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St. Luke's Episcopal Church – Anchorage, Kentucky
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John 20:19-31

How many times have we heard the phrases “I’ll believe it when I see it” or “Show me some proof that it is true?” Naturally, we prefer things to be within the realm of our understanding, as this gives us a measure of comfort and a sense of security, and this seems to be especially true when we find ourselves in a fearful or tense situation. We want to feel secure; we want to know that everything is going to be okay. I can’t begin to imagine what the disciples were feeling as they huddled together in the locked room. They were in a frightening and unpredictable situation, and frankly, I think it’s safe to say that they were at a loss of knowing what to do. Not only had they just experienced the horrific events of those past few days, but they went into hiding because they were fearful that they too may be hunted down by the authorities. Even though Mary Magdalene had told the disciples, on the day of the resurrection “I have seen the Lord!” fear gripped the disciples so tightly they questioned her authoritative testimony.

Thanks are to God, fear and locked doors are not barriers to the resurrected Christ, and this is made as evident as he appears to His disciples saying “Peace be with you” and upon showing them his hands and side, their fear seems to be lifted, and he assures them again by saying “Peace be with you.” He senses their fear and He knows that they are in great need of feeling peace and security. These four simple words can cast out fear, and amid the disciples fear Jesus confers peace. Can you imagine what this must have felt like? I would like to think that the disciples were filled with child-like hope and unceasing joy.

A few weeks ago we took our youth to see the movie 'Risen.' The movie is about a Roman soldier's search for Jesus' body following the resurrection. Following the movie we had a brief discussion with the youth. One of the young men stated "I thought it was interesting how the disciples were so child-like, but not in a bad way." And ya know – I too noticed that the disciples were child-like, and I envision that this is the way Jesus calls us to be. As they sat in the room with Jesus there was a sense of peace and joy that was palpable, even to the viewing audience. They exuded such a refreshing and child-like faith. One of the disciples rested his head upon Jesus' chest in a loving and respectful way. The scene prompted me to imagine what it would have been like to be amidst the risen Lord in all of His glory.

I would imagine that most of us have experienced being in a violent thunderstorm, with weather alerts sounding, winds howling (much like they are today/much like yesterday), and thunder roaring as lightning strikes all around. It can be a scary and helpless feeling to be in a storm such as this, as we experience the power of mother nature. But, then in a matter of time...the storm slowly passes, the rain subsides, and the brightness of the sun begins to peer out from behind the parting clouds. There is a feeling of calm, of peace, and of safety & security, and sometimes we are gifted with a beautiful rainbow.

Life can sometimes seem like a raging storm, where we may feel frightened and out of control, and it during times like this that we yearn most to feel the peace that Christ gave to His frightened disciples in the locked room on the day of His resurrection. He spoke of this peace earlier in John's gospel as he also foretold the coming of the Holy Spirit as he said "But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid"

(John 14:27). Yet, Jesus does not expect us to conquer our fear alone, as He knows that in most cases we are simply not capable. He gives us His peace through the power of the Holy Spirit – the mystery that is the assured presence of Christ. While in the room with the disciples, Jesus breathes the life-giving Spirit into them. This life-giving Spirit remains with us today. It is the presence of Christ that is the guide to Truth and the patron of peace. This guidance and peace is as essential for us today as it was for the disciples then. As they went out into a hostile world to promulgate the good news of the Gospel, we too are called to go out into the world, whether it is to our neighbors, our co-workers or to another state or continent. Though we may not witness the risen Christ, as the disciples did, like them we are filled with the Holy Spirit to be our advocate and our guide. We are never alone and all we need to do in order to feel Christ's peace is call upon Him through the power of the Holy Spirit. When we do this our fear will vanish and we will feel His presence and His peace.

A prayer from St. Augustine.

Breathe in me O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy.
Act in me O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy.
Draw my heart O Holy Spirit, that I love but what is holy.
Strengthen me O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy.
Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy. Amen.

Peace be with you~