

Easter 2009

Holy Saturday shares both in the mourning of Holy Week and in the joy of Easter. It is partially turned towards the Lord's Tomb, and partially toward the risen Jesus.

On Easter night, the procession outside the Church stops in front of the closed doors, silent's deafening, all the sudden eruption of the resurrection joy. Here and now the same question that was on the women mind, who early in the morning "just as the sun had risen", first came to Christ's Tomb: "who will roll away the stone for us from the door of the tomb? Will this miracle take place once again? Will the night once again be filled with that inexplicable joy which is so utterly independent of anything in this world, the same joy which all this night for many days to come will ring out at the Paschal greeting:" Christ is risen! Truly He is risen!"? That moment always comes, the doors open. Here we enter the Church to participate in the Triumphant Easter services.

But somewhere in the soul a question remains: what does all this means? What does it mean to celebrate Easter in this world filled with suffering, hatred, and war? What does it mean to ring of "trampling down death by death" and to hear that "not one dead remains in the tomb, when death remains the one absolute earthly certainty? Is it possible that Easter is merely a momenterely escape from reality, a spiritual drinking binge after which, the same routine will return, the same great reality, the same pitiness, the same race toward death and non-existence? After all, having been told that religions is self-deception and opium, an innovation to help man cope with his hard fate, an ever-dissolving mirage. Would it not be better to renounce this mirage and face squarely the simple reality? What is the answer to all this?

The first tentative answer I can give is this:
It is just not possible that all of this is a fabrication!

It is just not possible that so much faith, so much joy, and light over two thousand years could only be escape and mirage. Can a mirage continue for centuries? This argument is not convincing, and it must be stated plainly that no absolute convincing answer exists. Here, each person can testify of his own personal and living experience and speak for himself. In living and personal experience, in considering it and reflecting upon it, a person can find the foundation of the questions, will discover that illumined every thing with such blinding light and truly melts doubts and questions as wax melts before fire.

But what experience? No one can describe or define it than as the experience of the living Christ. My belief in Christ does come from the opportunity given to me to participate in the services since my earliest childhood especially in the Paschal celebration. How and when the faith was born? I don't know. Only I know that every time I open the Gospel and read about the Lord, and read his words, I consciously repeat, with all my heart and being, what was said by those who were sent to arrest Him but who returned to their leaders without Him:" no man ever spoke like this man" (John 7:46). Therefore what I know first of all is that Christ's teaching is alive, and nothing on earth can be compared with it. And this teaching is about Him, about eternal life, about victory over death, about a love that conquers and overcomes death. And I also know that Christ will not leave me. "I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you" (John 14:18). And He comes and can feel Him through prayer, and through the Church Services. This living experience is always growing, this knowledge, this awareness which becomes so obvious that Christ is here and that his word has been fulfilled:" whoever loves me, I will love him and manifest myself to him" (John 14:21). This is my only answer to the questions.

"Why do you seek the living among the dead"? "Why do you mourn the incorrupt amid corruption"? all Christianity is the experience of faith repeated again and again as if for the first thing through the incarnation in rites, words, music, colors.....

To the unbeliever, it may indeed seem like a mirage; he hears only words, he sees only incomprehensible ceremonies, and he understands them only outwardly. But for believers, all of this radiates from within and not as proof of faith, but as its results, as its life in the world, in the soul, in history. Therefore, the darkness and sadness of Holy Friday is for us something real, alive, contemporary; we can cry at the cross and experience all that took place in that triumph of evil, treachery and betrayal; we can contemplate the life bearing tomb on Holy Saturday with excitement and hope. And therefore, every year we can celebrate Easter, for Easter is not the remembrance of an event in the Past; it is the real encounter in happiness and joy, with Him whom our hearts long ago knew and encounter as the life and light of all light. Easter night testifies that Christ is alive and with us, and that we are alive with HiM.

Amen.