

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father, and our Risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Alleluia! Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed, Alleluia!

My dear beloved flock, the text for our meditation is the Revelation according to Saint John the first chapter, verses four through eighteen.

Boys and Girls how are you doing today? Have you ever been left home alone? Maybe mom and dad decided to go out on a date and left you by yourself. Maybe you had to take care of your brothers and sisters while they were gone. Were you afraid? I bet you were, especially the first time it happened. That's a lot of responsibility! Most children have some fear of being alone at home, and the *Home Alone* movies have only given more reasons for such fears. What helps quiet such fears is the presence of a parent, family member, babysitter, or even a trusted pet. The presence of a loved one brings children feelings of security that quiet their natural fears. While most of us have overcome our fears of being alone at home, we often have bigger fears related to physical death and divine judgment. In our text for today, we see that The Presence of the Risen Christ with His Church Calms Our Doubts and Fears. How does Jesus calm our fears of death, judgement and loneliness? Ponder this question as you hear the rest of the sermon. You may go back to your seats and those who love you.

At first glance, this seems like an odd text for the Second Sunday in Easter. What does a reading from the very last book of the Bible, much of it focused on the end of the world, have to do with our Lord's Resurrection? Because of what John sees. He sees Christ, ascended at the right hand of the Father, risen as the firstborn of the dead. Because of the Presence of the Risen Christ with His Church. That alone is what calms all of Our Doubts and Fears.

Christ calms our doubts by assuring us that he is the one true God.

We may doubt that Jesus is really present with us here and now. After all, we cannot see Jesus so where is He? If we cannot see Him,

then Jesus must not exist. This is a bold-faced lie. Jesus is right here with us now. How? Because Jesus is in what we call His state of exaltation. As the God-man, He is fully using all of His power as God, no more hiding it! Indeed He is the only true God. Many people today view Jesus as only a mere man. He was a good teacher of moral values and the right way to live our lives. Maybe a good prophet proclaiming the wonders of God. Yet, they deny that Jesus is God in the flesh for us. That Jesus died and rose from the dead so that we could have the forgiveness of our sins. John's vision assures us that Christ is God from eternity. Just look at how he describes Jesus. Jesus is one like a son of man (Ezek 1:26; Dan 7:13). He is clothed in a long flowing robe the same as (Is 6:1. He has a golden sash around his chest (Dan 10:5). He has eyes like a flame of fire and feet like burnished bronze (Dan 10:6). His head and hair are white as wool like the Ancient of Days (Dan 7:9). His voice is like the roar of many waters (Ezek 1:24; 43:2). He has a sharp, two-edged sword coming out of his mouth (Is 11:4; 49:2). His face is like the sun shining in full strength (Ex 34:29–35; Mt 17:2). Does that sound like a mere human to you? No, even just one of these is overwhelming proof that Jesus is God, much less all of them! Truly, when we worship Jesus, we are worshiping the one and only eternal God. As the one true God, Jesus has all power and authority, and how does He use it? He uses it for our good, for us men and for our salvation rather than our complete and utter destruction as we well deserve.

Christ calms our fears and assures us of the victory over death.

This fact may, and well should, both terrify us and causes us to rejoice to the point that we have the same reaction as John. He fell at Christ's feet as though a dead man. Why? Because we are sinners, same as John. As the Psalmist says, our sins are ever before us. We know our sins in thought, in word and in deeds. We deserve destruction. We deserve wrath. We deserve present and eternal punishment, now and eternally Yet, in His mercy, Christ removes the need to fear God by freeing us from our sins by his blood (v 5). He has removed our sins from us and made us His dear and beloved children.

Because of Jesus, we need not fear death. Jesus Christ is the firstborn from the dead. He is not dead but lives forevermore. He has conquered death beneath His nail scarred feet. Because He has conquered, He has promised that we will as well. We share in His victory. Christ holds the keys of Death and Hades. He controls death, making the grave not a place of fear for us but rather a place of rest and sleep. As we confess in the committal service for the blessing of the grave, “O Lord Jesus Christ, by Your three-day rest in the tomb You hallowed the graves of all who believe in You, promising resurrection to our mortal bodies. Bless this grave that the body of our brother or sisters may sleep here in peace until You awaken them to glory when they will see You face to face and know the splendor of the eternal God.”

Jesus removes our fear of judgment. When He does come again on that glorious Last Day to judge the living and the dead, indeed, “All tribes of the earth will wail on account of him”. This is the end, there is no second chances. They have had their multitude of chances and now they will face the consequences of their actions. As for us? We have nothing to fear because Christ, through His death and resurrection, has “made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father”. We will be with Christ forever in His kingdom, because of what He has done on our behalf by His perfect life, suffering, death, and resurrection..

That’s all well and good Pastor but what about here and now? What about our present loneliness? What about right now in the midst of our suffering? In the midst of our pain and hurts of life? Christ assures us that he is with his Church. Your Lord and Savior is with you here and now. Christ walks in the midst of the lampstands (churches) and holds the stars (pastors) in his right hand. Christ watches over His church, guard and protects her in the midst of her hurts and pains. He upholds and strengthens you, even now! How? Christ is present as he speaks through his Word. Whenever and wherever the Word of God is proclaimed, there Christ is in, and for, His people. That is one of the reasons that we rise for the reading of

the Holy Gospel, to honor the words and deeds of Christ in our midst. As if that is not enough, Christ is present as he feeds His bride with his very body and blood in the blessed Eucharist. Christ gives you His very self to strengthen your faith, forgives you of all of your sins and empowers you to love God and show that love in service to your neighbor.

With Christ in our midst, giving us His strength and support, giving us His calm and His peace, now and forever, what is there to fear? There is no reason to fear. Rather, we can go forth boldly into the world, proclaiming that Christ has won the victory over sin, over death and over the power of the devil, because Christ is Risen! He is Risen indeed, Alleluia!

May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.