



Why Do You Look for the Living Among the Dead?

How to Meet the Risen Christ

Based on articles 624-682 of the CCC

As you prepare to pray with the Risen Christ, the one whom we know as Lord, pause here to consider how you remember him. In what ways has he touched your life, your heart? How have you shared this with others?

He is Dead

We believe that Jesus died that day,
crucified among thieves,
hanging on that cross.

Died and was buried
in a local tomb.

This brings us to the Easter Vigil
in the liturgical life of the Church,
to Holy Saturday night
where we celebrate the mystery
of this death leading to new life.

There is a sense of waiting between
the events of Good Friday
and those of Saturday night.

We celebrate the Vigil,
remembering and retelling our long story
of salvation history;

We bless new water and new fire;
and glory in the Resurrection of Christ!

For us Christians, this leads to baptism,
celebrated as the high point
of the Easter Vigil.

**For in baptism, we ourselves die in Christ,
we go into the water,
into the tomb,
to emerge as men and women
recreated in Christ.**

The great mystery of the tomb
and our great faith in the communion of saints,
together with our experience of Divine Love
restoring us from selfishness and sin,
redeeming us with love,
leads us to believe as well
that all the dead know the Christ.

Pause here to bring to mind all the ways you have been called to die to yourself in Christ. These might include dimensions of your closest love relationships, your spouse, partner, friends, or family members. Think about how you are called to die in forgiving others, in welcoming them, in being generous and hospitable toward them. How are you called to enter into the death of Christ?

If possible, share this with another. If you're using this as a group resource, allow plenty of time for people to explore the meaning of dying and rising. The first step is to face those things to which we are called to **die**. As you share about this, the resurrection will dawn upon you.

With this in mind, we turn now to the Resurrection.

He is Risen

We turn to some of the earliest Christian writings,
to the letters of Paul,
to grasp the understanding of the church
about the Resurrection of Christ.
“...I handed on to you,” Paul wrote to Corinth,
“as of first importance
what I in turn had received:
that Christ died for our sins...
that he was buried...
that he was raised on the third day...
that he appeared to Cephas...”



This early faith provides the basis for our own.
Paul did not himself witness these events,
but he learned of them after his own conversion.
The stories were told in the community
and repeated and repeated and repeated.
Now they are handed on to us.

**"Why do you look for the living
among the dead?"
the women had been asked in Luke,
chapter 24, verse 5
reflecting the faith of the Gospels.**

No one had been an eye witness to the Resurrection;
indeed, all they suspected at first

was a missing corpse.
And as the Gospel writers wrote this account,
remember that it was some forty years later,
forty years of being church,
of commemorating that morning hour
when they first encountered
the Risen Lord.

Their account provides us with the theology
that peers into this great mystery,
but does not really explain it.

We believe in the Resurrection
because of their early belief,
but also because we ourselves know Christ,
the Risen Lord,
in our midst. We have met him.



**The women disciples
were the first
to encounter Christ,
no longer in the way
they had during
his lifetime...**

They in turn told the men, including Peter,
and the others.

The faith of the first community
was established.

He is Risen!

The Risen Christ

Try to imagine what this experience
must have been like for those early believers.

He had been seized from their midst,
tortured in public as they hid,
and killed like a common criminal.

He had been the one in whom they had placed
all their hope and faith,
the one who had been teacher to them,
he had been companion and friend.

They'd never experienced anyone

quite like this man, Jesus.
They understood his principle very well:
never give up your love,
never.



You *never*
give up your love.

Pause here to consider the times in your own life when you nearly gave up loving others, when you nearly “gave up” on this good news. When did you choose death over life, darkness over light? These times help us understand the power of Christ. For in them, we experience forgiveness and healing and prepare to go on.

These may well have been times when we held a grudge or plotted revenge against others. Or times when we engaged in gossip or negative criticism of others, even of those whom we love. Giving up on the good news means giving up on each other, or even on ourselves. If you are sharing this exercise with a group, share this with each other. If you are alone, enter into an examen and prepare for Reconciliation.

But they could not have imagined
that he would give even his life
for Divine Love,
for God’s will and power.
They understood so little,
and perhaps we, too, understand too little.
For we ourselves cling to life,
to possessions,
to power and position and prestige.
We forget that Divine Love, in the end,
is stronger than hate, darkness, and fear
and more important than everything else.



The Experience of the Risen Lord

They began experiencing him again:

in the context of a meal at Emmaus,
or a fish fry on the beach in John's Gospel,
or in that upper room among the twelve,
or, as Paul reported, to "more than five hundred
...at one time!"
in 1 Corinthians, chapter 15, verse 6.

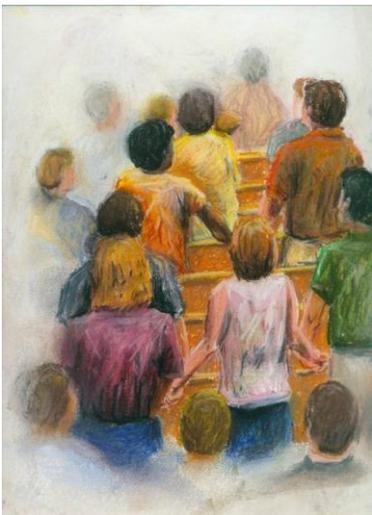
Here he is among them,
in his "glorious body"
no longer limited by time and space,
transcending all they could understand.

We are not talking here about a corpse
that has been resuscitated,
as happened to Jairus' daughter,
the son of that widow of Naim,
or Jesus' friend, Lazarus.

Resurrection is not a return to earthly life,
but it is Divine Love
in a new way of being.

Those who experienced him while he lived
knew Christ now
as filled with the Holy Spirit,
sharing divine life.

Most of those who experienced the Risen Christ
had been his faithful followers,
but in the end, had also abandoned or denied him.



Their community was fractured and dispersed
and they were in hiding
for fear that they, too, would be asked
to choose between Divine Love
or their lives!

So when, after the dark night of this moment
passed over to the dawn of reunion
with each other,
perhaps they gathered in a shared meal,
perhaps at a warm fire, in an embrace,
with a comforting word
from Mary or John.

And there, in that renewed solidarity,
in that recommitment to his love,
in that assembly of Christ's own friends,
lo! he is there among them again!

How have you met the risen Christ? At what times did he appear to you and your community or family? What great meals have you shared with others? At what times have you experienced true solidarity and the power of the presence of God in such a meal? To what meals do you now look forward with hope? To what meals do you look backward with thanks? You are very close to understanding the Eucharistic experience.

It's no accident that many of the experiences
of the Risen Christ
occurred in the context of meals.

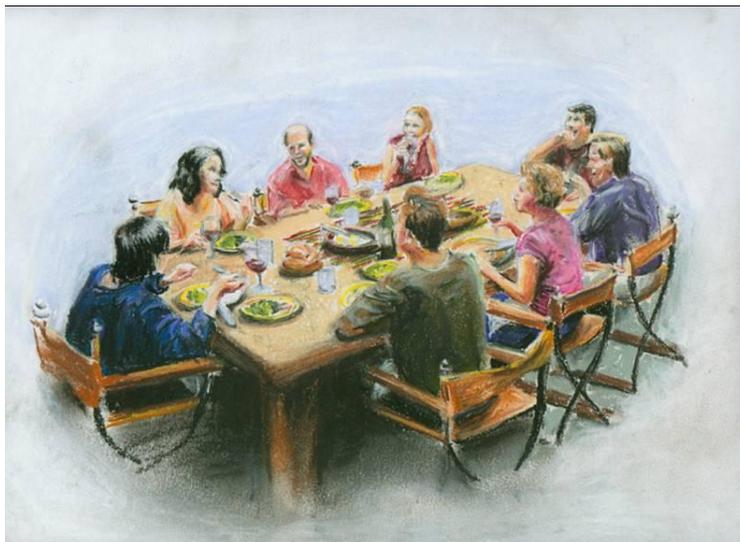
Where else?

For Christ's own memorial
of his saving death and resurrection
had been a meal, after all.

And for us Christians,
the meal became *Agape*,
a Greek word which means "sacred love"
celebrated in a "love feast."

It became Eucharist,
which means Thanksgiving.

Each time we share this sacred meal,
each time we assemble for Eucharist,
even just two or three of us,
Christ is present among us
as he promised.



The experience of the Risen Christ
is that experience on which our faith is based.
It completes and seals and confirms all he taught,
and all he did
during his years of ministry.
In the reality of the Resurrection
from God who is Divine Love
flows a river of new life
which fulfills a promise
made in ancient times.

We have been set free
from that human inclination to selfishness,
and we have also been offered a pathway
to new life.

We are returned, in a word, to the power
of Divine Love,
to grace.

Have you experienced the power of God? What is your experience of Grace? Have you shared that with others? From what moments – in your parish, home, school, workplace, park, farm or garden– do you draw your strength now?

Allow yourself a little time to reflect on this as you go about your daily tasks and chores. Keep this at the back of your mind. How does the Power of God touch your life? To what are you being called by God? As you prepare to sleep tonight, put this question into your mind and allow your dreams to lead you onward.

We are empowered ourselves now
to forgive endlessly,
to love with passion,
to see the materially poor and
to be generous,
inclusive,
and just.

Truly, this is victory over death!
For we are now sisters and brothers,
we are sons and daughters of Divine Love.

We have a real share in the life of Christ,
Risen and Present.

The promise is immense:
in Christ we shall all arise.

When we put on Christ as a garment,
in Paul's words,
or when we give over our own hearts,
we live no longer for ourselves,
but for Christ... Amen.

How have you “put on Christ as a garment?” How do you allow forgiveness, generosity, and love to be your cloak?

We Christians believe that
when we die,
the love we have in our hearts
is what we take with us
for eternity.

We believe that we will be judged,
based on our conduct,
on the purity of our motives,
on the secrets of our hearts.

Our attitudes toward our neighbor,
the patterns of our lives,
will clearly show whether we accepted grace,
or refused it.

Then it will be known
what we did to the least of Christ’s little ones.

Chapter 25 of Matthew’s Gospel
echoes the whole Christian tradition
when it warns that we will be asked
did we feed the hungry?
did we clothe the naked?
did we visit the prisoner?
did we welcome the stranger?

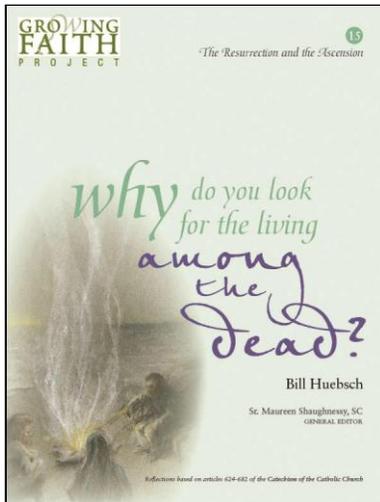
We long to hear those words,
echoed in Matthew’s Gospel,
“Come, you that are blessed by my Father,
inherit the kingdom
prepared for you from the foundation
of the world...”

Take a few moments now to let this all sink in. The risen Christ is with you, empowering you, filling you with the power of love, which is grace. You in turn, are called to transform the world with that love and grace, with that peace and justice.

Look back over these words. Which phrases or words continue to live in your memory? From which do you draw encouragement? By which are you challenged to grow?

Close this prayer by turning your heart to Christ. Allow the power of God which is all around you, to fill your heart. Contemplate this for the next few days of your life.

Above all, when you seek him, look for him among the living!



These reflections are drawn from Booklet #15 in the *Growing Faith* series. *Growing Faith* summarizes the entire *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in plain English. It carries a Nihil Obstat and Imprimatur. Es disponible en español, también.

You can learn more about *Growing Faith* at the web site which supports it, PastoralPlanning.com. On the home page, scroll down and click on Growing Faith in the left hand column.

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