

# Text for the Times: *Risen with Christ*

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*As winter recedes, like the earth around us, we put on new clothes and appearances, we are full of the spirit of spring. The Christian puts on Christ, the Risen Christ, and is made part of his new creation through the sacraments. These mysteries of the Risen Christ help us on our journey to our Father's house where we will share with our resurrected bodies in the glory of Christ, the first-born from the dead.*

'This Time (springtime) was that very one which appeared at the moment of the first creation of the world, when the earth brought forth shoots, when the stars appeared, when heaven and earth and all that is in them came into being together. It is at this time also that the Saviour of the whole world accomplished the mystery of his own feast and, like a great star, lit up the whole world with the rays of the true religion and indeed the occasion seemed to surpass the birthday of the cosmos. At this time the type, the ancient Pasch which is called the Passover, was brought to fulfilment. Furthermore, it bears the image of the slain lamb, and hints at the sign of eating unleavened bread. All these things find their fulfilment in the feast of Salvation. It is he, the Christ, who was the Lamb whose Body was stretched out. But it was he also, the Sun of Justice, whose divine springtime and salvation-bearing change caused the life of men to pass from evil to good. Yet even now heaven-sent scourges are raining down on the Egyptian gods and everywhere the peoples of the earth celebrate their freedom from the many errors of godlessness. The spirits who cause the peoples to go astray and the evils of winter have ceased to be active, and the abundance of new fruits crowns the Church of God with the diverse gifts of the Holy Spirit; and in a word the whole race of men leaps over to our side. All the fields which were cultivated by the Word with spiritual cultivation bring forth the lovely flowers of holiness and, freed from the evils of darkness, we are made worthy on this day of the light of the knowledge of God.'

*Eusebius of Caesarea; from his Treatise on Easter. (P.G. 24, col. 697 A-B).*

''And they were saying to one another: Who will roll away the stone for us from the door of the tomb? And looking up they saw that the stone was rolled back. For it was very large.'' Matthew has sufficiently explained

how the stone was rolled back by the angel. But in a mystical sense the rolling back of the stone suggests the unfolding of the sacraments of Christ, which were concealed by the veil of the written law. For the law was inscribed on stone. When its cover had been taken away and the glory of the resurrection shown forth, both the abolition of the old death and the eternal life, which we must hope for, began to be preached to the whole world.'

*Bede the Venerable : from his Commentary on St Mark's Gospel, Bk .4 Ch. 16 (P.L. 92, Col. 295 B).*

'Let the people of God recognize that in Christ they are a new creature and let them understand with due consideration by whom they are adopted and whom they have adopted. Let not the things which are made new return to their old instability ; and let not the man who has set his hand to the plough leave his work unfinished, but let him attend to what he sows and not look back to what he has left behind. Let no one fall back into that from which he has risen, but even if because of bodily weakness he still lies sick and listless, let him desire immediately to be healed and raised up. This indeed is the road to health and the imitation of the Resurrection begun in Christ. Although in the slipperiness of this life there are many falls and calamities, through it the steps of travellers may be guided from marshy to solid ground. Because, as it is written : "The Lord guides the steps of a man and makes safe the path of one he loves. Though he stumble he shall never fall for the Lord holds him by the hand." (Psalm 36, 23-4). These thoughts, dearly beloved, must be remembered for the sanctification of our whole life, and not only at the Easter festive season, and it is to this that our present activity ought to be directed, so that what has delighted the minds of the faithful in the short experience of divine worship may become a habit and remain untarnished, but if some fault creeps in let it be blotted out by swift repentance. And because the healing of old diseases is difficult and slow, the more recent the wound the quicker the remedies ought to be applied. Thus always rising whole from all our stumbling steps, we may deserve to attain that incorruptible resurrection of our glorified flesh in Christ Jesus Our Lord who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Ghost for ever and ever. Amen.'

*St Leo the Great ; from his first Sermon on the Lord's Resurrection. (P.L. 54, col. 389 B-D).*

'But what now of those souls already separated from their bodies ? We believe that they are completely immersed in that vast ocean of eternal light and shining eternity. But if they wish to receive their bodies again (which cannot be denied) or certainly desire and hope to receive them ; it remains, beyond doubt, that they are not yet entirely changed from themselves, since it is agreed there is something of their own still lacking to which their attention is turned back just a little. Until therefore death is

absorbed in victory and unceasing light enters everywhere on the boundaries of night and entirely takes possession of it so that the heavenly glory may shine forth even in bodies, souls cannot completely lay themselves open, and pass over into God. For even now they are surely bound to their bodies, even if not by life or senses, then by a natural affection, so that without them they neither wish nor are able to be brought to perfection, and so, before the resurrection of the body there will not be that self-abandonment of souls, which is their perfect and highest state. Nor indeed would the spirit seek the companionship of the flesh if without it it could be brought to perfection. For the body is neither put off or taken up again without some benefit to the soul, 'precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his saints'. But if death is precious what is life and that life worth? It is not to be wondered that the body, now in glory, seems to bring something to the spirit, since it is agreed that when weak and mortal it was of no small value to it. O how truly he spoke who said: "All things work together for good to them that love God". To the soul that loves God, the weak body, the dead body and the resurrected body are of use: the first, indeed, for the fruit of penance, the second for rest, the third for perfection. Rightly the soul doesn't wish to be perfected without that which in every state she feels brings her good things . . . But she is not entirely forgetful of herself who still thinks about the resurrection of her own body. But when this one thing that was lacking has been obtained, what now hinders her from in a certain way passing from herself and going completely into God, and becoming as entirely like herself as it is granted her to be made most like to God?' *St Bernard of Clairvaux: On the Love of God (ch. xi)*.

Texts chosen and translated by Bertrand Callaghan, O.P.

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