

Dominica in Albis in Octava Paschæ [Sunday in White/Low Sunday]/Divine Mercy Sunday: April 28, 2019

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1 John 5, 4 - 10; John 20, 19 - 31.

“My Lord and my God!”

Eight days ago we gathered to celebrate the feast of Easter, the greatest feast of the Christian year. Throughout the week, the Church has presented us in the Gospel reading at daily Mass the different post-Resurrection apparitions of Christ. We are there for six of these apparitions.¹ On Monday we were with the disciples from Emmaus who finally recognized Jesus in the breaking of bread after not having recognized him while he joined them and talked with them on their journey. On Tuesday, the apostles and the disciples “touched” Jesus and ate with Him on the first Easter evening. Jesus appeared to us on Wednesday on the shores of the Lake of Genesareth when He invited the seven apostles to a meal of fish and bread. On Thursday, we were with Mary Magdalene “who with love and longing sought and found her Saviour.”² And then, on Friday, we were in the crowd of disciples and we saw the Risen Christ on the mountain in His last apparition. Christ tells us, “I am with you all days...” Today, we are at the sixth apparition, with the Apostles, and more particularly, with Thomas. Today, we are called to touch the Risen Christ and, with Thomas, to also say, “My Lord and my God!”

Liturgically, this Sunday is known as *Dominica in albis*, that is, the Sunday in white. This name comes from the early Church when those who had been baptized at the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday, wore all through the Octave

of Easter the white garment with which they had been robed at their Baptism; going to Mass on each of the eight days in procession, wearing the white garment. Their visibility throughout the Octave “was a living sermon reminding all that as Christians they had risen with Christ to a new life on Easter.”³ It was on the Saturday after Easter, that is, yesterday, that they took off their white garments and put them in the church’s wardrobe. On the following day, the First Sunday after Easter – today – they attended Mass for the first time in their ordinary clothes, a sign of being full members of the Church.

This tradition is quite important to our understanding the message of Easter for us today. From the Vigil Mass on Holy Saturday at which the Baptisms happen to the daily Masses of the Octave of Easter, the liturgical celebrations of the Easter season focus our faith on the core elements of our belief: the Resurrection of Christ and our Baptism into that Mystery. These two elements of our faith as Christians are inextricably bond together. A commentator, in fact, has written that “the second complements the first, while the first is the symbol and cause of the second.”⁴ We can see Baptism, our Baptism, as the Resurrection of Jesus in our soul. Indeed, Baptism marks us as followers of Christ, as Christians, as believers in His Resurrection, as sharers in His Resurrection. This Baptism forms in us, in an ongoing way, the desire to proclaim the Risen Christ as “My Lord and my God!”

As Jesus calls Thomas to touch Him, to touch His wounds, so too Jesus calls each one of us to touch him and to confess Him as “My Lord and my God!”

The Church's focus on the apparitions of the Risen Christ during this Octave are meant to cultivate in us a deeper sense of the Resurrection and of the Risen Christ's continuing presence in and among us; so close, in fact, that we can touch Him. This we can do in our private prayer, in our meditation and contemplation. This we can do in our communal prayer. This we can do in our daily encounters with the people with whom we live and work.

But, this we do especially in the Mass. For it is in the Mass, in our reception of the Body of Christ, that we can most intimately touch the Risen Christ. The infant faith we professed at our Baptism needs to be nurtured in the encounter with the Risen Christ at every Mass. It is in receiving the Body of Christ at Communion that we touch His wounds. In so doing, we bring our own wounds to Him, attach them to Him and He in return attaches Himself to us, taking our wounds into the wounds of His resurrected body.

The faith which we receive at Baptism as infants grows through our bringing our woundedness to the Risen Christ as He becomes present at Mass. Here, as the bread and wine are brought to the altar, we bring also the stuff which makes up our lives, and in particular that which is painful to bear, that which may make it difficult to believe. Here, as the Risen Christ continues His apparitions, He calls us to touch and see, and to believe in the power of His resurrected presence in our lives.

On this day, let us reaffirm our faith in the abiding presence of the Risen Christ in His Church, and together, let us confess, "My Lord and my God!"

¹ See Dr. Pius Parsch, *The Church's Year of Grace, Volume 3: Easter to Pentecost* (1963: The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN), p. 3.

² Ibid., p. 3.

³ Ibid., p. 50.

⁴ Ibid., p. 2

