

## "Your Sorrow Will Be Turned into Joy" John 16:16-22 Jubilate 2022

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Maundy Thursday was melancholy for Jesus' disciples. The Lord announced His last will and gave his New Testament when He instituted His Supper. He told them what would happen to Him in a matter of hours. The Lord knew that His time of departure, His hour of death, was drawing near, for it was Holy Week. The disciples were soon to lose their Teacher, Master, and Lord. They had been with Him for three years, learning from Him as He taught them. They grew very close as they had been with each other day in and day out. Yet the time was at hand when the disciples would not see their Lord, for they would not see Him following the Crucifixion until the third day. But on the third day, they would see Him alive—resurrected—risen from the dead! Jesus said they would see Him, and they would rejoice, except for the fact that they were too dumbfounded to recognize their risen Lord. Eventually, they would get it; they would finally realize that Christ is risen; their sorrow would finally turn to joy.

But their joy would not be permanent. Jesus said they would see Him because He goes to the Father. He would be with them for 40 days following His resurrection. On the 40th day, He would go to His Father; He would ascend into heaven, where He would sit at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. The Lord says in our text, "A little while, and

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you will not see Me; and again in a little while, and you will see Me, because I go to the Father" (v. 16). The soon-to-be apostles would indeed see Him as they, one by one, would be martyred for the faith, except for John, and they would eternally rest from their labours, and they would see the Lord face to face, in all His glory, in heaven.

And so it is with us today, this Fourth Sunday of Easter, that we begin to turn our faces from the empty tomb toward heaven as we begin to look forward to celebrating our Lord's ascension, as He leads us to the marriage feast of the Lamb in His kingdom, which has no end. This hope, this certainty, gives us joy, which no one will ever take from us.

And no matter what we undergo in this fallen world, no matter what we suffer, no matter what sinful, shameful things we do, and no matter what we see going on around us, we can take comfort that the Lord is still near us, that He is in fact with us. Saint John testifies as he says in Revelation 21, "And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God'" (Rev. 21:3). He is with us, for His Name, Immanuel means "God with us." He promised His disciples and promises us in the last chapter of St. Matthew, "I am with you always, even to the end of the

"Your Sorrow Will Be Turned into Joy" John 16:16-22 Jubilate 2022 age" (Mt. 28:20b). As the Lord instructed John, the Holy Spirit instructed Matthew, "Write, for these words are true and faithful" (Rev. 21:5b). This means that our God has promised to be with us, no matter what happens.

Jesus, our Immanuel, is with us today in His Word. Yet we do not see Him, but by faith, we behold Him, for we walk by faith and not by sight. The heavenly Bridegroom is with His Bride, the Church, whom He has cleansed with His blood, making her presentable to God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. Behold, He who makes all things new has made us new. He made us new at our Baptism and in our living our Baptism, as the Old Adam in us drowns and dies each day in all sins and evil desires and as the new man daily emerges and arises to live before God in righteousness and purity forever. He makes us new in the forgiveness of sins, which is an extension of our Baptism. He made us new this morning at the beginning of Divine Service. We see our risen Lord in His body and blood, tasting His forgiveness upon our lips. Behold, He who has made us new will make us new again at the resurrection of the body on the Last Day when He will raise us and all the dead, and give eternal life to us and all believers in Christ. The old body will be gone, and we shall look like Christ, for we will regain the image of God once lost in the Fall.

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Whatever sorrow we have for our not being in heaven, in God's kingdom of glory, will turn to joy as the Lord has claimed us as His own and will gather us to Himself on the Last Day, "and God will wipe away every tear from [our] eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Rev. 21:4). As the Lord says in our text, "Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you" (v. 22).

As we begin to focus on our Lord's ascension, we keep in mind the central message of Easter, that Christ who once was slain has burst His three-day prison. The disciples were in sorrow for the Lord's body lay in the tomb, and they saw Him not. But their sorrow turned to joy when they saw the risen Lord, who gave them His peace. The peace He gave them He also gives to us, that peace which the world cannot give. Jesus Christ died so that we would not sorrow but live in the forgiveness He won on the cross for us. And now is Christ arisen...He lives! "He lives to silence all my fears; He lives to wipe away my tears; He lives to calm my troubled heart; He lives all blessings to impart" (LSB 461:5). God grant this in Jesus' Name and for His sake.

Christ is risen! HE IS RISEN, INDEED! ALLELUIA! Amen.