

- “*Peace be with you*”. Such a wonderful phrase that Jesus repeats over and over.
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 - Now our Gospel today gives us a primary basis for the wonderful sacrament of confession...a sacrament which affords great peace.
 - We often hear non-Catholics—and even many Catholics—will dispute the need for confession. “*I don’t have to confess my sins to a man. I confess directly to God!*”
 - Well, that would be fine...IF that were how God wants us to do it...but, after Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit upon the apostles (the first bishops), He tells them: “*I send you...*”
 - Well, to whom is He sending them but to the whole world...and to the beginnings of the Church?
 - And then Jesus says: “*Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.*”
 - He doesn’t say: “Oh, just tell them to confess their sins directly to God, and they’ll be forgiven.” If He had, the authority to forgive and retain sins would be rendered moot and pointless.
 - Jesus gave authority to the bishops of the Church in the apostles to govern and guide the people of God, and for 2000 years the Church has discerned the requirement of confession for serious, mortal sin. Would it not be quite presumptuous if we, as comparative “babes in the woods” as goes theology, decide to do otherwise?
 - We CAN confess smaller, venial sins directly to God, but mortal sins must be confessed for forgiveness. This is what the Church binds us to, and thus it is bound in Heaven through the keys of the kingdom given to Peter.
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- We remember how even the early Israelites confessed sins in the presence of the priest during sin offering sacrifices, as in Leviticus 5: “*When a man is guilty in any of these, he shall confess the sin he has committed, and he shall bring his guilt offering to the LORD... and the priest shall make atonement for him for his sin.*” (Leviticus 5:6)
- Sounds quite a bit like confession, doesn't it?
- Or, in Numbers: “*When a man or woman commits any of the sins that men commit...he shall confess his sin...and he shall make full restitution for his wrong...*” (Numbers 5:6-7)
- And much later, in the book of Nehemiah: “*...the people of Israel were assembled with fasting and in sackcloth...and [they] stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers.*” (Nehemiah 9:1-2)
- At the Jordan with John the Baptist, the Gospel tell us that the people: “*...were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.*” (Matthew 3:6)
- And in the letter of James: “*...confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.*” (James 5:16)
Is this not what happens in confession?

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- Confession, I think, not only grants forgiveness, but also teaches even in the earthly realm how to cultivate good society...to make amends for wrongdoing, and thus smooth the way for closer human relationships.
 - Perhaps this is a reason God instituted this sacrament, because when we supposedly “confess our sins directly to God,” in reality we simply dismiss our sins, with very little humility, penance or accountability.

- But, if we have a true disposition of repentance...through the keys of the kingdom given to Peter, we can be assured of forgiveness in sacramental confession, by that power of binding and loosing given to the Church.
- And, then, when we exit the confessional, we can almost hear the words of Jesus to the apostles today: *“Peace be with you.”*
- But we must be sincerely repentant, and not presume on God’s forgiveness.
- As we read in Psalm 19: *“Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.”* (Psalm 19:13-14)

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- Now today is the Feast of Divine Mercy, focusing especially upon God’s loving mercy—reinforced by the writing of St. Faustina.
 - Confession itself IS a great sacrament of mercy...sins against God and our fellow men and women erased via sincere sorrow for sin, a resolve to try not to sin again, and a few moments of humility in confession. What could be easier; what could be more merciful?
 - Yes, God already knows our sins, but that’s not the point; in confession, we “apologize” to God, and receive forgiveness through His priest...as He apparently wants us to do, as Jesus gives that power of forgiving and retaining of sins in our Gospel today.
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 - For 2000 years the Church has taught this...given through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
 - So find comfort in Church’s teaching, for in a world that scoffs at God, it takes courage and determination to remain faithful. But those who stand truly with Christ will one day know everlasting

life with Him, and hear those words forever: *“Peace be with you.”*

Reading 1 [Acts 4:32-35](#)

The community of believers was of one heart and mind,
and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own,
but they had everything in common.

With great power the apostles bore witness
to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus,
and great favor was accorded them all.

There was no needy person among them,
for those who owned property or houses would sell them,
bring the proceeds of the sale,
and put them at the feet of the apostles,
and they were distributed to each according to need.

Responsorial Psalm [Ps 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24](#)

R. (1) **Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, his love is everlasting.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

Let the house of Israel say,
"His mercy endures forever."

Let the house of Aaron say,
"His mercy endures forever."

Let those who fear the LORD say,
"His mercy endures forever."

R. **Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, his love is everlasting.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

I was hard pressed and was falling,
but the LORD helped me.

My strength and my courage is the LORD,
and he has been my savior.

The joyful shout of victory
in the tents of the just:

R. **Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, his love is everlasting.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

The stone which the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.

By the LORD has this been done;
it is wonderful in our eyes.

This is the day the LORD has made;
let us be glad and rejoice in it.

R. **Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, his love is everlasting.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

Reading II [1 Jn 5:1-6](#)

Beloved:

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten by God,
and everyone who loves the Father
loves also the one begotten by him.

In this way we know that we love the children of God
when we love God and obey his commandments.

For the love of God is this,
that we keep his commandments.
And his commandments are not burdensome,
for whoever is begotten by God conquers the world.
And the victory that conquers the world is our faith.
Who indeed is the victor over the world
but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

This is the one who came through water and blood, Jesus Christ,
not by water alone, but by water and blood.

The Spirit is the one that testifies,
and the Spirit is truth.

Gospel [Jn 20:19-31](#)

On the evening of that first day of the week,
when the doors were locked, where the disciples were,
for fear of the Jews,

Jesus came and stood in their midst
and said to them, "Peace be with you."

When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side.

The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you.

As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them,
"Receive the Holy Spirit.

Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them,
and whose sins you retain are retained."

Thomas, called Didymus, one of the Twelve,
was not with them when Jesus came.

So the other disciples said to him, "We have seen the Lord."

But he said to them,

"Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands
and put my finger into the nailmarks
and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

Now a week later his disciples were again inside
and Thomas was with them.

Jesus came, although the doors were locked,
and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you."

Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands,
and bring your hand and put it into my side,
and do not be unbelieving, but believe."

Thomas answered and said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

Jesus said to him, "Have you come to believe because you have seen me?
Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed."

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples
that are not written in this book.

But these are written that you may come to believe
that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,
and that through this belief you may have life in his name.