

Saint Thomas and Saint Thomas of the Air Church
 Easter I
 April 7, 2024
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“ . . . as My Father hath sent Me,
 even so
 send I you.”

There are 40 days between Jesus’ Resurrection and Ascension.
 40 days on Earth,
 The last 40 days.
 40 days to assure the foundation of His Church.
 40 days to empower the remaining 11 ordinary men.
 40 days for them to become extraordinary men.
 The 40 days we call Eastertide.

Jesus wasted no time.
 John’s Gospel for today takes us back
 to His climactic Resurrected appearance to the Apostles.
 It was in a closed upper room somewhere in Jerusalem.
 Evening.
 Behind locked doors.
 10 of them
 Hiding in fear, quaking perhaps.
 They knew what the Romans and Jews had done to Jesus
 Was the same fate to befall them?
 They heard the rumors
 Mary said she had seen the living Jesus.
 But how could that be?
 If it was true
 Should they fear Jesus?
 After all, they had abandoned Him
 Peter had followed to His Jewish trial
 But even he had denied Him. Three times.
 Only John had the courage to witness the crucifixion.

If it was true and Jesus had returned from the dead,
 How could they face Him?

But before they could decide,
 There He was.
 Without fanfare and despite the locked doors
 There He was. The 5 crucifixion wounds.

His first words put them at ease:
 “Peace be unto you”.

But there was work to do.
 No time for celebration
 No time to assimilate all that had happened.
 No time to catch a breath
 No time to comprehend
 Jesus breathed on them.
 As God had breathed life into Adam
 at the Genesis of creation,
 Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit into them,
 Ordaining the first priests of His Church.
 There could be no Church without priests.
 They had baptism and He had given them
 The sacrament of Communion last week.
 Their next commission was to absolve sins.
 He gave them the power, through Him to
 Remit or retain.
 To remove a sinner’s sins or the sinner would retain them.
 The Church had its priests.

He charged them:
 “As my Father hath sent Me,
 even so Send I You”

It is a tall order;

 God had sent Jesus as the salvation of mankind.
 These new priests were sent by Jesus to do the same.

Does He send us too?

 Is the commission for us as well?

Thomas Cranmer wrote today's Collect for the 1549 Book of Common Prayer.

 He borrowed the concept of "leaven" from St Paul's
 1 Corinthians.

 And St Paul borrowed it from the Jewish Passover.

Leaven is the agent in the bread that makes the dough rise.

 It is what gives bread its texture

 Much of its flavor, its pleasing satisfaction.

 Leaven, or yeast as we know it, grows through the dough and
 Transforms it.

 You can think of it as an infection of sorts.

The Jews left Egypt overnight and there was no time to leaven the bread that would sustain them.

 So theirs was unleavened bread: wheat flour, water and salt.

It served as a great metaphor:

 The unleavened bread symbolized their new life
 of freedom from slavery
 by the mercy of God.

St Paul borrowed the metaphor

 The new life wrought by the sacrifice of Christ

 He counseled we should purge the old leaven

 And live a life with Christ unleavened

 by malice and wickedness.

Cranmer reaches back to 1 Corinthians and we pray
 “So to put away the leaven of malice and wickedness
 From our lives.”
 And serve God in pureness of living and truth: The New life.
 We begin to see what it means to fulfill the commission
 “Even so send I you”.

St John’s Epistle moves us further along.
 He boldly acknowledges that our task
 is to overcome the World.
 But it is our Faith and belief that will bring the Victory.
 He writes of three things in our favor:
 The Spirit
 The water and
 The blood.

The Spirit is the Holy Ghost who resides in all Baptized Christians
 Who guides and strengthens us from within.
 We have known Him from our Baptism
 When He was first imparted.
 But again at our Confirmation.
 And for some, again at Ordination.
 The Holy Spirit brings gifts,
 Wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge
 Piety and fear.
 They have become part of us.

St John writes of water,
 A reference to the sacrament of baptism.
 We are baptized with water
 Cleansed of our sins
 Purified.
 Adopted into the Kingdom of God as His child.
 The first of two sacraments necessary for our salvation.

He writes of Blood

A reference to the sacrament of Holy Communion.
The joinder with Christ in His sacrifice.
Our union with Him.

A symbolic way of speaking of His Baptism and Passion
Linked in time to the Spirit and the testimony the Spirit
Offers to us in our lives.

Water and Blood, in metaphor.

But both poured from the Body of Christ at the Crucifixion.

Was it a sign?

The Spirit, the Water, The Blood: all three acting as One:

The mysteries of sacrament,
And Victory over the world of sin and evil
And life giving union with Christ.

John concludes with the record,

A straightforward truth

A simple equation:

God hath given unto us eternal life
And that life is in His Son.
He that hath the Son, hath life:
He that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

Jesus sent His new priests into the World.

John was one of them.

He did the work.

He lived the challenges.

He overcame the World.

He can say, with conviction, strength and honesty that

“Whatsoever is born of God
overcometh the world.”

As Jesus sends us into the World

We too,

Born of God,

With the strength of the water and the blood,

(The sacraments),

And with the Spirit indwelling in us;

Attain the victory that overcometh the world

Of sin and evil.