
AN INVITATION TO CONTEMPLATION



The entire Easter liturgy is a pressing invitation to contemplate not only creation itself but also its Creator, not only the liberated Chosen People but also the Liberator himself, and not only Jesus' passion and resurrection, but the Risen Jesus. Let us often repeat the beautiful hymn of the "Exultet" which the Church proposes.

" EXULTET "

Rejoice, heavenly powers! Sing, choirs of angels! Exult, all creation around God's throne!
Jesus Christ, our King, is risen! Sound the trumpet of salvation!

Rejoice, O earth, in shining splendour, radiant in the brightness of your King!
Christ has conquered, glory fills you! Darkness vanishes for ever!

This is our passover feast, when Christ, the true Lamb, is slain,
whose blood consecrates the homes of believers.

This is the night when Jesus Christ broke the chains of death
and rose triumphant from the grave.

Father, how wonderful your care for us! How boundless your merciful love!
To ransom a slave you gave away your Son.

O happy fault, O necessary sin of Adam,
which gained for us so great a Redeemer!

The power of this holy night dispels all evil, washes guilt away,
restores lost innocence, brings mourners joy;
it casts out hatred, brings us peace, and humbles earthly pride.

Accept this Easter candle, a flame divided but undimmed,
a pillar of fire that glows to the honour of God.

Let it mingle with the lights of heaven and continue bravely burning
to dispel the darkness of this night!

May the morning Star which never sets find this flame still burning:
Christ, the Morning Star, who came back from the dead,
and shed his peaceful light on all mankind,
your Son who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

CONTEMPLATING THE RISEN CHRIST

My wish is that the entire Easter liturgy be forever stamped on our hearts and beings. In his January 6, 2001 letter, Pope John Paul II urged us to contemplate the face of the Risen Christ: *« As on Good Friday and Holy Saturday, the Church pauses in contemplation of this bleeding face, which conceals the life of God and offers salvation to the world. But her contemplation of Christ's face cannot stop at the image of the Crucified One. He is the Risen One! Were this not so, our preaching would be in vain and our faith empty. The Resurrection was the Father's response to Christ's obedience, as we learn from the Letter to the Hebrews: "In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear. Son though he was, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him " (5:7-9).*

YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND FOR EVER

*«It is the Risen Christ to whom the Church now looks. And she does so in the footsteps of Peter, who wept for denial and started out again by confessing, with understandable trepidation, his love of Christ: "You know that I love you" (Jn. 21:15-17). She does so in the company of Paul, who encountered the Lord on the road to Damascus and was overwhelmed: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21). Two thousand years after these events, the Church relives them as if they had happened today. Gazing on the face of Christ, the Bride contemplates her treasure and her joy. How sweet is the memory of Jesus, the source of the heart's true joy! Heartened by this experience, the Church today sets out once more on her journey in order to proclaim Christ to the world at the dawn of the Third Millennium: he "is the same yesterday and today and for ever" (Heb. 13:8).» [Pope John Paul II, *Tertio Millennio Ineunte*, 28. Zenit News Agency Tr.]*

A SURE PRESENCE

We have the absolute certainty that the Risen Christ is present in each and everyone of us, that he is present in his Church. Did he not promise: *«"Know that I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Mt. 28:20b). This assurance has accompanied the Church for two thousand years, and from it we must gain new impetus for Christian living by making it the force which inspires our journey. Conscious of the Risen Lord's presence among us, we ask ourselves today the same question put to Peter in Jerusalem immediately after his Pentecost speech: "What must we do?" (Acts 2:37).» [Tertio Millennio..., 29]*

CALL TO HOLINESS

Pope John Paul has does not hesitate to tell us that we must rediscover this universal call to holiness: like the risen Christ, we are called to holiness in the same way as our forebears. It is not for nothing that we talk of a communion of saints, of the communion of holiness uniting us to one another. It isn't for nothing that the pope beatifies and canonises people who are for the most part our contemporaries, the many thousands of witnesses to the faith over the last one hundred years or so. Nevertheless, to become saints, we need to be people of prayer: our homes must be schools of prayer, not only prayer of petition but also of contemplation, adoration, and admiration. My heartfelt hope is that this Easter season will truly lead us along the path of holiness, and that the earnest prayer of the Holy Days will have convinced us all the more that it is good for

us to be with the Risen One, "Him in me and me in Him" (Cf. Jn.17:21), as Jesus himself prayed. "We praise you, glory of the Father, Jesus, Son of God!"

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