

5. From death to life

The faith should not make us believe in the Resurrection just as if it were an isolated reality, but in the Resurrection that, with the gift of the presence of the Lord, renews our life and the whole world. But how does this come about? How can we today experience this renewal worked by the Origin of everything, who is the Word of God incarnate, who suffered death and rose for us?

Jesus tells us: “Behold, I make all things new” (Rev 21:5). How does this come about? How do we truly allow the risen Christ to renew everything, to renew us wholly, to rebuild the ruins, to rejuvenate our old age, to reunite all in the harmonious integrity that we have lost?

Above all we must remember that the Savior does all this not as a hero who comes to conquer the world, as a Superman who comes to save us with power and splendor: he does it as a father, a good shepherd, a friend who has compassion on us. In fact, in the Book of Revelation, this proclamation of the victory of Christ is preceded by a promise of consolation: “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away” (Rev 21:3–4).

The victory of Christ over all that makes us die is his presence that dries our tears, conquering every reason for sadness: death, sorrow, lament, and grief.

“He will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

“Behold, I make all things new.”

The newness that Christ brought into the world is above all his consolation, that which dries all tears, that which comforts every sorrow and pain. Only Christ’s consolation renews the world! The true newness and victory of the Risen One is the consolation of his presence.

In fact, the first great witness of Christ’s Resurrection, St. Mary Magdalene, recognized Jesus in the one who, in a certain sense, dried her tears: “Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?’ Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, ‘Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Mary.’ She turned and said to him in Aramaic, ‘Rabboni!’ (which means Teacher)” (Jn 20:15–16).

But this passage from tears to joy for the manifestation of the Risen One is a sign of how the renewal of all things that Christ’s Resurrection makes possible is brought about in and through us.

On Easter Monday I was struck by the short reading of Nones, taken from the second letter to Timothy: “The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him” (2 Tim 2:11).

In the original Greek and in the Latin translation – *“si commortui sumus, et convivemus”* – this phrase is even more concise and we could translate it as follows: “If we co-die, we co-live.”

What does this mean? Mainly that our resurrection and renewal imply death, a passage through death. At the same time we understand that the essential thing for living out this paschal journey is to be with Christ, is communion with Him.

This means that to rise again, to renew the situations of death in which we find ourselves, we must first of all begin by living our death with Christ, by living our situations of death with Christ. The path of renewal is, with Christ, to cross through every condition and situation of death that our human condition as sinners involves. Before the resurrection, we must receive from the Risen One the grace of being able to die with Him, of living our death with Him.

We must recognize that normally, instead of accepting this paschal logic of renewal, we are content to ensure ourselves some survival, that is, we would like Christ to renew us without bringing us back from the dead, without passing through death with Him. We fear death because we do not truly have faith that “if we die with him, so also shall we live with him.” We do not trust that the companionship of Christ is enough to defeat death, is enough to pass from death to life. The fear of death blocks us from trusting in Christ, from abandoning ourselves to his saving presence. We live all our situations of death like little children who, even if their father takes their hand, are not willing to cross a dark room or steep path to get to the light or to the peak of the mountain.

But Jesus, rising and manifesting his presence, and assuring us that he will be with us every day until the end of the world (cf. Mt 28:20), has revealed and offered to our faith not only the ability to pass through difficult moments and situations, but through situations of death, and through death itself. Christ is no longer just a trustworthy good shepherd, like a mountain guide, who enables us to cross through a dark valley. Christ enables us through resurrection to pass through death itself, and situations in which all is lost, all is destroyed, all is finished. This is the meaning of “dying with Him” that St. Paul announces to us as a way of life.

But what does it really mean to die with Christ? What makes it possible?

It is difficult to imagine and understand the death through which we must pass. Our death is a passage through a dark valley that we cannot describe. But this is not what is important: the important thing is not understanding death but allowing Christ’s presence to accompany us through it. To die with Christ the important thing is not to choose death: that will present itself on its own, is part of the human condition. The important thing, rather, is to choose to be with Christ, to choose to receive his presence like the friendly light that makes us pass from death to life, whatever death we are asked to confront. It can be sickness or old age, it can be the fragility of sin, it can be the diminishing of relationships that sustain us, it can be the loss of work, of safety, of peace. It can be the weakness of our communities who ask a lot more from us than they give. It can be the crisis of an era, like that we are passing through today. It can be war or oppression imposed by the “delirium of omnipotence” that Pope Leo XIV continues to denounce.

We do not know what death will come to meet us, through what dark valley our life, our community, our people, the whole world will have to pass.

But Christ is risen! And this does not mean that all this disappears, quite the opposite! It means that in all this we are given the chance to die with Him in order to live with Him. Everything is transformed in an impossible but real renewal, because whoever accepts to die with Christ experiences rising with Him, living a new life already because we are with Him, because we are united to Him, as his friends.

The secret of the renewal of everything, then, is not to lose help, not to refuse, not to neglect communion with Christ in every experience of our life. In trials we should never worry mainly about changing our life and situation but about living them with Him.

The question, then, that we must always ask ourselves in every moment of crisis in which life fades away is a single question: how do I remain with Christ, how do I stay with Him, how do I walk with Him through whatever I am being asked to live through today, now, at each instant? How do I live with Him the trial I or we are passing through?

It is precisely in this way that the monastic life is *per se* a way of renewal and resurrection. For the monastic life, from the very beginnings, is entirely organized toward choosing and welcoming communion with Christ in every moment and situation of the day and in each step of life.

How often, however, our reaction to the moments of crisis and death that we pass through, personally and as a community, is to look for every kind of solution instead of running back to communion with Christ, to which our vocation is wholly dedicated and for which it offers us every kind of help: life in the monastery, the rule, the liturgy, the sacraments, the Word of God, fraternal communion, the authority that guides us.

The seeds of renewal that we need are already contained in all that which the Church and our charism offer us constantly for welcoming the presence of Christ, up to the point of being able to die with Him in order to live now and always with Him.

The new thing that Jesus wants to make in us and among us is his friendship, which embraces our whole life to the point of death and resurrection.