

God's Gifts of Word and Sacraments are the only Certain things in an uncertain world

Uncertainties are very real sources of fear for us. Even if one hasn't faced medical uncertainties, it is unheard of to live as a fallen creature in this fallen world without having encountered some sort of uncertainty. Job loss or a pay cut causes questions about how long one will be able to pay the bills before the collectors come. A serious conflict with a loved one or a sin committed by or against them causes uncertainty as to whether or not the relationship can be restored. Fears about COVID-19 continue to abound- is it safe for us to come back to the Divine Service?

But thanks be to God in Christ, that we are given a certainty of blessed eternity which overcomes all the uncertainties in this life – yet so much more than that! For the merciful, forgiving, and restoring work of God in Christ also overcomes all the certainties of this fallen world! Sin and death and all the evils that come with them are unavoidable certainties in this life. But all find their end in Christ! “In the World you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33b)

Revelation 21 paints a beautiful picture of the results of Christ's overcoming the world. A new heaven and a new earth! The dwelling place of God coming down to be with us! All tears wiped away! No more mourning, crying, or pain! “Behold, I am making all things new.” (Rev 21:5) This is what we celebrate in Holy Week and Easter! This is what we confess when we proclaim in the Creed, “I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life of the world to come. Amen!” We find this certainty given to us in God's Word and Sacraments!

For many already impacted by this virus, there are certainties; dismal certainties. As of this writing there have been thousands of families who are mournfully certain not to be able to hug or hold their loved one any longer in this life. Further, and more generally, it is a sad certainty in this fallen world that many broken relationships will never be repaired, not everyone seeking a paid job will find one, and some will forever be wrestling with some trial or other. But we've got a greater certainty; a certainty which comforts us in our grief, meets doubt with truth, and gives hope for us to endure! It is found in the “living and active, sharper than any double edged sword” Word of God.

Peter might well put it the most poignantly in the first chapter of his second letter. He begins by describing his firsthand experience on the mount of Transfiguration; writing of how he, James and John actually beheld Christ in His glory. “We were eyewitnesses of His majesty.” (2 Peter 16) You will recall that this is where they saw Jesus in His glorified body speaking with none other than Moses and Elijah. Peter further describes actually hearing the voice of God “borne from heaven!” Yet, after sharing this most mountaintop of all mountaintop experiences, Peter writes, “And we have something more sure,” (2 Peter 1:19a). More sure than being firsthand eye witnesses to Christ,

Moses, and Elijah glorified and conversing together on a mountaintop? More sure than hearing firsthand the voice of God the Father booming his confirmation that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God? Yes! The most sure thing of all sure things! “The prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts,” (2 Peter 1:19b). The Word of God through which comes faith (Romans 10:17). For “faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1)

Uncertainty and doubt are great contributors to the fallen frailty we experience in this life. They cloud our vision and darken our world so that we often cannot see the world unfolding ahead of us. But God’s Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. The light of Christ the Word made flesh is not overcome by any darkness (John 1:5), but shines ahead and over the shadow of this world to the hope of the life to come.

Through Holy Baptism, through Holy Absolution, through His Holy Supper, through its ongoing proclamation, God’s Word continually delivers Christ, His Cross, and His Resurrection. Through these means, the Holy Spirit makes use of the Word to hold us steadfast in faith. In this Word we find redemption and life eternal; life where the perishable has put on the imperishable, and the mortal has put on immortality. (1 Cor 15:53)

Another certain thing is the joyous gift of young people confessing their faith in the rite of Confirmation. Confirmation Sunday is on June 28th at the 9:15 service. What better way to celebrate than with the news that we can increase attendance to 75% capacity, which means that we can seat approximately 160 souls in the pews for this joyous day.

We may never in this world be able to have any certainty whatsoever concerning the health and wellbeing of loved ones, nor of our own plans for “success” in this life. But, We believe in the resurrection of the Body (cf. 1 Cor 15:12ff). We know for certain that, for all of us who are in Christ, health and wellbeing will be restored, and every last cell of our frail flesh will be restored, but then indestructible. The brokenness between people in conflict may well remain in this life. But all brokenness will be repaired, as the full realization of our oneness in Christ will be fully revealed at His return.

If the healings and restorations for which God’s people pray do not come to pass in this fallen world, still we know that the Lord Christ, in whose blood we have the forgiveness of sins, likewise makes all things new. This is what we celebrate this Holy Week and Easter, and every Lord’s Day, and every moment of every day as we live out the vocations into which God has called us.

It is with the cross and resurrection of Christ in view that we rejoice and pray with hope and certainty, these words of the Psalmist, “Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his

benefits, who forgives all your sin, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's . . ." (Psalm 103:1-5)

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