

THE POSITION OF THE RESURRECTION IN OUR LIVES

CHRIST ROSE FROM THE DEAD in the body in which He was born, crucified, and died. Thus when He went to heaven following the resurrection, His disciples were troubled because they thought He was a spirit, as did the Emmaus disciples: “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since this happened” (Lk 24:19-21).

“On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” But they were frightened, and supposed that He was a ghost. And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do questionings rise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have.” And while they still did not believe because of joy and amazement, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” (Jn 20:19; Lk 24:36-41)

It would have been possible here for Christ to open their eyes and reveal Himself, for them to recognize Him and believe in Him at the same time. But Christ’s desire was for them to become eyewitnesses. They were able to deliver the message with the assurance of what they had seen with their eyes, so that we could accept the account given in the Word and consequently believe that which they had seen and verified.

The Apostles’ belief in Christ was not just based on sight and touch, they were also given two other factors that raised their faith to the level of revelation and fellowship in the Divine truth:

The first factor is a higher level than believing through sight and touch. Christ: “opened their minds to understand the scriptures” (Lk 24:45), which means to know their truth. Of course this was built on the foundation of believing through seeing.

The Second factor elevated them to an even higher degree than the opening of their minds. They received the Holy Spirit through the breath of Jesus mouth, and

again through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Their faith reached the level of Divine truth in this way, and they became partners in it. This great gift was of course founded on their first belief, which came as a result of seeing with their physical eyes.

When the disciples handed Faith in Christ down to us, they did it at three levels: the level of sight and touch, then at the level of mind opening and the revelation of Divine truth in the living Word, and then at the level of the Holy Spirit who gives us fellowship in the Divine Truth. This is the spiritual fellowship described by St John in his First Epistle: “Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 Jn 1:4).

Christ gave to them at all three levels, not only to be living in them, but that they might also pass it on to us as they had received it themselves, with the same power, and freely without cost: “While we were yet sinners Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8).

St John the Apostle writes:

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life – the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us – that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing this that our joy may be complete” (1 Jn 1:1-4).

Today is the day of the resurrection. I tell you that this fellowship to which St John calls us, with the apostles, the Father, and His Son Jesus Christ, that completes our joy, is the very same fellowship experienced by the apostles on the day that the resurrected Lord was revealed to them, and they “did not believe it because of joy and amazement” (Lk 24:36-41). This is the same resurrection, and is the same as that which St Peter calls our new birth:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you” (1 Pet 1:3-4).

St Peter also offers us a transfer from the re-birth through the resurrection on the personal level to a re-birth. This takes place through the Word, “God’s living word,” because he considered it autonomous, alive with the power of eternal life,

able to give life to whoever lives by it: “You have been born anew, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God” (1 Pet 1:23).

It is amazing that St Peter and St John both considered the living word to be “the seed of God”. It was the seed of eternal life if it inhabited the heart, due to its ability to offer eternal life. It offers the resurrection, in its divine nature that does not sin and cannot sin: “No one born of God commits sin; for God’s nature abides in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God” (1 Jn 3:9).

For that reason he who is born of God lives in the resurrection in that he has overcome sin and death. Paul the Apostle therefore says to those who sin after having received the life of the resurrection: “We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin” (Rom 6:6). “Let no sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions” (Rom 6:12).

It is as if the man who obeys sin is trying to make sin once more take a hold of his body that was crucified with Christ.

If you ask me; “why don’t I feel the new man that is in me, or feel that I possess the newness of life or this resurrection we share in?” I will tell you that the resurrection and the new man or the new creation is of Christ’s heavenly nature. When Christ rose from the dead not everyone could see Him. Christ was born and died on the cross in a human body filled with the divine attributes, and we were filled with Him. He rose in that same body, becoming a celestial body that cannot be seen, and we were united with Him. He chose to whom He would reveal Himself, opening their eyes to the Divine truth so that they may know Him. We have fellowship with Him in this celestial nature, hidden in us in a way that cannot be revealed to us or any other living being. The Apostle Paul explained it this way:

“For you have died, and your life (new) is hid with Christ (resurrected from the dead) in God” (Col 3:3).

Christ cannot be seen nowadays, but His life is hidden in God. In Him we also become unseen, meaning our new nature or the new man who lives in Christ’s resurrection. This is what St John in his First Epistle assures us: “Beloved, we are God’s children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (1 Jn 3:2). The Apostle Paul also affirms this: “When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory” (Col 3:4). The nature of God is not

to be revealed now in any form. If we take part in it then the law will be applied to us. As Christ says, the new creation separates us from the world:

“I have given them thy word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not pray that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one” (Jn 17:14, 15).

Among the most important of new man’s features is that he is a creature that resembles God in righteousness and sanctity of truth, and is entrusted with implementing the commandment to love God and others faithfully, because he (the new man) is born of God and God’s nature is love, and God’s love is active. Whoever has God’s love must show it if it is to increase. The effective gift of love is new man’s life and his righteous deeds. St John in his First Epistle says:

“He who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love” (1 Jn 4:7, 8).

This verse is remarkable in that it reveals the source of the mystery of being born of God, and that is love. True, faithful love with a whole heart immediately reveals that its owner is born of God with a new creation and new nature. Love is the certificate of God’s children, and St John declared it to be a source of the knowledge of God: “He who loves is born of God and knows God.” The knowledge here is the unveiled knowledge as between two lovers. St Paul says: “Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?” (1 Cor 9:1). “Assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me for you, how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. When you read this you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ ... Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God’s grace which was given me by the working of his power” (Eph 3:2-7).

These days we notice that the majority of those who come to Christ with fervor and vigor do not come by means of teaching and sermons, but through an inner response to Christ’s personal invitation. St John reveals this mystery in his First Epistle: “And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, to know him who is true” (1 Jn 5:20).

Here, understanding and the knowledge of truth are the application of the new birth as a man comes into the knowledge of Christ, love for Him and faithfulness to Him, without means or teaching. The understanding gives him an inner revelation of Christ and over a period of time he comes to know about Christ and learns from Christ what many others have not known. Although this makes us

very happy, at the same time it draws our attention to a flaw in our understanding, where the vision of truth is being overcome by the world and is gradually disappearing. We are not abiding in the new creation we received through Christ's resurrection according to the exhortation: "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col 3:1-3).

What can we say dear brothers?

The treasure in your hands which has been entrusted to you and came down to us through the blood of martyrs and the tribulation of past generations is all but removed from our hands, to be given to others who will be faithful witnesses to Him. For we have risen with Christ and boast of it, but we do not concern ourselves with what is above or seek it. Our interests are earthly and self-centered. We say we have died with Christ and boast of it but we live for the world and not with Christ or for Christ.

The resurrection is Christ's heavenly treasure, that He bought with His blood and entrusted to us; then He went away and the key to our journey remains in Him.

(2001).

St Macarius the Great

Fellowship with Christ in Hardships and Tribulations

In your poverty and indigence do not relax your zeal but take as an example and aim the Lord who fared thus. When your body suffers and you wear down remember the Lord's body which was lashed by Pilate, and how it had been worn out with travel. When you are destitute of a home remember that the Lord of creation said when he came to earth, "the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head" (Lk 9:58). When you walk remember that the Lord's feet were covered with dust throughout his life on earth except for the only time when for the sake of the prophecy he sat on an ass. When your eyes are filled with tears remember that the Lord wept over your fall and prayed to the Father with loud cries and tears that you might escape death. When people insult you remember the slaps and the spitting which he received and have patience in your misery. Neither is your sleep on the floor more painful than the crown of thorns which they placed on his head.

Collection III, *Homily 6:4*.