

"ON THE THIRD DAY, HE ROSE FROM THE DEAD"

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Faith Formation Monthly

ST. LAMBERT PARISH

This simple statement of truth expresses one of the greatest mysteries of our faith. When you think about it, the existence of the entire body of Christ and our hope of eternal life hinge on this one mystery. Consider the alternative. If Jesus didn't really rise, then the formation of the Church from the very beginning and all that we have come to believe is based on a lie. If Jesus didn't rise, then we have no hope of resurrection ourselves and our only existence will be this short period of time we are present here on earth. If Jesus didn't rise, then in the words of St. Paul "we are the most pitiable people of all" because it is "for this life only we have hoped in Christ". (1 Cor 15:19) So, how do we know that Jesus is truly risen, what is the evidence nearly 2000 years after this miraculous event? The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains that this "crowning truth of our faith" was "believed and lived as the central truth by the first Christian community; handed on as fundamental by Tradition; established by the documents of the New Testament; and preached as an essential part of the Paschal mystery along with the cross." (CCC 638) Simply put, we know of the resurrection because of the witness of those who personally experienced Christ's physical, living presence after His death. Beginning on that third day after the crucifixion and continuing until His ascension into heaven, Jesus appeared to those who were close to Him and hundreds of others as well. This witness has been handed on both orally and in writing through Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture

since those first words of the angel to the women at the tomb, "...Why do you seek the living one among the dead? He is not here, but he has been raised..." (Luke 24:5,6) Certainly, not everyone who has heard this message has believed, beginning with the Apostles themselves, "When they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her (*Mary Magdalene*), they did not believe". (Mark 16:11) But how could we discount the personal witness of so many over the centuries to the continuing presence of Christ which flows from His death and resurrection. One also has to ask, if the account of the resurrection was fabricated by the Apostles, would they have portrayed themselves as cowardly and fearful following Christ's death, as the Gospels surely do? Would they have endured many hardships and suffered martyrdom for the sake of a lie? The proof is overwhelming. The tomb was empty because Jesus truly did rise!

The post-resurrection appearances of Christ, which give witness to his rising, also give us much food for thought. How did those who saw Him experience Christ's supernatural presence and how might that relate to our own experience of His presence in our lives today? Christ took pains to convince the Apostles that it was truly His same body that was resurrected. He sought their touch and shared a meal to prove He was not a ghost, but was truly, physically present to them. His body still bore the marks of the crucifixion and yet the Scriptures describe how He also possessed certain supernatural qualities. He could pass through walls, appear at different locations at the same time, or appear as someone else, such as a gardener or simple traveler. He was no longer

confined to time and space, but had entered into the Father's divine realm. (CCC 645) In this glorified state he was manifesting heaven on earth, the supernatural in the midst of the natural. The spiritual became visible in the physical. What seemed impossible was now possible and eternal life after death was now reality. This was a shocking experience to those who first encountered the risen Lord. Is it for us as well today? Do we recognize Christ physically and spiritually manifested to us in the here and now? He seeks our touch and shares a Eucharistic meal each time we celebrate Mass. He is truly physically present although His appearance is changed. He allows us to sense both heaven and earth, the natural and supernatural, the physical and spiritual. Do we experience this reality of eternal life as we encounter Him? A foretaste of the fullness we will one day enter into. Do we see the risen Christ manifested in one another? In the poor and needy of our world? In the depths of our hearts and our simple everyday existence? He is not limited to time and space. He is present here and now to each one of us and to all who exist on earth and in heaven. Let us open our eyes and the eyes of our hearts. Let us touch his wounds and know that He is real. Let us seek what brings life out of death. The tomb is truly empty, He has risen and He is with us, Alleluia!

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SACRED SCRIPTURE



"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy gave us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you who by the power of God are safeguarded through faith, to a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the final time. (1Pet1:3-5)

" But if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some among you say there is no

resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then neither has Christ been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then empty (too) is our preaching; empty, too, your faith. Then we are also false witnesses to God, because we testified against God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, neither has Christ been raised, and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is vain; you are still in your sins. Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If for this life

only we have hoped in Christ, we are the most pitiable people of all. But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. (1 Cor 15:12-20)

"We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." (Rom 6:4)

SACRED TRADITION

The mystery of Christ's Resurrection is a real event, with manifestations that were historically verified, as the New Testament bears witness. In about A.D. 56, St. Paul could already write to the Corinthians: "I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve . . ." The Apostle speaks here of the living tradition of the Resurrection which he had learned after his conversion at the gates of Damascus. (CCC 639)

Finally, Christ's Resurrection - and the risen Christ himself - is the principle and source of our future resurrection: "Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. . . . For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." The risen Christ lives in the hearts of his faithful while they await that fulfillment. In Christ, Christians "have tasted . . . the powers of the age to come" and their lives are swept up by Christ into the heart of divine life, so that they may "live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. (CCC 655)

I WILL RISE

Louie Giglio, Chris Tomlin, Matt Maher, Jesse Reeves

There's a peace I've come to know, Though my heart and flesh may fail. There's an anchor for my soul, I can say, "It is well".

Jesus has overcome, and the grave is overwhelmed; The victory is won, He is risen from the dead.

And I will rise when He calls my name; No more sorrow, no more pain. I will rise on eagles wings; Before my God, fall on my knees, and rise. I will rise.

There's a day that's drawing near When this darkness breaks to light, And the shadows disappear, And my faith shall be my eyes.

And I will rise when He calls my name; No more sorrow, no more pain. I will rise on eagles wings; Before my God, fall on my knees, and rise.

I will rise...I will rise...I will rise!

And I hear the voice of many angels sing, "Worthy is the Lamb!" And I hear the cry of every longing heart, "Worthy is the Lamb!" "Worthy is the Lamb!"