

Easter 2 – April 7, 2024

Text: Antiphon for the Introit

Theme: Like Newborn Babes

Today is Quasimodogeniti Sunday. We have lost the mysterious name in the new hymnal. Now we refer to this Sunday with the grand and illustrious name, Easter 2. But when I was a kid, I would look up on the hymn board on the Sunday after Easter and see the title Quasimodogeniti. No, we are not honoring the Hunchback of Notre Dame. It is a Latin term that translates the first words of St. Peter's Epistle in chapter 2 verse 2, "like newborn infants." That verse shows up as the antiphon of the Introit appointed for this day:

"Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation—if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good."

Now that the battle has been fought and won on the cross, and Christ is victorious, we find ourselves in a strange new place. There is nothing left for us to do. Think of what it feels like the first day of a 2-week vacation. Two whole weeks of rest and relaxation stretch out before you. It is important to build in in rest when we take a vacation because that is the point of a vacation, to rest and renew your strength. That is sort of where we are the Sunday after Easter.

We have been washed clean of sin. We are like newborn babies with our whole lives before us. I remember baptizing Neal and Noah, and I remember wondering what their lives would be like as I poured the water over their heads and witnessed the Holy Spirit washing away all their sin and making them children of God. I was privileged to watch a whole new life unfold. That's how it is for me here too because I have been here long enough to have watched many children I baptized grow into adults. I have even been able to baptize children of children I confirmed! Maybe I will even one day get to baptize a child of a child I baptized. That faith that is given us at Baptism holds onto our salvation but it is a young faith. Even if you are 90 years old, by God's standards you are barely out of infancy – maybe you are a toddler compared to the rest of us infants but adulthood is still a long way away.

On this Sunday after Easter, Peter challenges us to make plans for what we will do with this phenomenal gift that has been dropped into our laps. Salvation is a little bit like a new outfit. That's where the tradition of baptismal gowns comes from. By his death and resurrection, Christ took our old, soiled, suit of sin and replaced it with a brand new, beautiful suit of salvation. The problem is, our new suit of salvation is not a perfect fit for us. Now don't get me wrong, the suit is perfect top to bottom, inside and out. The problem

is that we are an imperfect size. It is as though I took my size 48 long suit and draped it over a kid. It might be a fine suit, but it wouldn't be a very good fit. There would be a great deal of room for growth into that suit.

We are all newborn babies in a perfect suit of salvation. Our challenge is to spend the rest of our lives growing into that suit. And how do babies grow? We're all aware of the nutritional guidelines for children. Babies need milk. And eventually, they work their way up to strained carrots and mashed potatoes and someday they can eat steak. The point is that none of us would fill our baby's bottle with Mt. Dew. But spiritually speaking, the world is full of junk food. You and I are assaulted daily with all manner of sinful delights in all their various forms. I could spend hours just listing all the sins that come across our paths on a daily basis, but the point is that just as a diet of Mt. Dew would make a baby sick and eventually kill him, spiritual junk food rots and decays our faith on a daily basis. And if faith withers and dies, we no longer would be able to hold on to the gifts of God's grace.

That is why God offers us a balanced diet. He gives us his Word and Sacraments. And God promises that when we consume that Word and Sacrament, our faith will grow. On a regular basis, we lay out this feast of Word and Sacrament. We have 3 or more

opportunities to worship every week. We have 3 opportunities to receive the Lord's Supper. We have several opportunities to study God's word. And all of that is just what goes on here at the church, not counting what you all might do at home on your own: family devotions, Bible stories for the children, Bible discussions.

However, God will not force us to eat. We can choose to work, or play, or sleep, or do anything we want instead of consuming Word and Sacrament. We have within our power to eat what we want, but bear in mind that we are always eating. The question is, is it the pure spiritual milk that God offers or the junk food of Satan? When we are choosing to stay away from God's banquet, it does not mean that we are ceasing to eat. It means we are choosing to eat something else. We are choosing to gluttonously revel in the veritable feast of iniquity which the world has to offer. One way or the other, one place or the other we are always eating – always drinking in whatever is around us and that could be hymns and songs of praise or that could be the dark and forlorn lyrics of some of the popular music. We could be taking in inspirational and motivational messages from God's word or immersing ourselves in all manner of sick and twisted ideas found on Netflix, Hulu, and HBO. The point is that we are always receiving food. The only question is

what kind of food are we receiving and how is what we are receiving affecting us?

The Bible tells us to taste and see that the Lord is good, but tasting is more than sitting in church to appease your parents or spouse without connecting to what is going on. Tasting is more than having a dust laden Bible sitting on a bookcase somewhere at home. Tasting is experiencing, enjoying, partaking, obtaining. Just as physical taste is not just a chemical process, so spiritual taste is more than just being there. When we taste something, a whole range of feelings and emotions is involved. All of us probably have some food that we loathe mostly because of a bad experience associated with that food. All of us have foods that are special to us because of the good experiences associated with that food. For instance, Grandma's perogies were probably not all that special, but they are associated with grandma who was all that special.

You and I daily have to travel out into the world. Although we are not of the world anymore, we have been set aside by our Baptisms, we are forced to be in the world until we die. The world has many tastes to offer us and most of those tastes would be unpleasant to us if Satan did not interfere. He sugarcoats the rotten flavors of the world so that we will be tempted to swallow the spoiled, decaying slop of Satan. And each time we do, our faith is

poisoned. Each time we take the Lord's name in vain, or get drunk or high, or participate in sexual sin, or gossip about someone or place worldly things above the things of God, we swallow the evil excrement of Satan.

But then, after a day of sugarcoated sourness from Satan, Jesus invites us to a feast of the pure milk of the Gospel. We can open our Bibles and taste God's pure love for us. We can remember the Baptismal waters that flow over us and remember the clean, refreshing water of forgiveness. We can receive the body and blood of Christ and in the Holy Supper, receive the very Lord God into our bodies. And our faith grows stronger.

Last Sunday, Christ swallowed all the evil Satan could muster. He tasted every bitter sin for us. Now we have tasted the kingly love of God and we are as newborn babies. All sin is washed from us. All the sourness of sin and Satan is washed from our mouths. Now there is a cool refreshing taste that is full of faith but yet desiring to taste more of God's love. Faith empowers us to strengthen faith. It is by feeding on God's Word and Sacrament that we become powerful enough to push away from Satan's table. We no longer crave his filth when we are full of righteousness. God's feast is ready. Come to the feast.