

Christ is risen! Alleluia!

In the name of ✠ Jesus.

You didn't hear it today — the introit was replaced with our baptismal entrance hymn. On this Second Sunday of Easter, *Quasimodo Geniti*, the introit normally begins "*Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good*" (1 Pet. 2:2-3).

And so, like the newborn infant he is, Warren today "drank" of "*the pure spiritual milk*" offered up in the water of Holy Baptism, for we know that this water "is not just plain water, but it is "the water included in God's command and combined with God's word" (Small Catechism, What is Baptism?). That word of God included in the water is "*pure,*" unadulterated by any error your pastor might make in expounding the word. It is Jesus' own pure word: "*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations — not excluding infants such as these. Make "disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*" (Matt. 28:19). This water along with the Spirit that accompanies the word of God effects the birth from above that Jesus instructed Nicodemus about. By this water and the Spirit, God "rebirthed" Warren into citizenship in His kingdom, and gave him a "*living hope*" in an "*inheritance*" "*imperishable, undefiled, and unfading,*" in "*a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*"

This hope comes from Christ, from sins washed away because of His cross, from the promise of our own resurrection because of Jesus' resurrection. Yes, when we are "rebirthed," by God, we are "rebirthed" to "*a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*" Holy Baptism drowns the Old Adam in us as we are united with Jesus in His death and burial; but Holy Baptism also gives new life as we are united with Jesus in a resurrection like His (Rom. 6:3-5).

But there is a lot of life to live, we pray, before that time comes when Warren is laid to rest in the grave to await his resurrection. Baptism provides for that, too. When we are baptized, we die with Christ, but we are raised with Him, as a new creation, that we "*might walk in newness of life*" (Rom. 6:4). Luther explains it this way in the Catechism: "by daily contrition and repentance" we drown "the old Adam in us" "with all sins and evil desires," "that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever" (Small Catechism, What does such baptizing with water indicate?).

Tyler and Rachel have something ahead of them with Warren, even as they are doing now with Callahan. Continuing with Jesus' words from Matthew 28, they are "*teaching [these boys] to observe all that [Jesus] commanded*" (Matt. 28:20), that the pure spiritual milk of God's word might continue to feed them, "*that by it*

*[they] may grow up into salvation.*” Tyler and Rachel, God grant you continued success in this God-given task. And God grant to us all, baptized into Christ, repentance, and forgiveness of sins, and fidelity to God’s word and to Him of whom it bears witness. God grant to us to be *“like newborn infants, [longing] for the pure spiritual milk.”*

This exhortation to ever long for spiritual milk may seem surprising to us who know that Paul admonished the Corinthian Christians for their spiritual immaturity. They were *“infants in Christ,”* which is why Paul told them *“I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it”* (1 Cor. 3:1-2). The writer to the Hebrews likewise chided his readers: *“You need milk, not solid food,”* calling them children (Heb. 5:12-13).

Yet, we also confess *“Not only is it true that one [Christian] is weak and another strong in the spirit, but each Christian also experiences differences in himself. At one time he is joyful in spirit, and at another fearful and alarmed. At one time he is intense in love, strong in faith and hope, and at another time he is cold and weak”* (Formula of Concord, SD, II:68). Although, we pray, we can grow to handle God’s *“solid food,”* we must admit — the *“pure spiritual milk”* of the Gospel remains a constant need.

And this *“pure spiritual milk”* is surely the preaching of Jesus’ cross and resurrection, that Jesus *“was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification”* (Rom. 4:25), for Peter explains immediately: *“As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious”* (1 Pet. 2:4). Jesus Christ the crucified is the *“stone that the builders rejected”*; Jesus Christ risen from the dead is that living *“cornerstone chosen and precious”* (1 Pet. 2:6-7), the Rock upon which *“God’s house of living stones”* is built (LSB645:3). This is the milk that bookends Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians: *“For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified”* (1 Cor. 2:2); and *“But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep”* (1 Cor. 15:20).

This *“pure spiritual milk”* is also what Thomas needed as the disciples told him of Jesus’ visit to them in the closed room. He needed the concrete verification that He who appeared to the other disciples was in fact He who had been crucified.

Now, I admit that what follows may challenge some of our long-held thoughts about Thomas and Jesus’ appearance to him — it has certainly challenged mine. But our own Bill Weinrich has pushed back on the narrative of “doubting” Thomas, a moniker that has been almost indelibly been applied to the apostle. Weinrich writes: *“the demand of Thomas is to behold and to experience the concrete form and manner of the Resurrected such as the disciples themselves*

beheld and experienced it” when Jesus appeared to them (William C. Weinrich, “Doubting ‘Doubting Thomas,’” essay given to this author — and following quotes). It’s not the point of the Gospel. Rather, with this Thomas account, the Evangelist John makes “the Resurrected One recognizable as the Crucified.”

Indeed, it’s not really about Thomas at all, Weinrich writes. “He is not a representative figure of weak faith; nor is he presented as a figure of one who demands sight over belief in the word. Nor does the demand of Thomas arise from a doubt that the one crucified has in truth arisen.” “Jesus’ word to Thomas that he place his finger and hand into the marks of his wounds is in no way a word of rebuke. Nor is it an accommodation to ‘doubting’ Thomas. Rather, Jesus in fact comes as he came previously to the disciples and grants to Thomas, not a proof of his resurrection, but an appearance of the Resurrected in the marks of the Crucified.”

None of this is what John is leading to as he relates the story of Jesus’ appearance to Thomas. “What does matter is that the appearance of the Resurrected as the Crucified is the constitutive fact of faith in the reality of that God who gives life to the world.”

This is the “*pure spiritual milk*” of John’s Gospel — “It is I, the Crucified; see my hands and my feet”; “*Peace be with you*”; “*Receive the Holy Spirit*”; “*forgive sins*.” This is the “*pure spiritual milk*” of Holy Baptism — “sundered from the number of the unbelieving, preserved dry and secure in the holy ark of Christendom” (Baptismal rite), no longer unbelieving but believing, with sins washed away, rescued from death and the devil, brought into eternal life and salvation. This is the “*pure spiritual milk*” of the Lord’s Supper — Christ’s crucified and risen body and blood offered up for you once on the cross, given to you in this Sacrament for the forgiveness of your sins; “For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation” (Small Catechism, What is the benefit of this eating and drinking?).

These are all signs — along with the other signs that John relates — signs that were “*written so that [we] may believe*” — Warren and Callahan, all the little ones, disciples like you and I; that we may believe “*that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing [we] may have life in his name.*” Lord, help us always to long for this “*pure spiritual milk.*”

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

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