



The Holy See

JOHN PAUL II

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Wednesday 18 April 2001

Contemplating the face of the risen Lord

1. Today, the customary Wednesday General Audience is flooded with the luminous joy of Easter. At this time, the Church celebrates the great mystery of the Resurrection with exultation. It is a deep and inextinguishable joy based on the risen Christ's gift of the new and everlasting Covenant, which endures because now he dies no more. A joy that continues not only during the Easter Octave, which the liturgy considers a single day, but is extended for 50 days until Pentecost. Indeed, it now embraces all times and all places.

During this period, the Christian community is invited to a new and deeper experience of the risen Christ, living and active in the Church and in the world.

2. In this splendid setting of light and joy that belongs to the Easter season, let us now pause to contemplate together the face of the *Risen One*, taking up and carrying out what I have not hesitated to call the "core" of the great legacy left to us by the Jubilee of the Year 2000. In fact, as I stressed in my Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte*, "if we ask what is the core of the great legacy it leaves us, I would not hesitate to describe it as the *contemplation of the face of Christ ...* known through his manifold presence in the Church and in the world, and confessed as the meaning of history and the light of life's journey" (n. 15).

Just as on Good Friday and Holy Saturday we contemplated the sorrowful face of Christ, we now turn our gaze full of faith and grateful love *to the face of the Risen One*. The Church looks at him in these days, following in the footsteps of Peter, who professes his love to Christ (cf. Jn 21: 15-17), and in the footsteps of Paul, who was overwhelmed by the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus

(cf. Acts 9: 3-5).

The Easter liturgy presents to us the *various encounters with the risen Christ*, which are an invitation to reflect on his message and encourage us to imitate the faith journey of those who recognized him in those first hours after the Resurrection. Thus the devout women and Mary Magdalen spur us to bring the news of the Risen One (cf. Lk 24: 8-10; Jn 20: 18). The beloved Apostle bears an exceptional witness that it is precisely love which sees the reality symbolized by the signs of the Resurrection; the empty tomb, the absence of the body, the folded burial cloths. Love sees and believes, and urges us to walk towards the One who in himself contains the full meaning of all things: Jesus, living for ever and ever.

3. In today's liturgy the Church contemplates the face of the Risen One, who shares the journey of the two disciples of Emmaus. At the beginning of our meeting, we listened to a passage from this well-known text of the Evangelist Luke.

However tiring, the road to Emmaus leads from a sense of discouragement and bewilderment to the fullness of Easter faith. In retracing this journey, we too are joined by the mysterious traveling Companion. Jesus approaches us on the road, meeting us where we are and asking us the essential questions that open the heart to hope. He has many things to explain about his and our destiny. In particular, he reveals that every human life must pass through his Cross to enter into glory. But Christ does something more: he breaks the bread of sharing for us, offering that Eucharistic Table in which the Scriptures acquire their full meaning and reveal the unique and shining features of the Redeemer's face.

4. After recognizing and contemplating the face of the risen Christ, we too, like the two disciples, are asked to run to our brothers and sisters to bring everyone the great news: "We have seen the Lord!" (Jn 20: 25).

"His Resurrection is our rising to life" (*Easter Preface II*): this is the good news that Christ's disciples do not tire of bringing to the world, especially through the witness of their own lives. This is the most beautiful gift that our brothers and sisters expect of us in this Easter season.

Let us be captivated, then, by the fascination of Christ's Resurrection. May the Virgin Mary help us to experience in full the joy of Easter: a joy which, as the Risen One promised, no one can ever take from us and which will never end (cf. Jn 16: 22).

I extend a special greeting to the newly ordained Deacons of the Pontifical Irish College, and I urge you to rely always on the Holy Spirit to guide you in your ministry of word and service. Upon all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors, especially those from England, Ireland, Finland,

India and the United States, I invoke the joy and peace of the Risen Saviour. Happy Easter!

The Holy Father appealed for peace in the Middle East:

As the light of the risen Christ illumines the whole universe, we can only express solidarity with all our brothers and sisters in the Middle East who have been caught in a maelstrom of armed violence and retaliation.

The roar of weapons must give way to the voice of reason and conscience: sincere concern for the legitimate aspirations of all peoples and the scrupulous observance of international law are the only way to bring the parties back to the negotiating table and to mark out a path of brotherhood for those peoples.

May God speak to the hearts of those who kill, and have pity on those who succumb to so much violence! *Tu nobis, Victor Rex, miserere!*