

Paragraph 2. On the Third Day He Rose Again 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 Je-
 sus."⁴⁸⁹ The Resurrection of Jesus is the crowning truth of our faith in
 90 Christ, a faith believed and lived as the central truth by the first
 651 Christian community; handed on as fundamental by Tradition; estab-
 991 lished 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 Testa-
 ment 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 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 Resurrec-
 tion. This was the case, first with the holy women, and then with
 Peter.⁴⁹⁵ The disciple "whom Jesus loved" affirmed that when he

489 Acts 13:32-33.

490 Byzantine Liturgy, Troparion of Easter.

491 1 Cor 15:3-4.

492 Cf. Acts 9:3-18.

493 Lk 24:5-6.

494 Cf. Jn 20:13; Mt 28:11-15.

495 Cf. Lk 24:3, 12, 22-23.

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.⁴⁹⁷ 999

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!"⁵⁰¹ 553 448

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.⁵⁰² 659, 881 860

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

496 Jn 20:2, 6, 8.

497 Cf. Jn 11:44; 20:5-7.

498 Mk 16:1; Lk 24:1; Jn 19:31, 42.

499 Cf. Lk 24:9-10; Mt 28:9-10; Jn 20:11-18.

500 Cf. 1 Cor 15:5; Lk 22:31-32.

501 Lk 24:34, 36.

502 1 Cor 15:4-8; cf. Acts 1:22.

503 Cf. Lk 22:31-32.

504 Lk 24:17; cf. Jn 20:19.

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
 999 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
 934 returned by Jesus' power to ordinary earthly life. At some particular
 549 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

505 *Lk* 24:11; cf. *Mk* 16:11, 13.

506 *Mk* 16:14.

507 *Lk* 24:38-41.

508 Cf. *Jn* 20:24-27; *Mt* 28:17.

509 Cf. *Lk* 24:30, 39-40, 41-43; *Jn* 20:20, 27; 21:9, 13-15.

510 Cf. *Mt* 28:9, 16-17; *Lk* 24:15, 36; *Jn* 20:14, 17, 19, 26; 21:4.

511 Cf. *Mk* 16:12; *Jn* 20:14-16; 21:4, 7.

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 Exsultet 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 1000 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 258, 989 proper characteristics. The Father's power "raised up" Christ his Son and by doing so perfectly introduced his Son's humanity, including 663 his body, into the Trinity. Jesus is conclusively revealed as "Son of 445 God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his Resurrection 272 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

512 Cf. 1 Cor 15:35-50.

513 "O vere beata nox, quae sola meruit scire tempus et horam, in qua Christus ab inferis resurrexit!"

514 Acts 13:31; cf. Jn 14:22.

515 Rom 1:3-4; cf. Acts 2:24.

516 Cf. Rom 6:4; 2 Cor 13:4; Phil 3:10; Eph 1:19-22; Heb 7:16.

517 Cf. Mk 8:31; 9:9-31; 10:34.

518 Jn 10:17-18.

519 1 Thess 4:14.

626 650 The Fathers contemplate the Resurrection from the per-
 1005 spective 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,
 129 even those most inaccessible to human reason, find their justifica-
 274 tion 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
 994, 601 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.

445 653 The truth of Jesus' divinity is confirmed by his Resurrec-
 tion. 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
 461, 422 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

520 St. Gregory of Nyssa, *In Christi res. orat.* 1: PG 46:617B; cf. also DS 325;
 359; 369.

521 1 Cor 15:14.

522 Cf. Mt 28:6; Mk 16:7; Lk 24:6-7, 26-27, 44-48.

523 Cf. 1 Cor 15:3-4; cf. the Nicene Creed.

524 Jn 8:28.

525 Acts 13:32-34; cf. Ps 2:7.

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).
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526 *Rom* 6:4; cf. 4:25.

527 Cf. *Eph* 2:4-5; *1 Pet* 1:3.

528 *Mt* 28:10; *Jn* 20:17.

529 *1 Cor* 15:20-22.

530 *Heb* 6:5.

531 *2 Cor* 5:15; cf. *Col* 3:1-3.

ARTICLE 6

**HE ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN, AND IS SEATED
AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD THE FATHER
ALMIGHTY**

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
645 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 ordi-
nary humanity.⁵³⁴ Jesus' final apparition ends with the irreversible
66 entry of his humanity into divine glory, symbolized by the cloud
697 and by heaven, where he is seated from that time forward at God's
642 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
461 "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 human-
ity does not have access to the "Father's house," to God's life and
792 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

532 Mk 16:19.

533 Cf. Lk 24:31; Jn 20:19, 26.

534 Cf. Acts 1:3; 10:41; Mk 16:12; Lk 24:15; Jn 20:14-15; 21:4.

535 Cf. Acts 1:9; 2:33; 7:56; Lk 9:34-35; 24:51; Ex 13:22; Mk 16:19; Ps 110:1.

536 1 Cor 15:8; cf. 9:1; Gal 1:16.

537 Jn 20:17.

538 Cf. Jn 16:28.

539 Jn 3:13; cf. Eph 4:8-10.

540 Jn 14:2.

541 Roman Missal, Preface of the Ascension: "*sed ut illuc confideremus, sua membra, nos subsequi quo ipse, caput nostrum principiumque, praecessit.*"

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 Cove- 1545
nant, “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 1137
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.”⁵⁴⁶ 648

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 541
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

542 *Jn* 12:32.

543 *Heb* 9:24.

544 *Heb* 7:25.

545 *Heb* 9:11; cf. *Rev* 4:6-11.

546 St. John Damascene, *De fide orth.*, 4, 2: PG 94, 1104C.

547 *Dan* 7:14.

548 Nicene Creed.