

---

## “The Ministry of Reconciliation”

The Sunday after Easter is traditionally known as “**Low Sunday**” in contrast to the “high” celebration of Easter - and also because Church attendance is down compared to last Sunday. But this Sunday has another name - one some of you may not be familiar with – “**Quasimodo Sunday**” – derived from the opening words of the Introit in the old Latin Mass taken from 1 Peter 2:2 - *Quasi modo genit* – “**As new-born babes**”. Just as little babies demand to be fed no matter what time of day or night, St. Peter is saying that we should constantly be seeking absolution from our sins.

There is also an interesting connection in today's Gospel with the fictional character in Victor Hugo's novel where we read that, on the Sunday after Easter, a crying baby was discovered on the steps of the city's Cathedral - very badly deformed with a twisted face and severely curved back. The baby is taken into the Church, baptized and given the name of the day on which it was found - **Quasimodo – the hunchback of Notre Dame**.

Our Gospel today records 2 events - that which took place the **first Easter Evening** and also the story of **Thomas a week later**. I think what happened on the first Easter Evening is more theologically profound than Thomas' conversion, and needs to be preached more often.

On that first Easter Evening, there are some **other Quasimodos** - all desperately seeking sanctuary & refuge – huddled together behind locked doors as if they are abandoned babies. They too were **twisted out of shape by sin** - having abandoned their Lord and friend in the Garden of Gethsemane - one even denied knowing Jesus - **just to save their own necks** - and now they are ASHAMED and thoroughly AFRAID. They were scared of the religious leaders - fearing they would do the same to them as they had done to Jesus on Good Friday - especially now that rumours of resurrection were being circulated.

It is to this band of *Quasimodo-like men* - **distorted by sin & guilt - captive to fear & unbelief** that Jesus appears, and seeks **His own in love**. Miraculously, He comes to them *in flesh* through closed doors. For now **Jesus' humanity shares fully in the glory of His divinity**. He is a real body – truly risen from the grave – but now exalted completely into the majesty and attributes of His eternal nature as GOD THE SON. **Closed doors are no obstacle**.

Jesus doesn't chastise them for their failings and fears – but instead he is compassionate. He doesn't say “it doesn't matter what they did” - He doesn't say they can just forget about it and pretend their sin never happened. INSTEAD, Jesus

**absolves** them - He forgives them and releases them from their sin. He pardons their transgression and remembers it no more – *“Peace be with you”* He says - TWICE. Peace – Shalom – the peace that passes understanding and which gives wholeness, life and salvation.

To help them believe that His word of absolution is true – He shows them “his hands and his side” BECAUSE these are the very wounds by which healing comes. These are the things that make for peace with our heavenly Father - the **wounds that satisfy the penalty of sin**. These marks give evidence that He is the same man who was crucified on the Cross. This is no imposter - no ghost. This is the same man who suffered for the sins of the world - who died and was buried - who conquered death and is now alive in the flesh to give out His life to a dying world. **Jesus is known by His scars**. His words and wounds turn the disciples' sorrow into joy, and their fear into peace.

Like those first disciples, we have gathered this morning as *spiritual Quasimodos*. We are also hunched over by sin - *“we have not loved God with all our heart” and we have not always “loved our neighbour as ourselves”* - our lives are filled with **twisted priorities** - deformed by love for the things and the ways of the world. WE think we have the situation under control - but so often the situation controls us.

Like the fictional Quasimodo, Jesus receives us into His Church and baptizes us - He comes to us in love & compassion to bring peace. He doesn't gloss over our sins, or say it's no big deal - instead, He forgives and releases us from our sin. And He shows us **His wounds in the Sacraments**.

The resurrection appearances still continue in the Church – but in a different way. Jesus said to His disciples that night - *“As the father has sent me, so I send you.”* And he breathed on them and said, - *“Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”* This is the disciples' Ordination Day. **Do you see & understand what has happened here? Not only did Jesus forgive His “hunchback” disciples - NOW He makes them the instrument of His forgiveness to others.** He made those poor absolved sinners into His ABSOLVERS of other poor sinners - here is established the ministry of the Ordained Priesthood - in which Jesus is present to the end of time to bestow forgiveness and life. It was this authority to absolve & bless in His Name which Jesus gave to His Apostles that Easter night, and it is that same authority which is passed on to His Priests by means of the Bishops who are the Successors of the Apostles.

Jesus is still carrying on His ministry of reconciliation & healing - but through those he calls to ordained Ministry. The Priest is simply the mouth-piece of

---

Jesus whose minister we are. Jesus is in the business of borrowing mouths and hands to proclaim and give out His pardon and His life. That is why, when the Absolution is pronounced, the sign of the Cross is made to remind us that it is God Himself who does the forgiving - the Bishop or Priest is but the vehicle he uses.

In a moment we will hear these words: "*The peace of the Lord be always with you* " And then the Risen Lord will invite all of us to touch His hands and side in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. With His own hands, Christ will give us His Body, imprinted with the scars, and when we reach for the Cup we will touch His side. As you kneel or stand at the Altar Rail today, listen to what Jesus has to say: "You are no Quasimodo to me: you are beautiful and holy in my sight. By my wounds you are healed and forgiven. Blessed are you who have not seen me and yet have believed. For by so believing, you have everlasting life in my Name."