

Deacon's Corner: Redemption through Paschal Mystery (4)
The Significance of Christ's Resurrection (1)

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead goes to the very heart of our faith. In fact, the first proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by his followers was simply, **"He is risen!"** These are the words of the angel to the women at the tomb, these are the words of the Apostles to the disciples from Emmaus, and they remain the Easter greeting down to today: Christ is risen, he is risen indeed!

The words of St. Paul that **"if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, and your faith is in vain"** (1 Cor 15:14); as the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) notes, **"The Resurrection of Jesus is the crowning truth of our faith in Christ"** (CCC 638). It was a real event, as indicated by the empty tomb as well as Jesus' appearances to the disciples, recounted in both the Gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles and referred to by St. Paul.

As the *"mystery of faith"* proclaims, Christ truly died and truly rose from the dead. This is critically important for all Christians and for all humanity. Without the Resurrection there would have been no redemption; without the Resurrection of Christ, we would have no resurrection of our own to anticipate; without the Resurrection of Christ, there would have been no victory over sin and death, and all of humanity would have remained in bondage of sin.

However, the Resurrection of Christ is a joyful reality. It is both a historical and a transcendent event, one that confirms Christ's identity, affirms all he taught, fulfills the prophecies of the Old Testament, and offers the promise of our own resurrection to heavenly glory.

CCC 654: **"The Paschal mystery has two aspects: by his death, Christ liberates us from sin; by his Resurrection, he opens for us the way to a new life. This new life is above all justification that reinstates us in God's grace, "so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (*Rom 6:4; cf. 4:25*). Justification consists in both victory over the death caused by sin and a new participation in grace (*Eph 2:4-5; 1 Pet 1:3*). It brings about filial adoption so that men become Christ's brethren, as Jesus himself called his disciples after his Resurrection: "Go and tell my brethren" (*Mt 28:10; Jn 20:17*). We are brethren not by nature, but by the gift of grace, because that adoptive filiation gains us a real share in the life of the only Son, which was fully revealed in his Resurrection."**

Jesus' resurrection is the fulfillment and verification not only of his own promises, which he made during his public ministry, but it is also the fulfillment of the promises made throughout the Old Testament. In 1 Corinthians 15, St. Paul speaks repeatedly about how Jesus' actions—including his Resurrection—happened **"in accordance with the Scriptures."** For St. Paul, this phrase referred to the Old Testament alone, as those were the only Scriptures Paul knew at this time; the New Testament of course was just coming into existence, including the very letter in which Paul who wrote these words! This highlights the fact that Paul understood Jesus' resurrection to be the fulfillment of those promises of the Old Covenant, in addition to those promises made by Jesus himself.

Jesus' resurrection, then, is not just a "happy ending" to his life and his ministry, it goes to the very heart of why he came: to save us from our sins and for heaven by conquering sin and death. As the ancient Easter greeting says, "Christ is risen, he is risen indeed!"

Note there are several aspects of “The Significance of Christ’s Resurrection” presented in Holy Scripture as well as the Catechism of the Catholic Church; several of these articles will be presented in this column. For example: Was the Resurrection a true and historical event?

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