

6- The Paschal Mystery: The Mystery of Jesus' Death & Resurrection.

Then Yahweh God gave the man this admonition, 'You may eat indeed of all the trees in the garden. Nevertheless of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you are not to eat, for on the day you eat of it you shall most surely die.' Gen 2:16-17

'Take your son,' God said 'your only child Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah. There you shall offer him as a burnt offering, on a mountain I will point out to you.' Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering, loaded it, on Isaac, and carried in his own hands the fire and the knife. Then the two of them set out together. Isaac spoke to his father Abraham, 'Father' he said. 'Yes, my son' he replied. 'Look,' he said 'here are the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?' Abraham answered, 'My son, God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering', Then the two of them went on together. Gen 22:2,6-7.

The next day, seeing Jesus coming towards him, John said, 'Look, there is the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. Jn 1:29

Hail, sweet Jesus!
Praise, honor, and glory be to you,
O Christ, who of your own accord
did embrace death, and,
recommending yourself to your heavenly Father,
bowing down your venerable head,
did yield up your spirit.
Truly thus giving up your life for your sheep,
You have shown yourself to be a good shepherd.
You did die, O only-begotten Son of God.
You did die, O my beloved Savior, that I might live forever.
O how great hope, how great confidence have I reposed in your death and your Blood!
I glorify and praise your Holy Name, acknowledging my infinite obligations to you.
O good Jesus, by your bitter death and Passion, give me grace and pardon.
Give unto the faithful departed rest and life everlasting.
Amen.
(Dom Augustine Baker, 1575–1641)

Christ Passion as the crucified, Sacrificial Lamb who takes away the sins of the world was prefigured by the Jewish Pascal Lamb of the Passover (Ex 12/13). Whilst we have some understanding of Christ's atonement for our sins, we cannot fully comprehend His action. Christ's atonement saves us from the consequences of sin - death and hell; opening the possibility of heaven and eternity with God.

Christ's descent to the dead reveals how His sacrifice also redeems just souls who died before His incarnation. Christ's resurrection is physical – emphasised by Thomas. The Resurrected Christ's unhealed physical wounds signify His victory, glory and true identity. Likewise our wounds, suffered for the sake of salvation, will be our glory. Without the Resurrection, our souls would live on, but would have been shut out from heaven – no hope of eternal happiness.

Through the mystery of the Ascension our bodies will be transformed and freed from earthly constraints – a new glorified humanity with Christ. Where Christ has gone, by God’s grace we hope to follow.

Video Links:

The Mystery of Eating Jesus' Flesh - Bishop Barron (6 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NDVLBUK5FGw>

The Paschal Mystery and the Eucharist – Tim Staples, Catholic Answers (5 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WHAYHIYLxJQ>

The Way of Christ: The Paschal Mystery – St Philip Institute (5 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AI97PCs-Pck>

The Bible and the Sacrifice of the Mass- Dr. Scott Hahn (24 mins)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0uL_IAJWvX0

Suggested Scripture readings:

Philippians 2:6–11 Ephesians 2:1–8 1 Corinthians 1:18–25 Romans 5:9–17

O Jesus, you have called me to suffer
because you on your part suffered for me,
leaving me an example that I might follow.
When you were insulted,
you did not return the insult.
When you were mistreated,
you did not counter with threats
but entrusted yourself to the One who judges justly.
By your wounds we are healed.
Help me to imitate you in suffering.
Let me break with sin by means of my sufferings,
so that I may no longer live
according to the lusts of sinners
but according to the will of the Father.
Since you yourself have suffered and been tempted,
I know that you are able to bring aid
to all who suffer and are tempted.
I entrust myself to you and to the Father, my Creator,
knowing that you will never fail me. Amen.
—Prayer to Imitate the Suffering Christ

Catechism of the Catholic Church

The Father revealed by the Son

238 Many religions invoke God as "Father". The deity is often considered the "father of gods and of men". In Israel, God is called "Father" inasmuch as he is Creator of the world.⁵⁹ Even more, God is Father because of the covenant and the gift of the law to Israel, "his first-born son".⁶⁰ God is also called the Father of the king of Israel. Most especially he is "the Father of the poor", of the orphaned and the widowed, who are under his loving protection.⁶¹

239 By calling God "Father", the language of faith indicates two main things: that God is the first origin of everything and transcendent authority; and that he is at the same time goodness and loving care for all his children. God's parental tenderness can also be expressed by the image of motherhood,⁶² which emphasizes God's immanence, the intimacy between Creator and creature. The language of faith thus draws on the human experience of parents, who are in a way the first representatives of God for man. But this experience also tells us that human parents are fallible and can disfigure the face of fatherhood and motherhood. We ought therefore to recall that God transcends the human distinction between the sexes. He is neither man nor woman: he is God. He also transcends human fatherhood and motherhood, although he is their origin and standard:⁶³ no one is father as God is Father.

240 Jesus revealed that God is Father in an unheard-of sense: he is Father not only in being Creator; he is eternally Father in relation to his only Son, who is eternally Son only in relation to his Father: "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."⁶⁴

241 For this reason the apostles confess Jesus to be the Word: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"; as "the image of the invisible God"; as the "radiance of the glory of God and the very stamp of his nature".⁶⁵

242 Following this apostolic tradition, the Church confessed at the first ecumenical council at Nicaea (325) that the Son is "consubstantial" with the Father, that is, one only God with him.⁶⁶ The second ecumenical council, held at Constantinople in 381, kept this expression in its formulation of the Nicene Creed and confessed "the only-begotten Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father".⁶⁷

The Father and the Son revealed by the Spirit

243 Before his Passover, Jesus announced the sending of "another Paraclete" (Advocate), the Holy Spirit. At work since creation, having previously "spoken through the prophets", the Spirit will now be with and in the disciples, to teach them and guide them "into all the truth".⁶⁸ The Holy Spirit is thus revealed as another divine person with Jesus and the Father.

244 The eternal origin of the Holy Spirit is revealed in his mission in time. The Spirit is sent to the apostles and to the Church both by the Father in the name of the Son, and by the Son in person, once he had returned to the Father.⁶⁹ The sending of the person of the Spirit after Jesus' glorification⁷⁰ reveals in its fullness the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

245 The apostolic faith concerning the Spirit was confessed by the second ecumenical council at Constantinople (381): "We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father."⁷¹ By this confession, the Church recognizes the Father as "the source and origin of the whole divinity".⁷² But the eternal origin of the Spirit is

not unconnected with the Son's origin: "The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, is God, one and equal with the Father and the Son, of the same substance and also of the same nature. . . Yet he is not called the Spirit of the Father alone, . . . but the Spirit of both the Father and the Son."⁷³ The Creed of the Church from the Council of Constantinople confesses: "With the Father and the Son, he is worshipped and glorified."⁷⁴

246 The Latin tradition of the Creed confesses that the Spirit "proceeds from the Father *and the Son (filioque)*". The Council of Florence in 1438 explains: "The Holy Spirit is eternally from Father and Son; He has his nature and subsistence at once (*simul*) from the Father and the Son. He proceeds eternally from both as from one principle and through one spiration. . . . And, since the Father has through generation given to the only-begotten Son everything that belongs to the Father, except being Father, the Son has also eternally from the Father, from whom he is eternally born, that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son."⁷⁵

247 The affirmation of the *filioque* does not appear in the Creed confessed in 381 at Constantinople. But Pope St. Leo I, following an ancient Latin and Alexandrian tradition, had already confessed it dogmatically in 447,⁷⁶ even before Rome, in 451 at the Council of Chalcedon, came to recognize and receive the Symbol of 381. The use of this formula in the Creed was gradually admitted into the Latin liturgy (between the eighth and eleventh centuries). The introduction of the *filioque* into the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed by the Latin liturgy constitutes moreover, even today, a point of disagreement with the Orthodox Churches.

248 At the outset the Eastern tradition expresses the Father's character as first origin of the Spirit. By confessing the Spirit as he "who proceeds from the Father", it affirms that he *comes from* the Father *through* the Son.⁷⁷ The Western tradition expresses first the consubstantial communion between Father and Son, by saying that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son (*filioque*). It says this, "legitimately and with good reason",⁷⁸ for the eternal order of the divine persons in their consubstantial communion implies that the Father, as "the principle without principle",⁷⁹ is the first origin of the Spirit, but also that as Father of the only Son, he is, with the Son, the single principle from which the Holy Spirit proceeds.⁸⁰ This legitimate complementarity, provided it does not become rigid, does not affect the identity of faith in the reality of the same mystery confessed.

452 The name Jesus means "God saves". The child born of the Virgin Mary is called Jesus, "for he will save his people from their sins" (*Mt* 1:21): "there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (*Acts* 4:12).

453 The title "Christ" means "Anointed One" (Messiah). Jesus is the Christ, for "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power" (*Acts* 10:38). He was the one "who is to come" (*Lk* 7:19), the object of "the hope of Israel" (*Acts* 28:20).

454 The title "Son of God" signifies the unique and eternal relationship of Jesus Christ to God his Father: he is the only Son of the Father (cf. *Jn* 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18); he is God himself (cf. *Jn* 1:1). To be a Christian, one must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (cf. *Acts* 8:37; *1 Jn* 2:23).

455 The title "Lord" indicates divine sovereignty. To confess or invoke Jesus as Lord is to believe in his divinity. "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit" (*1 Cor* 12:3).

Jesus consummates his sacrifice on the cross

616 It is love "to the end"⁴⁴⁶ that confers on Christ's sacrifice its value as redemption and reparation, as atonement and satisfaction. He knew and loved us all when he offered his life.⁴⁴⁷ Now "the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died."⁴⁴⁸ No man, not even the holiest, was ever able to take on himself the sins of all men and offer himself as a sacrifice for all. The existence in Christ of the divine person of the Son, who at once surpasses and embraces all human

persons, and constitutes himself as the Head of all mankind, makes possible his redemptive sacrifice for all.

617 The Council of Trent emphasizes the unique character of Christ's sacrifice as "the source of eternal salvation"⁴⁴⁹ and teaches that "his most holy Passion on the wood of the cross merited justification for us."⁴⁵⁰ And the Church venerates his cross as she sings: "Hail, O Cross, our only hope."⁴⁵¹

Our participation in Christ's sacrifice

618 The cross is the unique sacrifice of Christ, the "one mediator between God and men".⁴⁵² But because in his incarnate divine person he has in some way united himself to every man, "the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery" is offered to all men.⁴⁵³ He calls his disciples to "take up [their] cross and follow [him]",⁴⁵⁴ for "Christ also suffered for [us], leaving [us] an example so that [we] should follow in his steps."⁴⁵⁵ In fact Jesus desires to associate with his redeeming sacrifice those who were to be its first beneficiaries.⁴⁵⁶ This is achieved supremely in the case of his mother, who was associated more intimately than any other person in the mystery of his redemptive suffering.⁴⁵⁷

Apart from the cross there is no other ladder by which we may get to heaven.⁴⁵⁸

IN BRIEF

619 "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures" (I *Cor* 15:3).

620 Our salvation flows from God's initiative of love for us, because "he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins" (I *Jn* 4:10). "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (2 *Cor* 5:19).

621 Jesus freely offered himself for our salvation. Beforehand, during the Last Supper, he both symbolized this offering and made it really present: "This is my body which is given for you" (*Lk* 22:19).

622 The redemption won by Christ consists in this, that he came "to give his life as a ransom for many" (*Mt* 20:28), that is, he "loved [his own] to the end" (*Jn* 13:1), so that they might be "ransomed from the futile ways inherited from [their] fathers" (I *Pt* 1:18).

623 By his loving obedience to the Father, "unto death, even death on a cross" (*Phil* 2:8), Jesus fulfills the atoning mission (cf. *Is* 53:10) of the suffering Servant, who will "make many righteous; and he shall bear their iniquities" (*Is* 53:11; cf. *Rom* 5:19).

ARTICLE 4

"JESUS CHRIST SUFFERED UNDER PONTIUS PILATE, WAS CRUCIFIED, DIED, AND WAS BURIED"

Paragraph 3. Jesus Christ was Buried

624 "By the grace of God" Jesus tasted death "for every one".⁴⁵⁹ In his plan of salvation, God ordained that his Son should not only "die for our sins"⁴⁶⁰ but should also "taste death", experience the condition of death, the separation of his soul from his body, between the time he expired on the cross and the time he was raised from the dead. The state of the dead Christ is the mystery of the tomb and the descent into hell. It is the mystery of Holy Saturday, when Christ, lying in the tomb,⁴⁶¹ reveals God's great sabbath

rest⁴⁶² after the fulfillment⁴⁶³ of man's salvation, which brings peace to the whole universe.⁴⁶⁴

Christ in the tomb in his body

625 Christ's stay in the tomb constitutes the real link between his passible state before Easter and his glorious and risen state today. The same person of the "Living One" can say, "I died, and behold I am alive for evermore".⁴⁶⁵

God [the Son] did not impede death from separating his soul from his body according to the necessary order of nature, but has reunited them to one another in the Resurrection, *so that he himself might be, in his person, the meeting point for death and life*, by arresting in himself the decomposition of nature produced by death and so becoming the source of reunion for the separated parts.⁴⁶⁶

626 Since the "Author of life" who was killed⁴⁶⁷ is the same "living one [who has] risen",⁴⁶⁸ the divine person of the Son of God necessarily continued to possess his human soul and body, separated from each other by death:

By the fact that at Christ's death his soul was separated from his flesh, his one person is not itself divided into two persons; for the human body and soul of Christ have existed in the same way from the beginning of his earthly existence, in the divine person of the Word; and in death, although separated from each other, both remained with one and the same person of the Word.⁴⁶⁹

"You will not let your Holy One see corruption"

627 Christ's death was a real death in that it put an end to his earthly human existence. But because of the union which the person of the Son retained with his body, his was not a mortal corpse like others, for "it was not possible for death to hold him"⁴⁷⁰ and therefore "divine power preserved Christ's body from corruption."⁴⁷¹ Both of these statements can be said of Christ: "He was cut off out of the land of the living",⁴⁷² and "My flesh will dwell in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, nor let your Holy One see corruption."⁴⁷³ Jesus' Resurrection "on the third day" was the sign of this, also because bodily decay was held to begin on the fourth day after death.⁴⁷⁴

"Buried with Christ. . ."

628 Baptism, the original and full sign of which is immersion, efficaciously signifies the descent into the tomb by the Christian who dies to sin with Christ in order to live a new life. "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."⁴⁷⁵

IN BRIEF

629 To the benefit of every man, Jesus Christ tasted death (cf. *Heb* 2:9). It is truly the Son of God made man who died and was buried.

630 During Christ's period in the tomb, his divine person continued to assume both his soul and his body, although they were separated from each other by death. For this reason the dead Christ's body "saw no corruption" (*Acts* 13:37).

ARTICLE 5

"HE DESCENDED INTO HELL. ON THE THIRD DAY HE ROSE AGAIN"

631 Jesus "descended into the lower parts of the earth. He who descended is he who also ascended far above all the heavens."⁴⁷⁶ The Apostles' Creed confesses in the same article Christ's descent into hell and his Resurrection from the dead on the third day,

because in his Passover it was precisely out of the depths of death that he made life spring forth:

Christ, that 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. Amen.⁴⁷⁷

Paragraph 1. Christ Descended into Hell

632 The frequent New Testament affirmations that Jesus was "raised from the dead" presuppose that the crucified one sojourned in the realm of the dead prior to his resurrection.⁴⁷⁸ This was the first meaning given in the apostolic preaching to Christ's descent into hell: that Jesus, like all men, experienced death and in his soul joined the others in the realm of the dead. But he descended there as Savior, proclaiming the Good News to the spirits imprisoned there.⁴⁷⁹

633 Scripture calls the abode of the dead, to which the dead Christ went down, "hell" - *Sheol* in Hebrew or *Hades* in Greek - because those who are there are deprived of the vision of God.⁴⁸⁰ Such is the case for all the dead, whether evil or righteous, while they await the Redeemer: which does not mean that their lot is identical, as Jesus shows through the parable of the poor man Lazarus who was received into "Abraham's bosom":⁴⁸¹ "It is precisely these holy souls, who awaited their Savior in Abraham's bosom, whom Christ the Lord delivered when he descended into hell."⁴⁸² Jesus did not descend into hell to deliver the damned, nor to destroy the hell of damnation, but to free the just who had gone before him.⁴⁸³

634 "The gospel was preached even to the dead."⁴⁸⁴ The descent into hell brings the Gospel message of salvation to complete fulfillment. This is the last phase of Jesus' messianic mission, a phase which is condensed in time but vast in its real significance: the spread of Christ's redemptive work to all men of all times and all places, for all who are saved have been made sharers in the redemption.

635 Christ went down into the depths of death so that "the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live."⁴⁸⁵ Jesus, "the Author of life", by dying destroyed "him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and [delivered] all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage."⁴⁸⁶ Henceforth the risen Christ holds "the keys of Death and Hades", so that "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth."⁴⁸⁷

Today a great silence reigns on earth, a great silence and a great stillness. A great silence because the King is asleep. The earth trembled and is still because God has fallen asleep in the flesh and he has raised up all who have slept ever since the world began. . . He has gone to search for Adam, our first father, as for a lost sheep. Greatly desiring to visit those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death, he has gone to free from sorrow Adam in his bonds and Eve, captive with him - He who is both their God and the son of Eve. . . "I am your God, who for your sake have become your son. . . I order you, O sleeper, to awake. I did not create you to be a prisoner in hell. Rise from the dead, for I am the life of the dead."⁴⁸⁸

IN BRIEF

636 By the expression "He descended into hell", the Apostles' Creed confesses that Jesus did really die and through his death for us conquered death and the devil "who has the power of death" (*Heb* 2:14).

637 In his human soul united to his divine person, the dead Christ went down to the realm of the dead. He opened heaven's gates for the just who had gone before him.

ARTICLE 5

"HE DESCENDED INTO HELL. ON THE THIRD DAY HE ROSE AGAIN"

Paragraph 2. On the Third Day He Rose from the Dead

638 "We bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this day he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus."⁴⁸⁹ The Resurrection of Jesus is the crowning truth of our faith in Christ, a faith believed and lived as the central truth by the first Christian community; handed on as fundamental by Tradition; established by the documents of the New Testament; and preached as an essential part of the Paschal mystery along with the cross:

Christ is risen from the dead!
Dying, he conquered death;
To the dead, he has given life.
490

I. THE HISTORICAL AND TRANSCENDENT EVENT

639 The mystery of Christ's resurrection is a real event, with manifestations that were historically verified, as the New Testament bears witness. In about A.D. 56 St. Paul could already write to the Corinthians: "I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. . ."⁴⁹¹ The Apostle speaks here of the living tradition of the Resurrection which he had learned after his conversion at the gates of Damascus.⁴⁹²

The empty tomb

640 "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen."⁴⁹³ The first element we encounter in the framework of the Easter events is the empty tomb. In itself it is not a direct proof of Resurrection; the absence of Christ's body from the tomb could be explained otherwise.⁴⁹⁴ Nonetheless the empty tomb was still an essential sign for all. Its discovery by the disciples was the first step toward recognizing the very fact of the Resurrection. This was the case, first with the holy women, and then with Peter.⁴⁹⁵ The disciple "whom Jesus loved" affirmed that when he entered the empty tomb and discovered "the linen cloths lying there", "he saw and believed".⁴⁹⁶ This suggests that he realized from the empty tomb's condition that the absence of Jesus' body could not have been of human doing and that Jesus had not simply returned to earthly life as had been the case with Lazarus.⁴⁹⁷

The appearances of the Risen One

641 Mary Magdalene and the holy women who came to finish anointing the body of Jesus, which had been buried in haste because the Sabbath began on the evening of Good Friday, were the first to encounter the Risen One.⁴⁹⁸ Thus the women were the first messengers of Christ's Resurrection for the apostles themselves.⁴⁹⁹ They were the next to whom Jesus appears: first Peter, then the Twelve. Peter had been called to strengthen the faith of his brothers,⁵⁰⁰ and so sees the Risen One before them; it is on the basis of his testimony that the community exclaims: "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!"⁵⁰¹

642 Everything that happened during those Paschal days involves each of the apostles - and Peter in particular - in the building of the new era begun on Easter morning. As witnesses of the Risen One, they remain the foundation stones of his Church. The faith

of the first community of believers is based on the witness of concrete men known to the Christians and for the most part still living among them. Peter and the Twelve are the primary "witnesses to his Resurrection", but they are not the only ones - Paul speaks clearly of more than five hundred persons to whom Jesus appeared on a single occasion and also of James and of all the apostles.⁵⁰²

643 Given all these testimonies, Christ's Resurrection cannot be interpreted as something outside the physical order, and it is impossible not to acknowledge it as an historical fact. It is clear from the facts that the disciples' faith was drastically put to the test by their master's Passion and death on the cross, which he had foretold.⁵⁰³ The shock provoked by the Passion was so great that at least some of the disciples did not at once believe in the news of the Resurrection. Far from showing us a community seized by a mystical exaltation, the Gospels present us with disciples demoralized ("looking sad"⁵⁰⁴) and frightened. For they had not believed the holy women returning from the tomb and had regarded their words as an "idle tale".⁵⁰⁵ When Jesus reveals himself to the Eleven on Easter evening, "he upbraided them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen."⁵⁰⁶

644 Even when faced with the reality of the risen Jesus the disciples are still doubtful, so impossible did the thing seem: they thought they were seeing a ghost. "In their joy they were still disbelieving and still wondering."⁵⁰⁷ Thomas will also experience the test of doubt and St. Matthew relates that during the risen Lord's last appearance in Galilee "some doubted."⁵⁰⁸ Therefore the hypothesis that the Resurrection was produced by the apostles' faith (or credulity) will not hold up. On the contrary their faith in the Resurrection was born, under the action of divine grace, from their direct experience of the reality of the risen Jesus.

The condition of Christ's risen humanity

645 By means of touch and the sharing of a meal, the risen Jesus establishes direct contact with his disciples. He invites them in this way to recognize that he is not a ghost and above all to verify that the risen body in which he appears to them is the same body that had been tortured and crucified, for it still bears the traces of his Passion.⁵⁰⁹ Yet at the same time this authentic, real body possesses the new properties of a glorious body: not limited by space and time but able to be present how and when he wills; for Christ's humanity can no longer be confined to earth, and belongs henceforth only to the Father's divine realm.⁵¹⁰ For this reason too the risen Jesus enjoys the sovereign freedom of appearing as he wishes: in the guise of a gardener or in other forms familiar to his disciples, precisely to awaken their faith.⁵¹¹

646 Christ's Resurrection was not a return to earthly life, as was the case with the raisings from the dead that he had performed before Easter: Jairus' daughter, the young man of Naim, Lazarus. These actions were miraculous events, but the persons miraculously raised returned by Jesus' power to ordinary earthly life. At some particular moment they would die again. Christ's Resurrection is essentially different. In his risen body he passes from the state of death to another life beyond time and space. At Jesus' Resurrection his body is filled with the power of the Holy Spirit: he shares the divine life in his glorious state, so that St. Paul can say that Christ is "the man of heaven".⁵¹²

The Resurrection as transcendent event

647 O truly blessed Night, sings the Exultet of the Easter Vigil, which alone deserved to know the time and the hour when Christ rose from the realm of the dead!⁵¹³ But no one was an eyewitness to Christ's Resurrection and no evangelist describes it. No one can say how it came about physically. Still less was its innermost essence, his passing over to another life, perceptible to the senses. Although the Resurrection was an historical event that could be verified by the sign of the empty tomb and by the reality of the apostles' encounters with the risen Christ, still it remains at the very heart of the mystery of faith as something that transcends and surpasses history. This is why the risen Christ does not reveal himself to the world, but to his disciples, "to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people."⁵¹⁴

II. THE RESURRECTION - A WORK OF THE HOLY TRINITY

648 Christ's Resurrection is an object of faith in that it is a transcendent intervention of God himself in creation and history. In it the three divine persons act together as one, and manifest their own proper characteristics. The Father's power "raised up" Christ his Son and by doing so perfectly introduced his Son's humanity, including his body, into the Trinity. Jesus is conclusively revealed as "Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his Resurrection from the dead".⁵¹⁵ St. Paul insists on the manifestation of God's power⁵¹⁶ through the working of the Spirit who gave life to Jesus' dead humanity and called it to the glorious state of Lordship.

649 As for the Son, he effects his own Resurrection by virtue of his divine power. Jesus announces that the Son of man will have to suffer much, die, and then rise.⁵¹⁷ Elsewhere he affirms explicitly: "I lay down my life, that I may take it again. . . I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."⁵¹⁸ "We believe that Jesus died and rose again."⁵¹⁹

650 The Fathers contemplate the Resurrection from the perspective of the divine person of Christ who remained united to his soul and body, even when these were separated from each other by death: "By the unity of the divine nature, which remains present in each of the two components of man, these are reunited. For as death is produced by the separation of the human components, so Resurrection is achieved by the union of the two."⁵²⁰

III. THE MEANING AND SAVING SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESURRECTION

651 "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain."⁵²¹ The Resurrection above all constitutes the confirmation of all Christ's works and teachings. All truths, even those most inaccessible to human reason, find their justification if Christ by his Resurrection has given the definitive proof of his divine authority, which he had promised.

652 Christ's Resurrection is the fulfillment of the promises both of the Old Testament and of Jesus himself during his earthly life.⁵²² The phrase "in accordance with the Scriptures"⁵²³ indicates that Christ's Resurrection fulfilled these predictions.

653 The truth of Jesus' divinity is confirmed by his Resurrection. He had said: "When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I am he."⁵²⁴ The Resurrection of the crucified one shows that he was truly "I AM", the Son of God and God himself. So St. Paul could declare to the Jews: "What God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm, 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you.'"⁵²⁵ Christ's Resurrection is closely linked to the Incarnation of God's Son, and is its fulfillment in accordance with God's eternal plan.

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."⁵²⁶ Justification consists in both victory over the death caused by sin and a new participation in grace.⁵²⁷ 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."⁵²⁸ 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.

655 Finally, Christ's Resurrection - and the risen Christ himself is the principle and source of our future resurrection: "Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits

of those who have fallen asleep. . . For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive."⁵²⁹ The risen Christ lives in the hearts of his faithful while they await that fulfillment . In Christ, Christians "have tasted. . . the powers of the age to come"⁵³⁰ and their lives are swept up by Christ into the heart of divine life, so that they may "live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised."⁵³¹

IN BRIEF

656 Faith in the Resurrection has as its object an event which is historically attested to by the disciples, who really encountered the Risen One. At the same time, this event is mysteriously transcendent insofar as it is the entry of Christ's humanity into the glory of God.

657 The empty tomb and the linen cloths lying there signify in themselves that by God's power Christ's body had escaped the bonds of death and corruption. They prepared the disciples to encounter the Risen Lord.

658 Christ, "the first-born from the dead" (*Col* 1:18), is the principle of our own resurrection, even now by the justification of our souls (cf. *Rom* 6:4), and one day by the new life he will impart to our bodies (cf.: *Rom* 8:11).

I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST, THE ONLY SON OF GOD

ARTICLE 6

"HE ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN AND IS SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE FATHER"

659 "So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God."⁵³² Christ's body was glorified at the moment of his Resurrection, as proved by the new and supernatural properties it subsequently and permanently enjoys.⁵³³ But during the forty days when he eats and drinks familiarly with his disciples and teaches them about the kingdom, his glory remains veiled under the appearance of ordinary humanity.⁵³⁴ Jesus' final apparition ends with the irreversible entry of his humanity into divine glory, symbolized by the cloud and by heaven, where he is seated from that time forward at God's right hand.⁵³⁵ Only in a wholly exceptional and unique way would Jesus show himself to Paul "as to one untimely born", in a last apparition that established him as an apostle.⁵³⁶

660 The veiled character of the glory of the Risen One during this time is intimated in his mysterious words to Mary Magdalene: "I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."⁵³⁷ This indicates a difference in manifestation between the glory of the risen Christ and that of the Christ exalted to the Father's right hand, a transition marked by the historical and transcendent event of the Ascension.

661 This final stage stays closely linked to the first, that is, to his descent from heaven in the Incarnation. Only the one who "came from the Father" can return to the Father: Christ Jesus.⁵³⁸ "No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man."⁵³⁹ Left to its own natural powers humanity does not have access to the "Father's house", to God's life and happiness.⁵⁴⁰ Only Christ can open to man such access that we, his members, might have confidence that we too shall go where he, our Head and our Source, has preceded us.⁵⁴¹

662 "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself."⁵⁴² The lifting up of Jesus on the cross signifies and announces his lifting up by his Ascension

into heaven, and indeed begins it. Jesus Christ, the one priest of the new and eternal Covenant, "entered, not into a sanctuary made by human hands. . . but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf."⁵⁴³ There Christ permanently exercises his priesthood, for he "always lives to make intercession" for "those who draw near to God through him".⁵⁴⁴ As "high priest of the good things to come" he is the center and the principal actor of the liturgy that honors the Father in heaven.⁵⁴⁵

663 Henceforth Christ is *seated at the right hand of the Father*: "By 'the Father's right hand' we understand the glory and honor of divinity, where he who exists as Son of God before all ages, indeed as God, of one being with the Father, is seated bodily after he became incarnate and his flesh was glorified."⁵⁴⁶

664 Being seated at the Father's right hand signifies the inauguration of the Messiah's kingdom, the fulfillment of the prophet Daniel's vision concerning the Son of man: "To him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed."⁵⁴⁷ After this event the apostles became witnesses of the "kingdom [that] will have no end".⁵⁴⁸

IN BRIEF

665 Christ's Ascension marks the definitive entrance of Jesus' humanity into God's heavenly domain, whence he will come again (cf. *Acts* 1:11); this humanity in the meantime hides him from the eyes of men (cf. *Col* 3:3).

666 Jesus Christ, the head of the Church, precedes us into the Father's glorious kingdom so that we, the members of his Body, may live in the hope of one day being with him for ever.

667 Jesus Christ, having entered the sanctuary of heaven once and for all, intercedes constantly for us as the mediator who assures us of the permanent outpouring of the Holy Spirit.