



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Saint Peter's Square
Wednesday, 3 April 2013

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Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good Morning,

Today let us take up the Catecheses of the [Year of Faith](#). In the *Creed* we repeat these words: "and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures". This is the very event that we are celebrating: the Resurrection of Jesus, the centre of the Christian message which has echoed from the beginning and was passed on so that it would come down to us. St Paul wrote to the Christians of Corinth: "I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, 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" (1 Cor 15:3-5). This brief profession of faith proclaims the Paschal Mystery itself with the first appearances of the Risen One to Peter and the Twelve: *the death and Resurrection of Jesus are the very heart of our hope*.

Without this faith in the death and Resurrection of Jesus our hope would be weak; but it would not even be hope; or precisely the death and Resurrection of Jesus are the heart of our hope. The Apostle said: "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins" (v. 17). Unfortunately, efforts have often been made to blur faith in the Resurrection of Jesus and doubts have crept in, even among believers. It is a little like that "rosewater" faith, as we say; it is not a strong faith. And this is due to superficiality and sometimes to indifference, busy as we are with a thousand things considered more important than faith, or because we have a view of life that is solely horizontal. However, it is the Resurrection itself that opens us to greater hope, for it opens our life and the life of the world to the eternal future of God, to full happiness, to the certainty that evil, sin and death may be overcome. And this leads to living daily situations with greater trust, to

facing them with courage and determination. Christ's Resurrection illuminates these everyday situations with a new light. The Resurrection of Christ is our strength!

But how was the truth of faith in Christ's Resurrection passed down to us? There are two kinds of testimony in the New Testament: some are in the form of a profession of faith, that is, of concise formulas that indicate the centre of faith; while others are in the form of an account of the event of the Resurrection and of the facts connected with it.

The former, in the form of a profession of faith, for example, is the one we have just heard, or that of the Letter to the Romans in which St Paul wrote: "if you confess with your lips that 'Jesus is Lord!' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (10:9). From the Church's very first steps faith in the Mystery of the death and Resurrection of Christ is firm and clear. Today, however, I would like to reflect on the latter, on the testimonies in the form of a narrative which we find in the Gospels. First of all let us note that the first witnesses of this event were the women. At dawn they went to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body and found the first sign: the empty tomb (cf. Mk 16:1). Their meeting with a messenger of God followed. He announced: "Jesus of Nazareth, the Crucified One, has risen, he is not here" (cf. vv. 5-6). The women were motivated by love and were able to accept this announcement with faith: they believed and passed it on straight away, they did not keep it to themselves but passed it on.

They could not contain their joy in knowing that Jesus was alive, or the hope that filled their hearts. This should happen in our lives too. Let us feel the joy of being Christian! We believe in the Risen One who conquered evil and death! Let us have the courage to "come out of ourselves" to take this joy and this light to all the places of our life! The Resurrection of Christ is our greatest certainty; he is our most precious treasure! How can we not share this treasure, this certainty with others? It is not only for us, it is to be passed on, to be shared with others. Our testimony is precisely this.

Another point: in the profession of faith in the New Testament only men are recorded as witnesses of the Resurrection, the Apostles, but not the women. This is because, according to the Judaic Law of that time, women and children could not bear a trustworthy, credible witness. Instead in the Gospels women play a fundamental lead role. Here we can grasp an element in favour of the historicity of the Resurrection: if it was an invented event, in the context of that time it would not have been linked with the evidence of women. Instead the Evangelists simply recounted what happened: women were the first witnesses. This implies that God does not choose in accordance with human criteria: the first witnesses of the birth of Jesus were shepherds, simple, humble people; the first witnesses of the Resurrection were women. And this is beautiful. This is part of the mission of women; of mothers, of women! Witnessing to their children, to their grandchildren, that Jesus is alive, is living, is risen. Mothers and women, carry on witnessing to this! It is the heart that counts for God, how open to him we are, whether we are like trusting children.

However this also makes us think about how women, in the Church and on the journey of faith, had and still have today a special role in opening the doors to the Lord, in following him and in communicating his Face, for the gaze of faith is always in need of the simple and profound gaze of love.

The Apostles and disciples find it harder to believe. The women, not so. Peter runs to the tomb but stops at the empty tomb; Thomas has to touch the wounds on Jesus' body with his hands. On our way of faith it is also important to know and to feel that God loves us and not to be afraid to love him. Faith is professed with the lips and with the heart, with words and with love.

After his appearances to the women, others follow. Jesus makes himself present in a new way, he is the Crucified One but his body is glorified; he did not return to earthly life but returned in a new condition. At first they do not recognize him and it is only through his words and gestures that their eyes are opened. The meeting with the Risen One transforms, it gives faith fresh strength and a steadfast foundation. For us too there are many signs through which the Risen One makes himself known: Sacred Scripture, the Eucharist, the other Sacraments, charity, all those acts of love which bring a ray of the Risen One. Let us permit ourselves to be illuminated by Christ's Resurrection, let him transform us with his power, so that through us too the signs of death may give way to signs of life in the world.

I see that there are large numbers of young people in the square. There you are! I say to you: carry this certainty ahead: the Lord is alive and walks beside you through life. This is your mission! Carry this hope onwards. May you be anchored to this hope: this anchor which is in heaven; hold the rope firmly, be anchored and carry hope forward. You, witnesses of Jesus, pass on the witness that Jesus is alive and this will give us hope, it will give hope to this world, which has aged somewhat, because of wars, because of evil and because of sin. Press on, young people!

Greetings:

I offer a warm welcome to all the English-speaking visitors present at today's Audience, including those from England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, Australia, the Philippines, Canada and the United States. In a special way I greet the newly-ordained deacons from the Pontifical Irish College and their families. My greeting also goes to the delegation from the United States Senate. I thank the choirs for their praise of God in song. With great affection I invoke upon all of you the joy and peace which are the abiding gifts of the Risen Lord.

I hope that you, dear *young people*, and you are many, may experience the living Jesus Christ, to become his witnesses. May you, dear *sick people*, feel the comfort of the Risen Lord's presence. And you, dear *newlyweds*, welcome him every day into your married life.

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