

# PASSION AND RESURRECTION: A JOURNEY INTO THE HOLY AND GREAT WEEK OF PASCHA



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# PaschaSunday



The Lord rises from the dead, like the Bridegroom coming out of the bridal chamber.

The Resurrection of Christ is a victory, not only over His own death, but over death in general. *"We celebrate*

*the annihilation of death, the deposition of Hades, the eternal outset of another life"*.

With His Resurrection, all of mankind and all human nature are co-

resurrected with Christ, *"the human species is enrobed imperishably"*.

Although we may be co-risen ( of course not in the sense of actually arising from the grave ), people still continue to die, but the despair over death has

been eliminated. Death has become powerless, and the power of resurrection has been bestowed on all human nature. The Apostle Paul makes this absolutely clear: *"If there were no Resurrection from the dead, then Christ would not have risen; And if the dead cannot be risen, then Christ could not have risen"* (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians. 15, 13, 16). *"If Christ is not risen, then our faith is futile"* (verse 17). Beyond the hope of the general

Resurrection, faith in Christ would have been futile and without purpose; it would have been mere vainglory. *"And now Christ has risen from the dead, as the first fruit of the slumbering souls"* (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians. 15,20) and this is where the victory of life is found.

# CHRIST HAS RISEN

At midnight, inside the totally dark temple, from inside the Sanctuary and as far as the very Tomb of the Lord, in every cemetery, the ever-shining light of the resurrected Christ comes forth and radiates everywhere: *"Light from light, the true God, by true God"*, that *"light of Christ"*, which *"shines upon everyone"*, which we are all invited to acquire, and ourselves eventually also become the light of Christ. *"Now everything is filled with light, the heavens and the earth and the underworld..."*. All nature celebrates; all of creation participates in the light of the Resurrection, and the people with the flame of the Resurrection in hand, pour out into the streets and the countryside, and carry the flame to their homes, their domestic churches. The resurrected Christ becomes *"the light of the world"*. In this rejoicing, *"enter, all of you; For He accepts the last one just as He does the first..... and He is merciful to the latter one, and He also cares about the former one. And He gives to that one, and grants to this one. And He accepts our labour, and respects our opinion, and honors the act, and praises the intention..."* (Catechist Speech of saint John the Chrysostom).

Christ with His Resurrection intervenes in the world. *"Yesterday, I was buried with Thee, o Christ; and today, I arise with Thine Arising"* and this "co-resurrection" is realized, with the transformation of man and the world.

Do not ask me to tell you what death and resurrection are; do not ask me what death and life are, or deterioration and imperishability. I am not able to. But if you insist on an infinitely small sample of the way and the means to conquer death, you must allow me to borrow a small excerpt from Dostoevsky's masterpiece, the BROTHERS KARAMAZOV. The excerpt that follows is titled "The little onion". *"Once upon a time, there lived a*

wicked woman. She died, without ever doing anything kind, so the devils threw her into the fiery lake. However, her guardian angel tried to remember some kindness that she may have done in her life, so that he might help her out, when she would stand before God. He remembered, and told God, that she had once uprooted a green onion and had given it to a beggarwoman. God then told the angel: "Take the same onion, and stand over the lake. Hold it from one end, and when she grabs hold of the other end, pull her out. If she manages to get out, then she can enter Paradise. But if the onion breaks, it will mean that she deserves to be where she is." The angel ran to the woman, and said to her "Hold on, hold on tightly to this little onion, and I will pull you out". And he started to pull her out, very carefully. He had drawn her out of the lake almost completely, but then, the other sinners saw her being pulled out, and they grabbed hold of her so that they too would be pulled out with her. But the woman was mean; a proper hag. She started to kick them away, shouting: "It's me, me that they want to pull out, not you! The onion is mine, not yours!" No sooner had she said this, than the onion snapped. And she fell back into the lake. And the angel broke into tears and went away." I read this narrative, so that I may complete it, with a phrase by saint Gregory: "He died, so that He might save, He arose, so that He might draw towards Him those bodies who had fallen down in sin..." . In other words, Christ Himself rose up to the heavens, so that He might pull us up with a simple little onion. All our human sin is hung on Him, and during all this period of time, we are taught that Christ Himself will submit Himself to death for all of us, to the end. Participation, or rejection? In the Kingdom of God - a certainty which is announced to us by the Resurrection – you either share the little onion that God gives you, with the others, or else you head down the path of oblivion.

*"In this did we perceive love: that He lay down his life for us. Therefore it is our debt, to lay down our lives for our brothers..... it is in this, that love is found : not in our loving God, but in His loving us, and sending us His son as ransom for our sins "* (John, Á´ 3,16 and 4,10). **TRULY, HE IS RISEN!**