

# EASTER

Fr. Steven Scherrer

Easter morning is the morning of our resurrection to new life in Christ. Christ's death on the cross has finally saved us from our guilt because of our sins, he having on the cross borne God's curse for them (Gal 3:13), so that we might rise with him, free at last from guilt to walk henceforth with the risen Christ in the "newness of life" (Rom 6:4), in the "newness of the Spirit" (Rom 7:6), illumined from within by the new light of his resurrection, and shone on from without by its splendor. We are saved by Christ, by rising with him to a new life, to live henceforth for God alone (Mk 12:30), pouring out our life in love and service for our brethren (Mk 12:31), for their salvation, using the gifts and inspirations God has given us for this purpose. This is the godly life, focused completely on God, seeking our joy in life in him alone, and renouncing all else for the love of him.

Cursed in his death upon a tree (Gal 3:13; Dt 21:23), Jesus Christ bore our guilt and suffered our punishment. He was "smitten by God" for our sake (Is 53:4), for "the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Is 53:6). And so he bore our punishment for us and suffered our alienation from God, so that we would no longer have to suffer it. He took our place, substituted for us, "was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed" (Is 53:5). "...he makes himself an offering for sin" (Is 53:10), offered in place of us for our sins, lifted upon the cross in punishment for our sins, so that we might be freed from their weight and from the burden of our guilt. So "it was the will of the Lord to bruise him; he put him to grief" (Is 53:10). We are thus liberated, for Christ on the cross has taken our place; he has substituted for us; he has borne our punishment, and paid our price. Through our faith in him and in the merits of his death for us on the cross, our debt has been paid, and we have been set free to live in the freedom of the sons of God (Rom 8:21).

We are justified by our faith in Christ, not by our works. Christ's death has merited our justification. By his merits we are forgiven and filled with light. It is not our own doing. It is the free gift flowing from his death for us on the cross, whereby he paid the price of our redemption. The merits of his death in substitution for us on the cross have made us righteous and new. They justify us through our faith in them; and this justifying grace flows into us particularly through the sacraments, which he left us for this purpose, especially the sacrament of reconciliation (Mt 18:18; Jn 20:23). Through this latter sacrament, received in faith, we are made resplendent in the splendor of the risen Lord himself.

Justified by his death, we are illumined by his resurrection. His resurrection proves that his death was an acceptable sacrifice, received by the Father. In that sense then his resurrection confers upon us our justification, which was merited by his death on the cross, so that it is true that he was indeed "put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (Rom 4:25).

In Christ's rising from the dead, we also rise with him to a new, redeemed, and illumined life, focused now totally on him. He died to free us from sin, and he rose to give us a new life, able now to avoid sin if we fully keep ourselves always focused only

on him. So we must seek to live a new life in him without sin. Indeed “the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Rom 6:10-11).

Freed from our guilt by the death of Christ, we are to live a new life in the light of his resurrection, which shines upon us, illumining our hearts (2 Cor 4:6). In fact, we rise with him to experience in an anticipated way the glory of the last day, which is inserted now already ahead of time into the middle of history. And being raised with Christ, we now “seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God” (Col 3:1). We have risen with Christ to a new life in the Spirit, to walk no longer according to the flesh, and we therefore renounce this world as did the man seeking the buried treasure or the pearl of great price (Mt 13:44-46). Only by renouncing all, was he able to obtain the treasure and the pearl, which is Christ shining in our heart (2 Cor 4:6). Christ teaches us that if we want this pearl and this treasure, this is the only way we can get them. We obtain them only after we have first sold all else, which means abandoning the pleasures of this world which divide our hearts from an undivided love of God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength (Mk 12:30). Only when we approach God with such an undivided heart—Jesus teaches us—will we gain possession of the pearl and the treasure, and come to live the new life to which we are called when we rise with Christ.

So if you want a new life in Christ, “Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth” (Col 3:2). And this we do because we have been raised with him (Col 3:1). We are thus to live an austere life in the complete service of God and neighbor (Mk 12:30-31). Only in this way will our new resurrected life in the risen Christ be actualized in us. Only in this way will we become a new creation, new creatures (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:14; Rev 21:5), new men (Eph 4:22-24), living a new and risen life, an illumined and transformed life in the risen Christ.

This is the Easter mystery, the mystery of a new life, walking in the light of Christ’s resurrection, in the “newness of life” (Rom 6:4), in the “newness of the Spirit” (Rom 7:6), dead to the world, crucified to the world (Gal 6:15; 5:24), freed from our sins and guilt in Christ’s death, and justified by his resurrection (Rom 4:25). In Christ’s resurrection we have been raised up with him to seek henceforth the things that are above, and no longer those that are upon the earth (Col 3:1-2; 2:12; Eph 2:6).