

“IF YE THEN BE RISEN WITH CHRIST”

The day of resurrection,
earth, tell it out abroad
the Passover of gladness,
the Passover of God.

Thus did John of Damascus sing the praises of this day, the praises of our Lord. On this day Christ, our passover, he who was slain in our stead and by whose blood we are redeemed, did himself pass over from death to life, from humiliation to glory, from defeat to victory, and we “Hail the day that sees him rise.”

But it is not in his resurrection alone that we rejoice because his resurrection was not alone. When he passed from death to life, he, our captain, did carry in his train all those who did and would place their faith in him. For them he trampled down death; them he freed from the grasp of sin and of the devil, and gave unto them life eternal. At our *baptism* we died and rose in him to new life. St. Paul wrote to the Romans, “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism unto death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (6:4). Likewise repeatedly at the *Holy Eucharist*, “we offer and present ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a living sacrifice.” Therefore as we said several weeks ago, “We offer and present ourselves unto God, unworthy though we may be, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Our unworthy and imperfect sacrifice of ourselves is united in [the sacrament of the altar] with the most worthy and perfect sacrifice of Christ.” Thus do we continually unite ourselves with his sacrifice, take up our cross to follow him, and losing our life for his sake do truly find it. And he in love receives us unto himself, binds us together with him in his sacrifice, so to speak, that we might also rise with him.

It is not Christ’s resurrection alone that we celebrate this day, but ours in him. John of Damascus continued his great hymn:

From death to life eternal,
from this world to the sky,
our Christ has brought us over
with hymns of victory.

Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, and he as a new and greater Moses leads his people from the land of bondage, away from the power of the spiritual Pharaohs of this world, and across the Red Sea to life, to that new and spiritual life that is eternal.

The Lord is risen. He is risen indeed! . . . *and we are risen with him.* This is a glorious truth, but certain things follow. Those who are liberated need to act as though they were free indeed, free from the past, free from bondage, free from untruth and falsehood, free from hypocrisy and jealousy, free from hatred and envy, free from self-centeredness and self-will, free from sin, and thus free to love and free to serve, free to give of themselves as did our Lord.

“If ye then be risen with Christ,” St. Paul admonishes us in today’s Epistle, “seek those things which are above.” We are like those whom God delivered from Egypt long ago, and are not to seek any longer the leeks and garlic of the land of bondage. Like Israel of old we are living in transition. We are on a journey. We have left Egypt behind and must now set our sights on the land to which we are destined, being ever careful on the way lest we fall in the desert as did so many. We are risen with Christ, and must now set our hearts on things above, on the things of God, on faith and hope and love, our eyes fixed on Jesus Christ the author and finisher of faith, for, as the apostle says, “When Christ who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”

We celebrate this day not an event of ancient history, but of the resurrection of the crucified Christ that includes us. And so we celebrate this day our new life in him. In Christ life is given us anew and afresh—not just a new chance at the old life, but Christ’s resurrection life over which sin and death can have no power. St. Paul put it paradoxically: “Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God,” You have metamorphosed and become a new creation. And this ‘postmortem life’, this resurrection life, must be devoted to things above—not otherworldly things, but to the honor of God’s name, the coming of his kingdom, the doing of his will, the loving of neighbor, the caring for the poor and disenfranchised, the seeking of justice, the love and service of truth, the spreading of his glorious gospel. We are risen with Christ and set free to be the men and women we were always intended to be, the men and women we have failed to be, and that miserably, but now with his life and in his strength and with his guidance and by the

enabling of the Holy Spirit we can lead lives that are full of meaning and filled with service and devoted to the worship and praise of him in whose image and for whose glory we were created. And so let the apostle's admonition from today's Epistle ring in our ears:

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things of the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. (Col. 3:1-4)

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