

“Confrontation and Transformation” – John 20: 19-31- Easter II.A – April 19, 2020 – St. Martin’s Episcopal Church

Let us pray. . . . Gracious and Eternal God, accept our thanks for the Peace that is ours because of the Risen Christ. At this time, let the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable offerings to you, O Lord our Strength and our Redeemer. Amen

I. Martin was a 17 year old young man. He enjoyed pepperoni pizza, chocolate milk shakes, and Friday night football games. For a couple of years, Martin’s parents had offered him some suggestions. They suggested that he would look better if he would wear a shirt with a collar and a pair of pants that did not have holes in the knees. And he would look so much more presentable if his shoes were cleaned - at least occasionally. And it would be nice if he would comb his hair – at least once in a while. Unfortunately, all of this parental advice and encouragement had little effect on Martin. It went in one ear and out the other. But then one day, Martin came to the breakfast table with a clean shirt that had a collar. Martin’s jeans had no holes. His shoes were clean. Martin’s hair was neatly groomed. Everyone in the family sat at the breakfast table in stunned silence. Even the neighbor noticed the new Martin as he walked to school on that particular morning. After everyone had left for work or school, the neighbor raced across the lawn. She knocked on the door, opened it, and sat down at the kitchen table with Martin’s mother. Half out of breath, she asked – what happened to Martin? And with a big smile on her face, Martin’s mother replied – Julie - the new girl down the street.

A. There was a confrontation in Martin’s life. The confrontation came in the person of Julie – the new girl down the street. And because of this confrontation – Martin had a transformation. There was a significant change in Martin’s life. Martin was transformed into a renewed person. And the change or transformation was 1) neat and presentable clothes, 2) clean shoes, and 3) neatly groomed hair. And notice how the transformation happened. The transformation in Martin’s life did not happen because of convincing arguments or frequent suggestions. Martin changed his habits and life style because of a personal encounter – a personal encounter with his new friend – Julie, the new girl down the street.

B. In our Gospel reading for today, we have another story about a confrontation and a transformation. A group of Jesus’ disciples were gathered together on Sunday evening. Two days earlier their teacher and leader and friend was put to death on a cross. They were afraid. The disciples wondered and were worried. Would the Romans come after them? Would they be crucified on a cross? The disciples were trying to find some security by locking the doors to their meeting room. The disciples were also hurt. They felt abandoned. They felt discouraged, skeptical, and perhaps even cynical. Their hearts were filled with ache and pain. They had received some bumps and bruises from the school of hard knocks. Because of these real and raw feelings, the disciples closed the doors to their heart

C. But thankfully there was a confrontation in the disciples’ lives. Locked doors to a meeting room do not hobble or hinder Jesus’ mission. Closed doors to hearts that were filled with hurt and sorrow and ache do not hold Jesus’ captive. As we heard in our Gospel reading, Jesus penetrates the door to the disciples’ meeting room. And just as importantly, Jesus penetrates the locked doors to the disciples’ hearts. Jesus opens himself up to the disciples – the ones who had

deserted and denied him. Christ comes into their lives and says four simple words – Peace be with you.

D. The Risen Lord Jesus Christ confronted the hurt and frightened and discouraged disciples. Because there was a confrontation there was a transformation. Our Gospel reading tells us that the disciples unlocked the doors to their meeting room. And more importantly they opened the doors to their hearts. There was a change in the lives of the disciples. The disciples were no longer focusing inwardly on themselves – on their struggles and on their strains and on their security. Instead, with peace they looked outward. With hope and joy they looked forward. There was a confrontation by the Risen Christ and as a result there was a transformation that happened in the lives of the disciple

II. Katie was a 13 year old girl. As a young child, she was tragically struck with polio. This dreaded disease caused the young girl to have one leg that was two inches shorter than the other. The malady caused Katie to have many, many back problems. For several years, Katie prayed that God would remedy her situation. But her back problems continued – day after day, week after week, year after year. One day Katie went and talked to her pastor. After that conversation, Katie went home and said to her mother – I learned something today. What did you learn asked her mother. And Katie replied – I learned that Jesus loves me even if things don't turn out like I think they should. For young Katie, there was a confrontation and a transformation in her life. Katie's pastor helped her to confront the care and concern and compassion of the Risen Christ. And because of this confrontation, there was a transformation in her life. Katie was able to live with the peace of the Risen Christ.

A. How many of us can identify with young 13 year old Katie? Personally, I can quickly and easily identify with her. It's no secret that during these past few weeks, you and I have been impacted by the coronavirus. Our lives have been disrupted. Perhaps, we know of someone that is ill because of this nasty virus. Perhaps, we are one who is ill. This virus has changed and inconvenienced our lives. Trips to the grocery store or to a friend's home or to St. Martins are no longer quick and easy routines. Social Distancing are two new words in our vocabulary. We are stressed. It's easy to be frustrated and impatient. At another time and another place one person prayed – God give me patience and give it to me right now.

B. Perhaps our hearts are full of ache for other reasons. We want to visit and be with grandchildren, family members, or friends. Our hearts may be filled with pain because of a friend's sickness or a recent death or some other tragic event. We may feel discouraged or skeptical or even cynical. We may quietly say to ourselves – it's not supposed to happen this way.

C. For all those stressful events in our lives and all those difficult situations, there is a confrontation. The Risen Christ confronts you and me with four simple but powerful words – Peace be with you. Christ wants us to know about His personal care and His everlasting love. The Risen Christ wants us to know about His perfect promises and His eternal presence in our lives. Christ promises to be with us always – to be with us at all times and in all places.

D. And because of the Risen Christ's confrontation, there can be transformation. The transformation is not the quick removal of hurt or a quick disappearance of the struggle in our lives. The transformation is not an instant elimination of tears or sorrow or fear. The peace of the Risen Christ does not mean that our lives will be pain free or struggle free. Instead, the transformation is knowing that hurt and ache do not have the last word. The transformation is knowing that because of the Risen Christ our tears and sorrow and fear and pain are not the end of the story.

E. The risen Christ wants us to know that He has destroyed the ultimate powers of sin and death and evil. Therefore, where there is sorrow, the Risen Christ offers comfort. Where there is stress or struggle in our lives, the Risen Christ offers His care and compassion. Where there is despair, the Risen Christ offers us His hope. Where there is guilt, the Risen Christ offers us His forgiveness. Our sins are forgiven, forgotten, and gone forever. Where there is fear, the Risen Christ offers us His courage and His strength. Where there is loneliness, Christ offers us His everlasting presence. Where there is worry, the Risen Christ offers us His peace. This past week, I read an instructive statement – "Worry does not take away tomorrow's troubles – worry takes away peace."

F. The Risen Christ is Lord over everything – from A to Z – everything in our lives. He is not just Lord over all that is positive and pleasant. The Risen Christ also reigns over sadness and skepticism and hurt and pain. Therefore, we can live with comfort and hope and courage and strength and hope – and peace. Or as Katie the teenager said so well – Jesus loves me, even if things don't turn out like I think they should. In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

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