

# *The Resurrection*

***Christ is Risen from the dead trampling Death by death  
and to those in the tombs granting Life!***

Easter is the earliest Christian feast. The whole tone and meaning of the liturgical life of the Church is contained in Easter, together with the subsequent fifty-day period, which culminates in the feast of the Pentecost, the coming down of Holy



Spirit upon the Apostles. This unique Easter celebration is reflected every week in the Christian Sunday, Resurrection Day. Every week the Church comes to the same central experience; every Sunday is dedicated to the resurrection of Christ, so that we never lose sight of the centrality of Christ's victory over death. Every week, the same fundamental fact of our Christian faith is proclaimed: Christ is risen! St. Paul says: "If Christ is not risen, then your faith is in vain."

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the fundamental truth and absolute fact of the Christian faith. It is the central experience and essential teaching of the Church. It confirms the authenticity of Christ's remarkable earthly life and vindicates the truth of His teaching. It seals all His redemptive work: His life, the model of a holy life; His compelling and unique teaching; His extraordinary works; and His awesome, life-creating death. Christ's Resurrection is the guarantee of our salvation. Together with His Ascension it brings to perfection God's union with us for all eternity.

## *The Descent into Hades Icon*

In traditional iconography, the actual moment of the Resurrection of Christ was never depicted. The Gospels and Church Tradition are silent about that moment and do not say how Christ arose. Neither does the icon show it.

The action of the event takes place in the depths of the earth, in hell, shown as a gaping black abyss. In the centre of the icon is the figure of the Saviour. He appears in hell not as its captive, but as its Conqueror and Deliverer, as the Master of life. He is surrounded by a radiant mandorla with rays issuing from the centre of the mandorla. His garments are not those in which He is portrayed during his lifetime. They are brilliant white.

The darkness of hell is filled by the light of these Divine rays. Christ tramples underfoot the two crossed boards of hell's doors that He has pulled down. In many icons, below the doors, in the black abyss, the cast down figure of the prince of darkness, Satan, is seen. The power of hell is destroyed. This is symbolized by the keys, nails, and so forth.

Christ raises Adam from the grave with His right hand and Eve with His left hand. By this he frees Adam's soul and with it the souls of all those who wait for His coming with faith. This is why, to the right and left of this scene are shown two groups of Old Testament saints, with prophets at the front. On the left are kings David and Solomon in royal robes and crowns and in front of them, John the Forerunner (Baptist). On the right are the prophets. Seeing Him, they at once recognize Him as the One whom they had foretold.

By freeing the old Adam, and with him, the whole of humankind, He laid the foundation of a new life for all humankind. The spiritual raising of Adam is a symbol of the coming resurrection of the body, the first-fruit of which was the resurrection of Christ.

In the upper section of the icon, the two peaks of rock remind us that "the earth shook and the rocks were split" (Mt. 27:51) after the death of Christ. The dividing of the rocks also reminds us of the dividing of the waters of the Red Sea as the Israelites traveled from the slavery of Egypt to the freedom of the Promised Land.

As you attend the Services for Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday really participate in the events of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ. Take time to pray and be present to Christ at this holy time. If you do you will experience the joy of the glorious Resurrection of Christ.