

*“And as they were eating, He took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, ‘Take; this is My body.’ And He took a cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And He said to them, ‘This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.’”*

What we just heard is the eye of the storm. When a hurricane arrives, the winds are fierce and relentless. For some time, the storm rages. And then the eye of the storm arrives and the hurricane pauses. The winds are calm. There are clear skies overhead. It is a time of relief and of rest. But not a time to let down the guard. For soon the latter part of the hurricane will arrive. The winds, again, will be fierce, perhaps even stronger than before.

For Jesus, the storm came early. Even as an infant, Herod sought to kill Him. After His baptism, the devil was relentless with his temptations. The storm did not let up. The Pharisees, the scribes, the Sadducees all came after Him. When they could not entrap Him, they plotted to kill Him.

But now in the upper room we see Jesus with His disciples. They are there alone. Away from all the temptations and attacks. It is the eye of the storm. The winds are calm. The skies overhead are clear. It is a time to rest. A time to be refreshed. It is time for the Holy Sacrament. Jesus gives His body and blood to His disciples.

That time is here tonight. I can see it on your faces, as you can see it on mine. The storm has not been gentle with you, nor with me. The devil has been just as relentless with us as he was with Jesus and His disciples. The winds of sorrow and trouble have been blowing fiercely in our lives. And oftentimes we ourselves are the cause of the very winds that trouble us.

But tonight, those winds are not blowing. Tonight, there is calm. Not because we cease to be sinful. Not because the devil will let us be. It is because we gather here tonight with Jesus and with His disciples. Yes, with all His disciples. With all the saints in heaven. For them, the storm is over. For them, there is only rest and peace in Christ forevermore.

For us, too, the storm has been stilled. Not forever, but for now. This is the eye of the storm. For here before us, for you and for me, is the very body and blood of Christ. Here there is forgiveness for our sins. Here there is rest and peace in Jesus. Here we are refreshed and renewed. We are strengthened. And this we need. For from here we go out into the latter part of the storm.

Jesus endured that latter part also. And it was much worse than the first part of the storm. From the upper room He goes to Gethsemane. He is arrested, tried, and convicted. He is executed on a cross for crimes that, not He, but that we have done. Yet Jesus endured the storm of the Father's wrath. He endured it for you and me.

Because He did, we are able to gather here and receive all that we need. This is why there is calm and peace in the eye of the storm. It is what Jesus brings and gives to us. He knows what the storm has already done to us. He knows that for us, the storm is not over. And so He gives us this

time with Him. He gives us His body and blood to refresh us and strengthen us. And more, He gives us the forgiveness we need. You, my friend and fellow sinner, are forgiven of all your sins. Every one of you is forgiven. And you are strengthened here in the Sacrament. In Christ you are strengthened. He comes into you to resist sin and the devil's temptations for you. Every time you come to receive your Lord you are strengthened. For each time we gather here, we come into the eye of the storm.

And this is a foretaste of what is to come. The rest and peace we have here in Christ within the eye of the storm points us to the day when the storm will be over; when we will join the saints in heaven; where no winds blow, where no troubles or sorrows can reach us.

That day will come when Jesus drinks of the fruit of the vine anew in the heavenly kingdom of God with us. But it is not yet. Now the storm is still with us. But fear not. The same Jesus who endured the storm for you goes with you into your storm. And He will continue to give you rest and relief here in His Sacrament for you, here in the eye of the storm. Amen.