

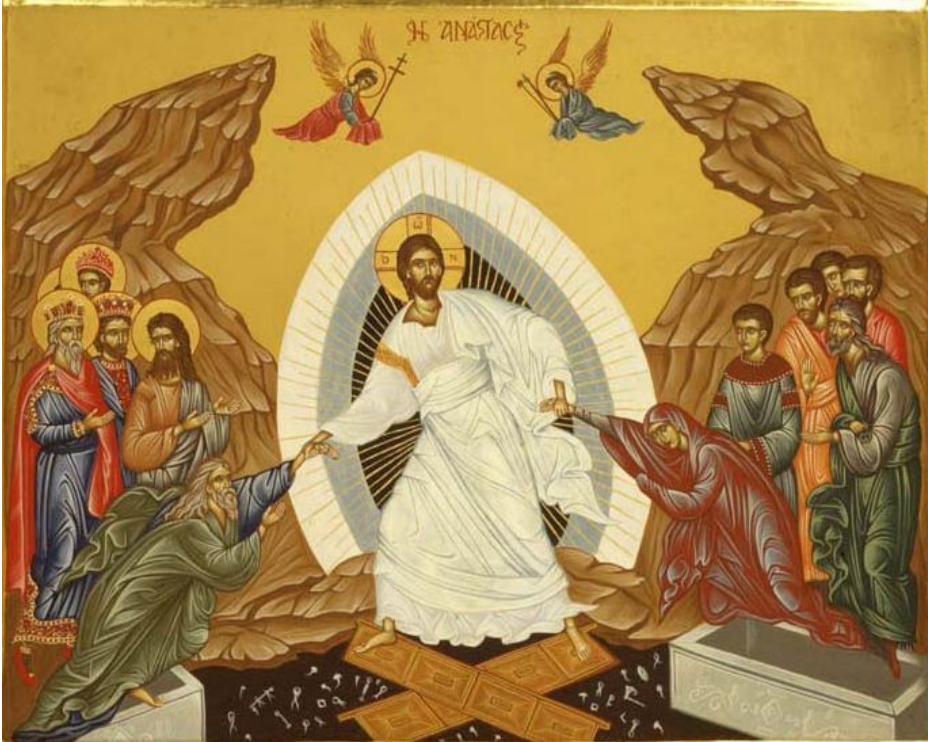


GRAND MAGISTERIUM – VATICAN
EQUESTRIAN ORDER OF
THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OF JERUSALEM

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

An Easter to be lived

A reflection by the Grand Master



The Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem joyfully and faithfully celebrate the Easter of the Risen Lord. It is a most special day for us. Our mind takes us back to the Holy Land and to the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre, from where our Order draws meaning and motivation. The memory of that sacred place, visited on pilgrimages that have changed our perception of the Gospel narrative, allows us to grasp the same experience of men and women who encountered the Risen Lord.

"And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you." (Lk 22:15).

This desire of Jesus to spend the great Jewish feast with his friends, according to the Mosaic custom, did not end at that last supper; on the contrary, it remained alive and open, so much so that Jesus asked them to repeat that banquet forever: "Do this in memory of me" (Lk 22:19). A desire that therefore becomes a sacrament, that is, a pledge of faith, a memorial of the Lord, a sacred and efficacious act for the grace that is given.

We can say that the same desire of the Lord, that is, that invitation to participate in Easter, comes to us through the liturgical occasion and extends wherever in the world a Eucharist is celebrated.

We too, therefore, are invited to enter into the Easter of the Lord, the memorial of his passion, death and resurrection.

What does it mean to *enter* into the Easter of Jesus?

The disciples had a friendship with him, a long-standing relationship consolidated by being strongly drawn to him over time through dialogue, preaching, pilgrimages during which they witnessed prodigious events and by his mercy towards the least and the sick that surprised and amazed everyone. Jesus spoke of God, and he spoke of him as Father; he was not interested in an exclusivist and intolerant religion. For Peter and the others, then, there were many rich bonds.

But for us? This is a real question, not a rhetorical one, a serious one, all the more so because for many today, entering Easter smacks of something ritualistic, of the past, an event that emerging from pages of a distant history, even more so in a socio-cultural context often indifferent to sacredness, accustomed to burning news and facts, even dramatic ones; in the case of indifference, there is not much to do; ignorance, on the other hand, can be overcome with a pinch of curiosity.

Entering Easter in a context of faith means reliving the central event of the Christian faith. It is through Easter that we understand the greatness of the mystery of God's Incarnation in Jesus. If Jesus had not risen," St. Paul preached to the Corinthians, "And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith! (1 Cor 15:14). With Easter we approach the mystery of the Lord's Resurrection and that first encounter with the disciples which will become the memorial day (Sunday) of the Risen Lord.

Jesus' resurrection was an amazing event! Easter places us somewhat beside the experience of Peter, John, Thomas and the other disciples, of men and women all deeply troubled by the dramatic end of the Master, whom they now meet alive. From that profound disturbance it is Jesus himself who draws them out: Behold, I am with you once again; look at my hands, my feet and my body, which bear the marks of the Passion (cf. Lk 24:39); remember the words I spoke to you: They hated me without reason (cf. Jn 15:25); I will come back to you (cf. Jn 14:28) and I will give you the same Spirit of truth (cf. Jn 16:7) that proceeds from the Father and bears witness to my mission (cf. Jn 15:26-27). The faith of the Church is founded on that event!

Before Jesus who is alive again and who allows himself to be seen and touched, the disciples, the women and the others no longer view him as they did in the past, as they did before his death. They now view him with the humility of a trust transformed into a new bond, which is not only anthropological but theological, a bond that has gone through pain, death and the confusion of the heart and has been purified. This is the definitive experience that unites Jesus and his divinity to the men and women and makes them his apostles in the world.

In Easter Jesus takes us in the same way. In the same way as his friends, because we too need to be with Christ and to encounter him, to feel his benevolent gaze, not scandalized, not inquisitive, not judgmental, but a messenger of that peace with which he greeted and reconciled the disciples for the first time after his resurrection: Peace be with you! (cf. Lk 24:16).

Easter reminds us that in our lives, God is not an indifferent spectator, even if at times this is our perception, traumatized by the evil that torments us, by the violence that surrounds us and by the "silence" of God; Jesus does not remain buried by death and by our unbelief; as with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, he accompanies us as travellers, he makes himself known in the signs of the spirit, he warms our hearts by giving meaning to our questions, he sits at the table with us, he takes and breaks the bread of faith, he pronounces the blessing, he gives us the food of the sacraments, of forgiveness and grace, and slowly lets our eyes open.

Although "*slow to believe*" (Lk 24:25), we cannot forget that the recognition of the meaning of Easter starts from within, that is, from recognizing Jesus Christ as Lord, the one who saves. Augustine of Hippo, the fourth century saint and bishop of the North African Church, spoke of the *restlessness* placed in the heart by Christ, by the one whom Dostoevsky called "our last hope"; by the Christ who ardently desired to spend Easter with his friends and who from then on, from his last earthly supper, wanted the door open and the invitation extended to all peoples.

Fernando Cardinal Filoni

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