

## “Let All Around Us Be Peace”

Peace Be With You! (And also with you.) I had hoped you would say that. In our Easter Sermon, we talked about rollercoasters with ascents and descents. This Gospel reading must be one of the “Ascents,” as the disciples are visited by the Risen Christ. Usually, we are concerned with “Doubting Thomas,” who was missing during the first visit. In these times, though, I’d like to visit the simple greeting of “Peace be with you.”

First, let’s consider what the Apostles must have been going through at the time captured in this reading. From what we can gather, it is Sunday, and they are behind a locked door. Perhaps Thomas had an errand to do or went out to secure food for them. Peter and John had already been to the tomb and had noticed that the body was gone. Not only did they think the Sanhedrin or Romans would come looking for them as followers of Jesus, but maybe they would also blame them for taking the body. Mary Magdalene had already been there to tell them that she had “seen the Lord” and to deliver the message Jesus had given her.

That is a lot to have taken place in just one day, let alone the prior three days. They must have been scared half to death. It would make sense, then, that Jesus would say to them, “Peace be with you” in an attempt to calm their fears and quench their anxiety. He said it again the next time he appeared to them, this time with Thomas present.

Peace is one of those things that the Apostles and disciples needed, and it is one of those things that we continue to need in 2026. One person is saying something, another is saying something else, and another is taking offense at what is being said. And that is just on the national level, let alone what people endure right around us here in Westfield and Southwick. All over our world right now, we have wars, fighting, and anything but peace. Now, our own country has not been under attack since September 11, 2001. Can you imagine what the people in Ukraine, Russia, Lebanon, Israel, and Iran must go through? Let alone what the military people go through, but think about the civilians and children; talk about people who need peace!

I don't know about you, but I feel as though I could use the Risen Christ to come into my space and say, “Peace be with you.” I remarked

to Tina this morning, Easter Sunday feels like a month ago, but it was only last week. So much is going on that we lose track of time, and we get into a time warp where we forget. I think this happens whether you're still working outside of the home as a student or worker, working from home, or retired. I have heard so many retired people say to me, "How did I have time to go to work? I am busier now than I was when I worked full-time."

Our role as Christians, followers of the Risen Christ, is to be a people of peace. It is not always easy to be a follower of the Risen Christ, as we tend to get lost in the world around us. Rest assured that this is not new, as people from past centuries also acknowledged it. They kept grounded in prayers taught to them by their religious leaders.

There is a prayer that is attributed to Patrick of Ireland, or "St. Patrick's Breastplate", that ends

Christ with me,  
Christ before me,  
Christ behind me,  
Christ in me,  
Christ beneath me,  
Christ above me,  
Christ on my right,

Christ on my left,  
Christ when I lie down,  
Christ when I sit down,  
Christ when I arise,  
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,  
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,  
Christ in every eye that sees me,  
Christ in every ear that hears me.

The Native Americans may not have had an organized religion, but they had a sense that they needed peace. A musician combined a Navajo poem with a simple tune

Peace before us, peace behind us,  
Peace under our feet.  
Peace within us, peace over us,  
Let all around us be peace.

The musician added a verse that may help to keep us grounded:

Christ before us, Christ behind us,  
Christ under our feet.  
Christ within us, Christ over us,  
Let all around us be Christ.

This week, let all around us be Christ! Let all around us be peace!  
Amen!