

- “Peace be with you.”
 - It’s been a week since Jesus rose, since they had first seen Him but the disciples are still in the Upper Room, still fearful of what might happen to them because of their testimony, their witness to Jesus.
 - As a result they are locked up, shut behind closed doors, isolated and afraid, not wanting people to know about them or what they believe.
 - And suddenly, Jesus is there, in their midst, in the midst of their fear, confusion, doubt and shame. Jesus is there with them as they are and offers them peace: Peace be with you.
 - Jesus comes to them, locked in their fear as much as – if not more so, than they are locked in that Upper Room and with gentleness, with Mercy, with love, then offers PEACE – shalom, right relationship restored, God knowing them intimately and loving them fully.
 - When the apostles receive this peace, their fear turns to joy.
- This peace Jesus offers overwhelms the sinfulness of the apostles.
 - Divine Mercy is the love of God, reaching down to every one of us, saint and sinner, reaching into every human heart, overtaking every misery, and, above all, forgiving every sin. Mercy is where God’s love meets our pain and our fear.
 - We do not earn it. We cannot buy it. God pours it out freely and with graciousness. God does not humiliate us but wants us to be “restored,” able to reclaim our value as His son or daughter.

- God's peace is like air or water because without it, there is nothing. I need God's peace, God's mercy, God's love or I die, I wither.
 - Does a plant know it needs water? No but it sure feels the effects of going without it. Like a plant, I may not know what I need, and I can last for a little while on my own but soon I will feel the effects of living without God's mercy and love, God's peace.
 - Unlike that plant, though, which I may forget to water, we can always depend on God to provide that peace, that love, mercy, and forgiveness. All we need do is ask and God comes to us. Peace be with you.

- Even with a God who comes to us, even as God gives so fully and freely, the Peace of Christ, the Divine Mercy of Jesus can be difficult to accept.
 - I love Thomas. Like Peter, he speaks his mind. He was the one who told the others they should follow Jesus back to Bethany after they learned of the death of Lazarus.
 - When things aren't clear, he asks questions. The night before Jesus died, as He was telling the disciples to follow Him, Thomas asked how could they follow Jesus if they did not know the way.
 - Now, Thomas wants something tangible. He wants clarification, even proof. I won't believe until...

- Another week has gone by and still they're locked in the upper room, trapped by their fear, unable to break out, unwilling to act on what they believe and have experienced.
 - And Jesus comes to them again. Peace be with you. He will not give up; He will not let them give into their fear, approaching with such gentleness especially for Thomas who struggled most of all.
 - Rather than castigate Thomas, Jesus offers His hands and side, the very marks of their sinfulness to demonstrate that HE IS risen, that He is alive, that the Way, the Truth, the Life
- Thomas wanted something tangible; he wanted to touch the Body of Jesus so that he could accept that Jesus was Risen and trust the Divine Mercy, so freely and fully offered.
 - Notice how Jesus invites Thomas to recognize Him: Jesus offers Thomas the holes in His hands and feet and the gash in His side.
 - So strong is the force of evil and darkness that they mark even the Resurrected Body of Jesus. Powerful? Yes, but they do not stop Jesus. In fact, Jesus encourages Thomas to reach out and touch Him, to put his fears and doubts aside, to see the power of evil but reach out to touch the power of Divine Mercy: Peace be with you.
 - Jesus invites Thomas to get close to him, to reach within his very body. Look, Christ says, I am risen, even as the wounds remain.

- The blaze of the Resurrection and Easter glory can blind us to the passion that besieged us just over a week ago. But Thomas reminds us that the Divine Mercy, God Peace flows only from the wounds of Christ.
 - In today's opening prayer, we asked for an increase in God's grace, that "grasp and rightly understand in what font...[we] have been washed, by whose Spirit...[we] have been reborn, by whose Blood...[we] have been redeemed."
 - This is not tidy grace, but unruly grace, wrought in tumult and chaos- costly grace born of the willing but ugly, horrific Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross.
- All of our readings today speak of this sacrifice and how, like Thomas, we are called to recognize Christ in and by that sacrifice.
 - Our first reading speaks of the sacrifices of all members of the early Church: their financial sacrifices for the support of the whole community, especially the poor and those on the margin; and of their sacrifices of time to read the sacred scriptures and comes together in prayer; as well as perhaps the most important sacrifice of their own will to that of Christ who calls them to be of one heart and mind with God and one with one another.
 - Saint John in our reading speaks of the water and the blood that flowed from Christ's side as it was pierced while He was hanging on the Cross, the same piercing that will allow Thomas to reach his hand inside.

- From the earliest days, the nascent Church understood this twofold flow from the side of Jesus to represent both the grace of baptism and the sacrifice of the Eucharist.
- Baptism is not enough to make us a Christian; we must also be marked by the Blood of Christ. We cannot fully or truly accept the love and mercy of God without a willingness to imitate Jesus in His sacrificial offering, the total and utter gift of self.
- Like Thomas, we are invited by Christ to reach out for His Body, not merely the Eucharistic Body of Christ that we receive from the altar but the Body of Christ in our sisters and brothers. Even more like Thomas, we are called to reach out and touch the wounded parts of the Body of Christ, those who are least, those who are hurting, those how are struggling.
 - Our call, like Thomas is to reach out and touch the wounds still present in the Body of Christ. Like Thomas we are to proclaim “My Lord and my God!” not by word but by action, by reaching inside the wounds of the Body of Christ, reaching for the joy and peace, God offers through His sacrifice, through our sacrifice.
 - If you want to know me, says Christ, touch Me: Touch Me in the unborn, the poor, the hungry, the homeless, the immigrant, the marginalized.
 - Dominic spoke before Mass of one way we can do that, simple as filling baby bottles with our extra change to reach out to the unborn and the struggling pregnant to provide for them.

- In our country now, we are faced with one of the most profound wounds in the Body of Christ.
 - As you may know, this past week, we remembered the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
 - Just 5 days before he died, Dr. King gave his last sermon at the National Cathedral, just 50 miles from here.
 - In that sermon, Dr. King highlighted in the body of Christ the wounds of racism, injustice and poverty. More than that, Dr. King also reminded us that we are called to work towards healing those wounds. His words are no less poignant and no less true 50 years later. Let me quote from his speech:
 - “Through our scientific and technological genius, we have made of this world a neighborhood and yet we have not had the ethical commitment to make of it a brotherhood. But somehow, and in some way, we have got to do this. We must all learn to live together as brothers or we will all perish together as fools. We are tied together in the single garment of destiny, caught in an inescapable network of mutuality. And whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly...This is the way God’s universe is made; this is the way it is structured...
 - [W]e are challenged to eradicate the last vestiges of racial injustice from our nation. I must say this morning that racial injustice is still the black man’s burden and the white man’s shame...And I can see nothing more urgent than for America to work passionately and unrelentingly—to get rid of the disease of racism. Something positive must be done. Everyone

must share in the guilt as individuals and as institutions. The government must certainly share the guilt; individuals must share the guilt; even the church must share the guilt...The hour has come for everybody, for all institutions of the public sector and the private sector to work to get rid of racism.

<https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/publications/knock-midnight-inspiration-great-sermons-reverend-martin-luther-king-jr-10>

- Somewhere we must come to see that human progress never rolls in on the wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts and the persistent work of dedicated individuals who are willing to be co-workers with God...So we must help... and realize that the time is always ripe to do right...
- I submit that nothing will be done until people of goodwill put their bodies and their souls in motion. And it will be the kind of soul force brought into being as a result of this confrontation that I believe will make the difference...The judgment of God is upon us today. And we could go right down the line and see that something must be done—and something must be done quickly...
- [W]e have difficult days ahead in the struggle for justice and peace, but I will not yield to a politic of despair.
- “Come,” Jesus says to us, *“Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe.”* Peace be with you.