

EASTER OF RESURRECTION

Good has triumphed: Christ is risen!

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The Resurrection of Jesus is the heart of the Christian proclamation. St Paul, writing to the Christians of Corinth, emphasises that this is the news that has been transmitted to him and he faithfully transmits it to the various communities: *“For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the Twelve”*

(1 Cor 15:3-5). This news is so important and decisive that St Paul goes so far as to exclaim: *"If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty, and your faith is also empty. We, then, are false witnesses to God, because we have testified against God that he raised Christ"* (1 Cor 15:14-15).

"Christ is risen!" This joyful news is transmitted from generation to generation and is strengthened by the witness of the martyrs and saints; and wherever it reaches us, it kindles hope and confirms the expectation of a new world. Yes, today we say it before the world, we shout it before our conscience, which is tempted to return to distrust: *Christ is risen!*

The truth that sustains everything, the pillar that gives stability to the whole immense vault of human history is a joyful proclamation: the world is moving towards a destination of happiness, which is beyond and above all our imagination.

"The most horrible blasphemy that has ever escaped human lips", wrote Paul Claudel, *"is the following: perhaps the truth is sad!"*. This dubious statement is Ernest Renan's, and Claudel hits the nail on the head when he says it is a horrible blasphemy.

No! We believe exactly the opposite of what Renan said: the truth is joyful, because the ultimate truth is the Resurrection.

Faith in the Resurrection commits us to love life, to believe in life, to defend the meaning of life, to fill all life with joy.

But how did the Resurrection of Christ come about? How did this extraordinary event, which initiated the whole adventure of Christianity, take place?

Everything happened in the style that Christ had inaugurated in Bethlehem: the Resurrection did not explode like a deafening bomb, but blossomed silently like a splendid spring flower. Why?

Because God does not like clamour and does not seek foolish revenge: God is God; God is not a man!

The prophet Hosea reminds us of this in words that are a clear invitation to throw away every human measure when approaching the deeds of God: *"My people are hard to convert: called to look up, none can lift up their gaze. How can I abandon you, Ephraim, how can I hand you over to others, Israel? [...] My heart is moved within me [...]. I will not give vent to the ardour of my anger [...] because I am God and not man"* (Hos 11:7-9).

However, one fact objectively imposes itself on the honest reflection of anyone open to the truth. The fact is this.

Suddenly a group of frightened men (at the hour of the Passion they had all run away

and the leader of the group had even repudiated the Master) is transformed into a handful of brave men, willing to face even death.

Why? Nothing happens without a cause! So what is the cause of this transformation?

The Apostles say they have seen the Risen Jesus. Did these men deceive themselves? Was it a collective hallucination?

No! Everyone agrees that it is impossible to have a collective hallucination that lasts for years and does not fall even under the impact of persecution and martyrdom.

Human behaviour follows constants: if, in this case, one accepts the explanation of hallucination, one must also admit that human history follows no law and no constant. Others still ask: is it possible that a group of Jews, strictly monotheistic, could suddenly kneel before a man who proclaims himself the Son of God and dies on the Cross, the slaves' scaffold?

Something must have happened, something must have imposed itself on the "*reason*" of these men, otherwise we would find ourselves, once again, before an inexplicable and absurd behaviour.

But there is an explanation: it is the Resurrection of Jesus!

In fact, *the faith* in the Resurrection can only be explained by *the fact* of the Resurrection.

We can add a further reflection. If, absurdly, the Resurrection of Jesus were "fake history", we must ask ourselves: is it ever possible that from a fake history the greatest ideal movement known to history is born and the heritage of thought on which the world has been drawing inexhaustibly for two millennia flourishes?

Is it possible that a "fake history" could give rise to the blossoming of very reasonable believers such as Leonardo da Vinci, Galileo Galilei, Johannes Kepler, Isaac Newton, Blaise Pascal, Max Plank, Alessandro Volta, L. Pasteur, E.M. Ampère and Guglielmo Marconi?

Would these people, rational in all fields, have become irrational only in faith? Honestly, we recognise a conclusion that imposes itself on reason: without the Resurrection of Christ, it is not possible to explain what happened around Christ and after Christ.

But what is the Resurrection? And what light does it bring to the search for meaning in our lives?

The Resurrection is the event that assures us that human life is journeying towards another life: journeying towards the Promised Land!

How important it is to know this! If this is true, today we are as if on a bridge: we cannot build our house on the bridge, we cannot base everything on today, rather we must live journeying; we must live warming ourselves with the hope of expectation.

The Resurrection of Jesus is an event that reminds us that even the human body will be saved. In other words: the presence of God, which today heals the inner centre of our person, will one day also embrace the body and shine on the face of all those who have accepted God's Love.

Therefore how much we must respect our bodies! How much we must fight, even here below, so that the body is freed from the weight of selfishness and becomes, even today, a reflection of the Mystery that is present in our heart! How much we must strive to transmit to others an awareness of the dignity of the human body, because it is destined for Resurrection!

A final question remains. This future promised by God, this Resurrection of Jesus that anticipates the future of the world, this Resurrection that we await...what relation does it have with the present that we live?

Between the present and the eternal future there is the same relationship as there is between the seed and the ear of corn, between the shoot and the plant.

And, since God is Love and Paradise is human existence freed from all distance from God, we can say with certainty that the future Resurrection will be in relation to the measure of charity that we achieve in life today.