



The Holy See

JOHN PAUL II

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Wednesday, 18 April 1979

1. "Haec dies quam fecit Dominus"

All these days, between Easter Sunday and the second Sunday after Easter "in Albis", constitute, in a certain sense, the One Day. The liturgy is concentrated on an Event, on the one Mystery. "He has risen, he is not here" (Mk 16:6). He fulfilled the Passover. He revealed the meaning of the Passing. He confirmed the truth of his words. He spoke the last word of his message: the message of the Good News, of the Gospel. God himself, who is the Father, the author of life, God himself who does not want death (cf. Ez 18:23, 32) and "created all things that they might exist" (Wis 1:14), manifested his Love, in Him and through Him, right to the end. Love means Life.

The Resurrection is the definitive testimony of Life, that is, of Love.

"Mors et vita duello confluxere mirando / Dux vitae mortuus regnat Vivus"! / "Death and Life faced each other / in an amazing duel. The Lord of life had died; but now, alive, He triumphs" (Sequence).

"This is the Day which the Lord has made" (Psalm 117 (118):24): "excelsior cunctis, lucidior universis, in quo Dominus resurrexit, in quo sibi novam plebem... regenerationis spiritu conquisivit, in quo singulorum mentes gaudio et exultatione perfudit" (more sublime than all, more luminous than all; on which the Lord rose again; on which he won for himself a new people... by means of the spirit of regeneration; on which he filled the soul of everyone with joy and exultation—St Augustine. *Sermo* 168, in Pascha X.1: *P.L.* 39, 2070).

This One Day corresponds, in a certain way, to all the seven days, of which the book of Genesis

speaks, and which were the days of creation (cf. Gen 1-2). Therefore we celebrate them all on this one day. On these days during the octave we celebrate the mystery of the new Creation. This mystery is expressed in the Person of the Risen Christ. He himself is already this Mystery and is for us its announcement, the invitation to it. The leaven. By virtue of this invitation and of this leaven *we all become in Jesus Christ the "new creation"*.

"Let us, therefore, celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven... but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor 5:8).

2. Christ, after his resurrection, returns to the same place from which he had gone to his Passion and death. He returns to the Upper Room, where the apostles were. While the doors were closed, he came, stood among them and said: "Peace be with you". And he goes on: "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you... Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (Jn 20:19-23).

How significant are these first words of Jesus after his Resurrection! The message of the Risen Christ is contained in them. When he says: "Receive the Holy Spirit", there comes into our mind the same Upper Room in which Jesus delivered the farewell address. Then he uttered the words pregnant with the mystery of his heart: "It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; *but if I go, I will send him to you*" (Jn 16:7). He said so thinking of the Holy Spirit.

And now, after having made his sacrifice, his "departure" through the Cross, he comes again to the Upper Room to bring them the One he has promised. The Gospel says: "He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (Jn 20:22). He states the mature word of his Passover. He brings them *the Gift of the Passion and the Fruit of Resurrection*. With this gift he models them anew. He bestows on them the power of awakening others to Life, even when this Life is dead in them: "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven" (Jn 20: 23).

Fifty days will pass from the Resurrection to Pentecost. But the essential Gift and the Fruit of Pentecost are already enclosed in this One Day which the Lord has made (cf. Ps 117 (118):24). When Christ says: "Receive the Holy Spirit", he proclaims his paschal mystery to the end.

"Hoc autem est mysticum et secretissimum, quod nemo novit, nisi qui accipit, nec accipit nisi qui desiderat, nec desiderat, nisi quem ignos Spiritus Sancti medullitus inflammat, quem Christus misit in terram" (This is a mysterious and hidden reality, which no one knows but he who receives it, and no one receives it but he who desires it, and no one desires it but he who is inflamed in the innermost depths of his heart by the Holy Spirit, whom Christ sent on the earth (St Bonaventure, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, cap. 7, 4: *Opera omnia*, ed. min. Quaracchi, 5, p. 213).

3. The Second Vatican Council again illuminated the paschal mystery in the earthly pilgrimage of the People of God. It drew from it the full image of the Church, which always plunges its roots in this salvific mystery, and draws vital sap from it. "In the human nature united to himself, the son of

God, by overcoming death through his own death and resurrection, redeemed man and changed him into a new creation (cf. Gal 6:15; 2 Cor 5:17). For by communicating his Spirit, Christ mystically constitutes as his body those brothers of his who are called together from every nation. In that body the life of Christ is communicated to those who believe and who, through the sacraments, are united in a hidden and real way to Christ in his passion and glorification" (Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 7).

The Church remains constantly in the mystery of the Son which was accomplished with the descent of the Spirit, at Pentecost.

The paschal octave is the Day of the Church!

Living this Day, we must accept, together with it, the words that rang out for the first time in the Upper Room where the Risen Christ appeared: "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you" (Jn 20:21).

To accept the Risen Christ means accepting the mission, as those who were gathered at that moment in the Upper Room, the apostles, accepted it.

To believe in the Risen Christ means taking part in the same mission of salvation which he carried out with the paschal mystery. Faith is a conviction of the intellect and of the heart.

This conviction takes on its *full* meaning when *participation in this mission, which Christ accepted from the Father*, springs from it.

To believe means accepting as a consequence this mission from Christ.

Among the apostles, Thomas was absent when the Risen Christ came for the first *time* to the Upper Room. This Thomas, who declared aloud to his brothers "Unless I see... I will not believe" (Jn 20:25), was convinced by the next coming of the Risen Christ. Then, as we know, all his reservations vanished and he professed his faith with these words: "My Lord and my God" (Jn 20:28). Together with the experience of the paschal mystery, he reconfirmed his participation in Christ's mission. As if, eight days afterwards, these words of Christ: "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you" (cf. Jn 20:21), reached him, too.

Thomas became a mature witness to Christ.

4. The Second Vatican Council teaches the doctrine *on the mission of the whole People of God*, which has been called to take part in the mission of Christ himself (cf. Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 10-12). It is a triple mission. Christ —Priest, Prophet and King —expressed his mission to the end in the paschal mystery, in the Resurrection.

Each of us in this large community of the Church, of the People of God, takes part in this mission

by means of the sacrament of Baptism. Each of us is called to faith in the Resurrection like Thomas: "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing" (Jn 20:27).

Each of us has the duty of defining the meaning of his own life by means of this faith. This life has a very varied form. It is we ourselves who give it a determined form. And it is precisely our faith which brings it about that the life of each one of us is penetrated somewhere by this mission, which Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, accepted from the Father and shared with us. Faith brings it about that some part of the paschal mystery penetrates the life of each of us. A certain irradiation of it.

We must find this ray in order to live it every day for all this time, which began again on the Day which the Lord has made.

Pope's special greeting to the young

A particularly affectionate greeting now goes to the boys and girls and all the young people who have come in such large numbers to bring joy to this General Audience. Beloved young people, I thank you warmly for this significant presence of yours and for the joy you give me with the gift of your youth and your faith in the Risen Christ. In this paschal time, I will say to you with the Apostle Paul: "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth" (Col 3:1-2).

Dear young people, raise up your hearts and advance in the Lord's name!

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