

**EASTER SUNDAY OF THE RESURRECTION**  
**&**  
**THE OCTAVE OF EASTER**

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**Sunday Solemnity of the Resurrection of the Lord**

**April 16 Christ's Resurrection Changes You**

A reflection developed from a text by Monika Hellwig

**Mon Monday of the Octave of Easter**

**17 Letting What Christ Won Be Ours**

A reflection developed from a sermon by Bishop Alonzo Orozco

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A reflection developed from a text by Fr. Carroll Stuhlmueller

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**19 Getting Rid of the Old Yeast**

A reflection developed from texts by Fr. Carroll Stuhlmueller

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**20 Let Your Joy Beget Newness**

A reflection developed from a homily by Hesychius of Jerusalem

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A reflection developed from a homily by St. John Chrysostom

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A reflection inspired by a text of Fr. Benedict Groeschel

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# **CHRIST'S RESURRECTION CHANGES YOU**

**A reflection developed from a text by Monika Hellwig**

The rule of God, Jesus proclaimed, doesn't come by compulsion or by extrinsic sanctions but by sharing a vision, wisdom and purpose. It is by invitation and by patiently waiting upon the free decision of those invited. That which constituted the tragedy of the ministry of Jesus constituted as well its most coherent explanation; in response to rejection Jesus didn't resort to violence, not even the subtle violence that bends people's consciences. He stood his ground in witnessing that he was personally sent to speak the compassionate and longing word of God's love, by inserting it into the human situation. For this he was crucified. Jesus spoke the word of God to the world and spoke it in all its truth and unviolent respect for the freedom of those who were not yet ready to respond positively.

God raised Jesus from death, giving him a name above every other name, and one by which all can be saved from the confusion and frustration of a sinful history lived under the crushing weight of a fear of dying. It is by this many-faceted compassion that Jesus offers us the key to resurrection.

His is a compassion that goes out to every kind of human suffering, both as healing and as a challenge. It is a compassion that respects freedom and patiently invites response from those who are unfree. It gently liberates them by affirmation, respect and expectation. It is a compassion that enters into situations of suffering, enslavement to sin, and of fear and frustration. Jesus enters into these situations all the way and to the bitter end. It is an ever-present and extraordinary compassion.

Jesus redeems the situation of hopelessness by being-there in it. Where Jesus is nothing can be entirely hopeless. In this way Jesus turns our thinking and imagining upside down. Jesus embodies in his own experience intimacy with God; he offers to make it ours too. Resurrection is above all the full realization of this God-being-with-us. It empowers us to do as Jesus did. In the total self-gift of his compassion Jesus becomes imitable and this is realized fully through his resurrection.

To be Jesus' follower means to enter by compassion into this experience. It also means to enter with him into the suffering and the hope of every human person, making common cause with them as he does, seeking out as he does his preferred place among the poor and despised and oppressed. This is what it means to be Church, to celebrate Eucharist. In doing this we are changed and become not only like but one with Jesus Risen. We stand with Him when we respect others as he does.

# **LETTING WHAT CHRIST WON BE OURS**

**A reflection developed from a Sermon by Bishop Alonso Orozco**

**Come and joyfully dwell on the marvelous redemption we are given. God could do away with sin simply by forgiving it, yet God chose to pile up countless trials and toils, beginning with his birth and lasting through the most shameful death the human world could devise for him. Review all this and meditate on what Jesus has done for us and do it in a way that lets you appreciate the spiritual grandeur of one who loves you with all his heart. There was nothing he did not accept and suffer because he thirsted, as he thirsts still, to give you the gift of divine and eternal life. For this he did not hesitate to abandon his own life into the hands of enemies.**

**St. Paul reminds us of how much gratitude we ought to show if we act rightly. “*You have been bought with a great price, so glorify and bear God in your bodies.*” It is as though he were calling us to meditate on this without ceasing. God did such marvels for Israel in the Red Sea in destroying all the treacherous ways people dealt with one another in Egypt, trying to make oppression of others a lasting way of life. Then, in the waters of the Red Sea, God drowned our personal sins. Now God has made this effective in both ways by shedding his own blood.**

**We stand in the freedom God gives us from these and all similar evil things. Let us recall all these wonderful things and let us live this freedom. First let each of us remind others of all the freedoms God has given us in Jesus Christ, and then let us live in the new way of life in the freedom Christ has thus made possible and taught us by example.**

**Let us stir up one another, not only to love such a great redeemer but to love all those in need, in whatever way, as Jesus loves them. Let us praise the God who has loved us so much, and, as St. John says, has cleansed our sores and festering scars, by standing with Jesus in living and loving as he has and does. Let us glorify our God in our bodies and minds and lives. That is how we thank our God as God deserves.**

**Don't be afraid. Don't think you aren't able to imitate Jesus. He has promised that you will be, if you will only hope in Him. You once tried to hope in yourself and you were disappointed. He has preserved your life and given you a new hope. Choose it. Let yourself be guided by that hope. What is there to fear? Everything will be well. No one can snatch us out of our Savior's loving hands.**

# **ACCEPTING THE CHANGES EASTER BRINGS**

**A reflection developed from a text of Fr. Carroll Stuhlmueller**

**Easter is a shock, especially for one who entered fully into Lent and Good Friday. Suddenly the air is filled with songs of gladness and rejoicing. Quick and dramatic changes like this bring as many reactions as there are followers of Christ. Recall what the Gospels say about the resurrection and the days following it. Some were paralyzed by fear, others overjoyed, some ran away or kept silence while others told everyone they met. Is it that happiness, and even holiness, can seem too good to be true? Jesus came to all and quietly said, “Peace”.**

**This isn't a time to turn away from joy because of the obstacles we find in ourselves. Accept what the Risen Life Jesus shows us. Easter is resurrection. It declares that the greatest of reversals doesn't take place on the stage or in fiction but in real life—in us!**

**What has actually happened changes everything. We can't think in the old, familiar ways anymore, because we see and believe that life isn't and doesn't work as we thought it was and did. We don't have to make our life turn out well. The happiest of all endings has been given us. The only struggle we have to go through is getting ourselves to accept this.**

**All the usual ways of trying to make life good aren't needed anymore. We don't have to hoard up things against the bad days of old age, or the possibility of economic hard times, and so on and so forth. God has the best of lives in store for us and our only task is to help one another prepare, if they haven't yet accepted God's gift to help them do that.**

**Did you think Lent was a time for making yourself fit for God's gift or the new life that is part of that gift? No, that wasn't the point. That is to begin to live the gift. Christ rose more than two thousand years ago and gave the gift of a new life to all who would live it, why are we so slow to do just that? Can you begin to do it now?**

**Our hour has come! Easter humbles us and so opens us to change. First comes the change that is a bond of loving concern even with those we once felt alien to us—as most people feel about the marginalized and poor. Did Lent begin to call forth in our hearts and ways of dealing with others the sort of loving acceptance characteristic of Jesus? The old attitudes and anxieties can be left in the tomb for old ways of thinking. Rise with Jesus to a new way of life. You've wanted to for so long. Just do it now!**

# **GETTING RID OF THE OLD YEAST**

**A reflection developed from texts by Fr. Carroll Stuhlmueller**

**Jesus' resurrection proclaims the miraculous transformation of our earthly existence! Notice the stupendous fact that the transformation is now! The first disciples, about whom we hear in the Scriptures, found their lives were transformed right away. It was not a change that would happen only on the Last Day! And there is another side to this! The event of Jesus' resurrection took place at a particular time in history and at a particular place on planet earth, but the disciples' lives were right away transformed and always are. We begin a kind of heavenly existence without waiting.**

**How do we put these two things together, practically? Jesus is risen and we are to be his witnesses! How do we witness to his resurrection? We live the "heavenly existence" right now and every day. I don't know if you have ever noticed the fact that St. Paul got a little sarcastic in writing to the Corinthian Christians. At one point he praises them for all sorts of virtue, except the most important one of all—charity. This goes with his repeated talk about the problem of "old yeast". "Get rid of the old yeast... Let's celebrate the feast not with the old yeast!"**

**What is Paul talking about? It is that lived charity doesn't make any sense if you use the old, "worldly" standards. If it did there wouldn't be discrimination, disrespect, oppression, permanent poverty and deprivation, stealing and fraud and backbiting, and even belittling people as Paul was—"A poor speaker and generally unsatisfactory apostle". Well, you probably wouldn't think of treating Paul like that, but haven't you put others down and belittled them, and so forth and so on? What we do to any fellow human being we do to Christ, let alone Paul! Jesus said so himself. And we do things like this automatically!**

**For instance, we try to solve social problems by locking people up so they can't bother us, or by finding other ways of getting rid of them. Yet Jesus never commands such things, or even approves of them. Ask yourself why politicians present themselves as better than their opponents by badmouthing them rather than giving an example of lived charity, or attempting to persuade opponents of the benefits of what they advocate. Should we elect people who do exactly what Jesus tells us never to do? This is what it means to think in an "old yeast" way. Get rid of the old ways and replace them with the ways of Jesus. That's living a non-worldly life, the life of a heavenly realm rather than an earthly kingdom. Easter starts to take effect in us as we start to do things in Jesus' way.**

# **LET YOUR JOY BEGET NEWNESS**

**A reflection inspired by a homily of Hesychius of Jerusalem**

The festival we have just begun to celebrate is one of victory. The children of God, King of the Universe, celebrate the defeat of the devil by the one he caused to be crucified. But that's old news. We celebrate the new life that is made possible because the Lord has freed us from the bonds that tied us to the old "order of this world". They prevented us from living the glorious freedom proper to the children of God.

What we are doing is beginning to celebrate our own resurrection! This is what fills us with joy! We have beheld new wonders. Tombs are open and many are risen from the dead refashioned. "Lift up your gates! Be lifted up you everlasting doors, for the king of glory has come!" He is robed in light, has ascended above the lightnings, above the rays of the sun, above the sun itself and even above the angelic powers and the very city of eternal life. Hidden first in a womb of flesh he sanctified human birth by his own birth. Hidden afterwards in the earth he gave life to the dead by his resurrection. Suffering, pain, and sighs have now fled.

Why do I carry on about all these things? It is because Easter brings a message of joy. If we have no joy we cannot bear witness to the Lord's resurrection by living the resurrected life that is given us. It was on the resurrection day that the divine call was first heard, that the kingdom was opened, that Christ was adored and that we were saved! Isn't being saved a sufficient cause for joy? But joy demands to be shared.

If you experience a great joy you can't keep it to yourself. Everything about you communicates it. Those who are transported by joy, carried out of themselves by it, do new and unexpected things. These are the kind of things that come from the new life within us. Are you so filled with joy that you want only to share good things with all those you meet? How does this differ from the fruit of the charity which Jesus Christ has shown us? In fact, joy is an open door to love and to a love which is extravagant and gives without counting the cost. How many do you meet in the streets that need the gift of joy even more than any ordinary gift?

Scripture has the Risen One say, "Here I am, O God, with the children you have given me!" And he hears, "Come and sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool". This is what lies in store for us. Let us rejoice. Let us break forth in deeds of love and charity. This is what witnesses to Christ's resurrection by showing forth resurrection life in us, where maybe few expected to see it! Yet here it is!

# **COME & SEE THE RISEN LORD**

A reflection developed from a homily by St. John Chrysostom

How can I recount hidden realities or proclaim what surpasses every human word and concept? Jesus Christ was born from a virgin womb and rose again from a sealed tomb? How can I lay open before you such mysteries? How can I explain the mystery of the Lord's resurrection? I can only do it by following the lead of the Holy Gospels. "Come and see the place where he lay!" That is what they say. How can we obey?

Come and see the place where the outward signs of your very own resurrection are found. This is where death has been entombed and destroyed. Come and see the place where the unsown seed of mortality has brought forth a hundred-fold harvest of immortality. Where do you see this? Look in the mirror of your heart and soul. Look at your risen self! You are risen by what you do.

How does one become able to see the signs of resurrection in one's own self? Listen to Scripture: "Go and tell my brethren to go to Galilee and there they will see me." How do you tell others where Christ is to be seen? How do you lead them to see Christ? You do it by making visible in your own person and deeds the risen life that Christ has given all of us.

Christ was present though unseen in the baptismal font but comes to be seen in the joy and life of the baptized. Christ embraced us as a friend and filled our hearts and souls with rejoicing. Christ himself has washed away all the stains of a worldly life with streams of grace and by anointing those who are reborn with the precious ointment of the Spirit. The Lord has become one who feeds us, and with the food that is his very self given to us daily. To all who believe him Risen he says: Take and eat the bread from heaven. Receive from my side the spring of living water, every flowing and never dried up. Let those who are hungry eat their fill. Let those who are thirsty drink the wine that brings true fulfillment and salvation. How can we not be filled with joy?

How can one prevent one's inner joy from springing out and showing itself in loving deeds? You have been sent to proclaim the Risen One to all your brothers and sisters, everywhere in the world where the Lord may lead you. Is it difficult? No more difficult than living the joy we are given. No more difficult than living the love we experience with one another.

# **HELPING ONE ANOTHER MEET CHRIST RISEN**

**A reflection inspired by a text of Fr. Benedict Groeschel**

**If you ever get the chance to go to the Holy Land go and visit the small chapel just outside Capernaum commemorating Jesus' breakfast with Peter and some of the apostles. Walk along the beach to the rock that is said to have served Jesus as a table when he invited not just disciples but very weary fishermen to have something to eat with him.**

**What did Jesus do that? He thoughtfully offered refreshment and respite to people who had been working hard but not accomplished what they wanted and were discouraged and tired. It was a simple deed of human concern that also became a revelation of the Risen Lord. The God of revelation is an awesome God. The God who raised Jesus from the dead, and then sent him to us, is perhaps even more awesome. The fact that the Risen Jesus comes only to those who are willing to believe doesn't change this a bit, but point to faith as source of the gift of ability to see Christ, and God, in every human deed.**

**Faith discloses that behind the kindness and thoughtfulness of a simple sharing of some bread and fish there lies an endless and measureless thoughtfulness and kindness. One of the possible reasons why faith is given us is to help us see this presence of God and so who God is because this has to happen through others. That, after all, is what Jesus was sent to show us. Once we see it we find an inexhaustible font of gladness to carry us through the ups and downs of everyday life. Walk along the shore of the Sea of Galilee early in the morning, and feel the coolness of the breeze brush your cheeks and help you recall simple truths and joys.**

**It is as though Jesus gently says, Peace be with you! Do not be afraid! I am present in the lake and the breeze and that stone just above the waterline. I am present everywhere and in everyone and only want to disclose myself in the tiny marvels I have created and hidden around each of the corners you will turn in your winding journey toward my Kingdom. Expect me in faith and you will be surprised and refreshed. I have shared so much because I want to testify to God's loving and refreshing presence everywhere and in everyone. By revealing this divine presence to you I offer you too a share in the peace and new life and energy that always come when we encounter our Lord and God. That is one of the tiny but vital gifts that Easter brings. Jesus continues to reveal to us the wonders God gives us as he calls us from daily tasks to a meal with Him in the mornings of our days.**