*Everliving God, who strengthened your apostle Thomas with*

*firm and certain faith in your Son's resurrection: Grant us so*

*perfectly and without doubt to believe in Jesus Christ, our*

*Lord and our God, that our faith may never be found wanting*

*in your sight; In the name of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.*

A week after Easter, stuck indoors, probably at least a little bit fearful, and in need of some serious peace from Jesus, St. John described that period just after the first Easter kind of like that. And I think it's safe to say that many of us know the feeling on this second Sunday after Easter. Managing fear and anxiety is the name of the game for many of us as we deal with what's happening around us. Maybe we find ourselves unable to pull ourselves away from the news, or maybe we are dealing with abrupt, daunting professional and financial situations that leave us emotionally and spiritually huddling just as the Apostles did.

Thankfully, the Risen Jesus entered into their fear and dispelled it. I think Jesus seeks to do much the same even now, and even though our situation is kind of different from the apostles all those years ago, I think it is true that our fear is nonetheless similar.

So, let's just take a walk through today's Gospel lesson and see how Christ can enter into our homes, our hearts, with the power of the resurrection. First, look at how he entered the house. John simply reports that Jesus came and stood among them. He was not tentative. He was not awaiting an invitation from James, or Andrew, or Peter. He came and he stood among them. Christ's place is among his disciples, even ones filled with fear. When I read this, I am comforted by the fact that Jesus was simply among his disciples, and I think that remains true to this day in all the ways God makes his presence known to us in our lives, and especially in our time of trial. This helps me to recall the psalter we read this morning, the same Psalm 16 that peter quoted in Acts:

"I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand I shall not fall." Christ is among us, and he will hold us up that we will not fall.

And as he stood among them, he bid his peace be with them. Notice that he did that three times throughout this lesson. Now, I don't think this was just a nice greeting; the very intentional repetition in the text keys that in for the careful reader. Rather, I think Jesus is both greeting and announcing. Christ's peace is the peace of God's own original intention for the universe, now unleashed and active in the Risen Christ, and certainly unleashed and active in the Church. He breathed his promise upon the Apostles, the promise of the ministry of reconciliation, of peace between God and humanity, the promise of peace which we as Christ's Church inherit. Later, perhaps remembering this fearful moment in the house, Peter wrote his first letter, which we read this morning. Listen again to the promise of Christ's peace in so many words: "By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading."

Christ's peace and promise cannot be shaken. It is "imperishable, undefiled, and unfading," as Peter writes. He bore it in his wounds, healed yet still evidence of his work on our behalf. He showed his apostles the wounds and they received his ministry. He showed his wounds to Thomas and Thomas confessed him as Lord. He showed them all his wounds, and in turn gave those not present his blessing. He gave *us* his blessing. Again, Peter wrote his friends about this very idea: "Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls."

So, to summarize, Christ was risen and present among his friends, bid them the depths of God's renewed peace in his resurrection, and proved his promise in his wounds which draw us closer to him. This entire episode in that fearful house reminds us that Jesus means to be among us in our homes, bidding us the peace and promise of his resurrection.

Beloved, I think this is needed medicine for our souls in such a time as this. Jesus is ready to enter our homes and hearts. He is ready to bid us his peace, soothing our anxieties and fears with the power of his grace. I can speak to this personally, actually. Not too long ago, I was really freaked out over this current crisis. I had gotten really into my head, which left my heart petrified. I needed a way for God to give me a heart of flesh, to give me some courage, to help calm me down to feel a little closer to normal. It shouldn't have come as a surprise, but the old habits felt new as I prayed the Daily Office and read Scripture to soften my heart. Who'd have figured that the things *my* pastors and priests told me were the things that brought Jesus back into my home, my *heart* to cast out fear.

Maybe you've felt something like that over the past few weeks: the peace of Jesus in your heart. Would you share that with us? Would you encourage us with how Jesus has brought you his peace? Don't feel like you've got to do a whole thing; you can just share something with us in the comments. In any case, I give thanks for all of your encounters with the peace-bringing Christ. And I pray that those of you who need that peace would receive it soon. Know that Jesus stands ready to enter, ready to bring you his eternal peace and promise. I pray that we would find in Christ's wounds, our own, redeemed, healed, offered back to God for the life of the world, so that we might proclaim the same confession as Thomas this morning, that Jesus is our Lord, and our God.

To Christ be all glory, from age to age. Amen.