

# MISERICORDIAS DOMINI

**May 5 2019**

Old Testament: Ezekiel 34:11-16

Epistle: 1 Peter 2:21-25

Gospel: John 10:11-16

## ***Standing...***

Alleluia! Christ is risen!  
He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Beloved in the Lord, grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

## ***Sitting...***

I want to take this morning to speak to our catechumens...

Actually, every Sunday, either Pr. Bruss or myself, speak to catechumens.

But those are not just the ones before us in white robes and wooden crosses...

Catechumens are those who have been catechized,  
or in the words of Matthew,  
those who have been taught to observe all  
that our Lord has commanded.

The Lord Jesus Himself has taught you  
His word and through His Word He gives you faith.

Specifically,

Payton, Chance, Jenna, Zoe, Bella, Mollie, Aiden, Avary, Kylie and Zach  
today is a joyful day when you stand before God and before the church  
confessing the faith that Jesus Himself has taught you.

You sons and daughters of the King...sons and daughters of the Church.

You have been given the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

*The faith, the Scriptures say,*

because we are not to have our own private set of beliefs  
nor are we to have fellowship with those who claim to.

When it comes to faith, we lose our individuality and conform ourselves,  
to hold and confess the faith—  
the teaching of Scripture—  
the Word of Jesus.

On this joyful day when you confess the faith and pledge yourselves in faithfulness,  
 you also should hear, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest  
 the stark words Jesus spoke to His first disciples.

Like you, these disciples had also heard His word  
 and pledged their faithfulness to Him.

But on the dark night of His betrayal,  
 on the Mt. of Olives

Jesus told them, "You will all fall away."

Without hesitation, Peter swore he was different—he would never fall away.

He said emphatically, "Even if I must die with You Jesus, I will not deny You."  
 And all the other disciples agreed.

At most, only a few hours pass until Judas kisses Jesus,  
 and the mob with swords and clubs lay hands on Him.

With that, Peter and all the other disciples run away.

Why did they flee?

These men who were closest to Jesus...?

These catechumens catechized directly by the Lord...?

If you have not yet discovered in yourself the reason why they fled  
 the day is coming when you will.

The same weakness that caused Jesus' first confirmation class  
 to forsake and flee Him is the same sinful weakness  
 dwelling in the heart of every Christian.

One of the jokes I heard as I colloquized into the LCMS was,

"How do you get rid of the bats in the belfry...?"

"You catechize them."

Since I didn't grow up with a process of catechesis and  
 a rite of conformation, I didn't really get the joke at first.

But sadly, now I do.

For I see it all too often,  
 and it's not funny. It's a shame.

You catechize the bats—you teach and teach and teach—

you show the bats where God promises to meet them,  
 you teach the bats how to hear God's voice, and know His will,

how to pray, how to worship,

and how to receive the forgiveness of their sins.

You confirm the bats, giving them a verse to hold onto  
 and a faith to grow into their entire life...  
 And what do the bats do?  
     Just fly away...  
     maybe, to circle around the belfry on Easter or Christmas.

Dear catechumens, pray this never describes you.  
 Nor describes you older catechumens.

Pray to remain steadfast in the vows you make this morning—or have made in the past.  
 Pray that you will always confess the faith that our Lord Jesus teaches in His word.

Because if Jesus' first confirmation class found itself scattered in the darkness,  
 the time could come when you find yourself lost in the darkness as well.

Now the Scriptures don't try to hide this ugly truth.  
 The disciples forsook Jesus and fled.  
 As a matter of fact, there was a young man,  
     following after Jesus who was wearing  
     nothing but a linen cloth.  
     It was late at night. It must have been what he was sleeping in.  
     And when a guard seized him, he squirmed out of the  
     linen cloth and ran away naked.

Tradition tells us this mystery man was Mark—  
 that this was his own account of his encounter with Jesus...  
     who'd rather run naked into the night  
     than be seen associating with His Lord.

The Scriptures don't hide this weakness of ours...  
 Whether it's Peter rebuking our Lord for speaking of the cross.  
 Whether it's Peter, James and John falling asleep in the garden  
 or whether it's Mark running away naked...  
     there's no intent on the part of these men to hide their betrayal.  
     Men, who once boasted that they would rather die than deny Him  
     now left Him for dead.

As a result, Jesus is left alone to walk the way of the cross.  
 The same feet our Lord Jesus stooped down to wash that very night  
 now carry His disciples away.

Only our Lord Jesus remained,  
 to walk to Calvary, which is why He came.  
 No less than three times Jesus told His catechumens  
 He would suffer,  
 be rejected by His own and die.

Didn't He tell them that He is the good shepherd—  
 who would lay down His life for the sheep?

Didn't He tell them that there is no greater love than this  
 that a Man would lay down His own life for His friends?

His disciples wanted Jesus to go another way,  
 but His feet knew no other way than the way that led to the cross.  
 His, the little infant feet in Mary's hands.  
 His, the feet that carried Him to the Jordan River to be baptized in our sins.  
 His, the feet that were anointed with perfume and tears  
 and dried with a sinner's hair.  
 His, the feet that carried Him to Golgotha,  
 staggering under the wood and all of your sin.  
 His, the feet, gored and pierced through with Roman spikes.  
***Behold the feet of God,  
 the bloody and beautiful feet of Him  
 who brings the good news.***  
 Only He could walk the way of the cross.

Again, His disciples swore that they'd rather die than betray Him—  
 but betray Him they did.  
 And if we were to look upon Him as He hung upon the cross,  
 we too would see the One whom we have betrayed.  
 How we betray Him is no great mystery.  
 We do so countless times in the course of each day.

For, out of the heart of man come evil thoughts,  
 sexual perversion of every kind,  
 murderous thoughts and deeds.  
 Greed for what we do not have.  
 Little lies and great big ones.  
 The gossip we tell and listen to,  
 and the grudges we enjoy holding on to. The list goes on and on.

Every sin is a departure from Him,  
 but every sin is what our Lord carried in His flesh for you.  
 Every sin He carried to the cross,  
 that there He might endure the wrath of God in your place.

When God, in His own words, says that  
 Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world...  
 God means that He takes away the sins of the world.

When God in His word says that  
 the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin...  
 God means that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin,  
 including every betrayal.

The question though is,  
 how do you receive this blood?  
 How does this blood come to cleanse you?

Your Lord Jesus Himself tells us.  
 He puts His cup to your sin parched lips saying, "Drink of it, all of you.  
 This cup is the New Testament in My blood which is shed for you for the  
 forgiveness of sins."

If you were to ask Jesus, "What is the New Testament?"  
 He would say, "This cup—this cup is the New Testament."  
 This cup is My blood shed for you.  
 This cup is My blood that cleanses you from all your sins.  
 Most Christians have no idea what the New Testament is  
 or where to get His blood.  
 If you asked them, they would give you all kinds of answers before  
 pointing you where Jesus Himself points you—  
 "This cup is the New Testament in My blood for you,"  
 "for your forgiveness."

See, none of us can go back in time.  
 We cannot get to Jesus' cross, no matter how hard we try.  
 But in the cup—His cross and passion come to you.

One drop of His holy blood is an ocean of absolution.  
 One drop of His holy blood cleanses you from every sin.  
 One drop is all you need to forgive every betrayal.

So, when you receive His cup for the first time this morning  
 or when you receive it any other time,  
 you're making a very simple confession—  
 the most important confession of all.

With your lips to His cup, you're confessing that you're a sinner in need of forgiveness.  
 And into your lips, Jesus pours His cleansing blood.

Dear catechumens, on the night when Jesus was betrayed, He said to His disciples,  
 "You will all fall away."  
 They did, and we have too—some longer than others....  
 But on that very same night, He gave His cup—  
 the place where we may always return and receive His forgiveness—  
 the New Testament in His blood.

This means, the cup of Jesus marks the spot—  
 the spot where all who have betrayed and deserted Him  
 might come to be restored.

The cup of Jesus marks the spot—where the conscience soiled with sin  
 might be cleansed and the weary soul set free.

The cup of Jesus marks the spot—where the learn'ed man silences his faulty reason  
 and believes the words of his Lord...just like a little child.

The cup of Jesus marks the spot—  
 where you can always find forgiveness.  
 Where you can always find your Good Shepherd.  
 Where you can always find your Lord and God.

Might the joke of the confirmed bats who leave the belfry  
 never, ever describe you.

In the Holy Name of Jesus, Amen.

**Standing...** And now may the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.