

"An Easter Gathering"

"As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, 'Peace to you!' But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. And he said to them, 'Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.' And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them." - Luke 24:36-42

During times like this, being separated from one another and isolated from many of the places and things that we'd be going to and doing, a feeling of loneliness can set in. More than that, our entire lives can often feel disoriented. The rhythm of how we would normally be conducting our lives feels disrupted. Things that were once familiar to us can now feel quite foreign. Even just the feeling of going to the grocery store to get essential goods and necessities seems otherworldly. When we are in the midst of this kind of pandemic, we can often wonder: when will there be an end to these trying times? Will there ever be a new normal?

At various points in our lives we can struggle with this feeling of disorientation. The disciples most especially sensed this sense of loss and disruption on Good Friday. Their Lord, who they had thought would be their Savior, was put to death on a cross. Everything that they had known and expected was thrown into question. Yet we, as Christians, understand that Good Friday isn't the end of the story. Instead, we are a resurrection people! And what Luke tells us is that when the risen Christ greets the disciples, He comes bearing one thing in particular: peace.

Jesus assures us that nothing can separate us from His love, care, and comfort. When Jesus encourages the disciples to see His hands and feet, He is telling them that not even death can separate them from the new life that He has given to the Church.

While we may be separated by proximity from our church building and home, we know that we are not, nor will we ever be separated from the love of Jesus. Perhaps during this time of separation, we can anticipate our return to church, whenever that may be, just as the disciples did. Read what Luke tells us about the ascension: *"And he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God."*

No doubt this pandemic is a time of spiritual trial. I'm sure that, by this point, we are all sensitive to the difficulties that come with living in isolation. However, we know that, even now, we have easter joy that comes from the good news of the resurrection! Even more than that, we understand that, even as we are separated by distance, we are part of a congregation and we can still worship our Lord and continually give prayers of thanksgiving for the new life which has been delivered by our Savior on Easter Sunday.

In Christ,

Seminarian Keating