Thomas, we have seen the Lord! But Thomas cannot accept this Apostolic Word. He just cannot believe it. "What do think I am, an infant or something? " O Thomas sounds so mature and grown up who doesn't fall for such crazy stories. "Unless I see the nail marks in His hands, and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand in his side, I will not believe."

So, eight day later, which is today by the way, Thomas has shown up at church with the others. Once again, the door is locked. Still afraid, still unsure. Like newborn infants they do not learn the first time. Things must be repeated, week after week.

Eventually they would unlock the doors and open them. But that would mean they would risk rejection and suffering that their Lord Jesus went through. But their faith had matured and would consider it an honor to be counted worthy to share in the sufferings of their Lord.

But on this night, they are not there yet. Thomas is with them. And Again, Jesus appears to them and shows them His wounds, and says, "Peace be with you." Jesus feeds them with the pure spiritual milk of the gospel. Jesus invites Thomas to see and touch and stop acting like an adult and start acting like a little baby. and Thomas says, "My Lord and My God." Impressive first words for a baby, aren't they?

Thomas went to India.....

The same crucified and risen Lord comes into this room, to be with us today. He comes right through whatever locked doors of fear you may be hiding behind, and by His Words, by His breath, and by His wounds, He feeds us with His pure spiritual milk that we all so long for, "Peace be with you."

This peace which passes all earthly understanding keep you hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord.