

Can you imagine what must have been going through the minds of the disciples as they hid away in the upper room? To describe them as frightened just doesn't do it justice. They had been with Jesus for the last three years—listening to him, watching him preach to the people with an authority never seen before—and healing them by the thousands. Then there was the expectation that Jesus would bring about the Kingdom of God right here and now—and finally settle the score between Jews and the Roman Empire. They thought that they could “drink the cup” that Jesus was about to drink—but when the soldiers took him away, their shame was realized as they abandoned Jesus one by one—out of fear for their life. The disciples were very familiar with the danger they were in as they hid away in the upper room. How long could it be before the door was kicked in and they were dragged away and nailed to a cross to die?

Then suddenly, Jesus appeared to them with the familiar greeting “peace be with you”. But how could this be? They had left his bloody and broken body in the tomb. Then he showed them his wounds of glory and they believed. Just as God breathed into the first man and gave him life, Jesus breathed his spirit upon the disciples, and all humanity was given new life. Life with the Holy Spirit that would never be taken away. It was a life with a purpose. They were given the authority to forgive the sins of the people and so lead us all to salvation. It was a new beginning for the disciples and indeed for all of us here. It was nothing less than a cosmic shift of the universe; a mystery so profound and so beyond our ability to fully understand—that the Church has been unpacking it ever since. The apostles were sent by Jesus into the far corners of the world, and they gave witness with their lives and with their death, to the truth of a mystery so great—that it literally changed the world—as they gave us all hope of a Kingdom yet to come.

Like St. Thomas, we know how easily we can lose hope in a dangerous world. Perhaps one of the greatest enemies to our joy comes in the form of doubt. We can develop doubts about relationships, the future, God, and sometimes even ourselves. We have a difficult time placing our trust in God's promises. We sometimes feel we need proof of his promises and his presence in our lives.

Fortunately, we have the sacraments—personal experiences with the living God, to assist us in ridding ourselves of our doubt.

Just as Jesus breathed the gift of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, he gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit through our baptism. We experience personal contact with the Holy Spirit in confirmation as he sends us out to comfort the afflicted. Like Thomas, we can actually touch Jesus, in the holy Eucharist. Even more than that, Jesus will enter into us even as he entered through the locked doors of the upper room to give us his bread of life.

Then there is the matter about our shame. Like the disciples in the upper room, we are all a work in progress and we all abandon Jesus from time to time. That is when we need to call upon Jesus who comes to us and alleviates our burden of sin in the sacrament of penance. These interactions are with a Savior who is alive and in our midst because of that Easter morning. The sacraments are not merely solemn rituals with meaning; they are real encounters with the living Christ.

When we believe in the power of Jesus in the sacraments, we can have sure and certain hope that Jesus is with us. When we pray for comfort, he gives us comfort. When we pray for hope he gives us hope. When we are lost and pray to find the way, he is there to guide us. Yes, Jesus is there for us, but we need to be there for Jesus as well.

God chose us to become Christ to one another, and so we participate with Jesus in the salvation of the world. The glory of Christ shines forth as it did on the mount of the transfiguration when we make an eternal difference in the life of another. When we take up this challenge, we discover a life without purpose is no life at all. No matter how successful we are in the business world, the only thing that gives us peace is to participate in the life of Jesus as we become Christ to one another. So like Jesus we greet each other at the sign of peace—Peace be with you!

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