



# The Holy See

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BENEDICT XVI

## **GENERAL AUDIENCE**

*St. Peter's Square*

*Wednesday, 27 April 2011*

[\[Video\]](#)

### ***Octave of Easter***

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

In these first days of the Easter Season — which lasts until Pentecost — we are still filled with the freshness and new joy that the liturgical celebrations have brought to our hearts. I would therefore like to reflect briefly with you on Easter, the heart of the Christian mystery. Everything, in fact, starts here: our faith is founded on Christ risen from the dead.

The whole liturgy of the Church radiates from Easter, as if from a luminous, incandescent centre, drawing from it content and significance. The liturgical celebration of the death and Resurrection of Christ is not a simple commemoration of this event but is its actualization in the mystery, for the life of every Christian and of every ecclesial community, for our life. In fact, faith in the Risen Christ transforms life, bringing about within us a continuous resurrection, as St Paul wrote to the first believers: “For once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true)” (Eph 5:8-9).

So how can we make Easter become “life”? How can the whole of our interior and exterior existence take on a paschal “form”? We must start from an authentic understanding of Jesus’ Resurrection: this event is not merely a return to previous life, as it was for Lazarus, for the daughter of Jairus and for the young man of Nain; rather it is something entirely new and different.

Christ's Resurrection is a landing place on the way to a life no longer subjected to the transience of time, a life steeped in God's eternity. In the Resurrection of Jesus a new condition of being human begins, which illumines and transforms our daily routine and opens a qualitatively different and new future to humanity as a whole.

For this reason not only does St Paul interpret the resurrection of Christians in a manner inseparable from that of Jesus (cf. 1 Cor 15:16, 20), but he also points out how we should live the Paschal Mystery in our everyday lives.

In the Letter to the Colossians, he says: "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" (3:1-2). At first sight, on reading this text it might seem that the Apostle intends to encourage contempt of earthly realities, in other words inviting us to forget this world of suffering, injustice and sin, in order to live in anticipation in a heavenly paradise. The thought of "Heaven" would in this case be a sort of alienation. Yet, to grasp the true meaning of these Pauline affirmations, it is sufficient not to separate them from the context. The Apostle explains very clearly what he means by "things that are above" which the Christian must seek and the "things that are on earth", that the Christian should avoid.

Now, first of all what are the "things of the earth" that must be avoided? "Put to death therefore", St Paul writes, "what is earthly in you: immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry" (3:5-6). Putting to death within us the insatiable desire for material goods, selfishness, the root of all sin. Therefore, when the Apostle invites Christians to detach themselves firmly from the "things of the earth", he clearly wishes to make them understand that they belong to the "old nature", from which the Christian must divest himself, in order to put on Christ.

Just as he was unambivalent in spelling out the things which we should not set our hearts on, he was equally clear in pointing out to us the "things that are above", which on the contrary Christians must seek and savour. They concern what belongs to the "new nature", which has put on Christ once and for all in Baptism, but always needs to be renewed "after the image of its Creator" (Col 3:10). This is how the Apostle to the Gentiles describes these "things that are above": "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other.... And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony" (Col 3:12-24).

St Paul, therefore is very far from inviting Christians, each one of us, to escape from the world in which God has placed us. It is true that we are citizens of another "city", where our true homeland is found; but we must journey on towards this destination every day, here on earth. Taking part from this moment in the life of the Risen Christ, we must live in this world, in the heart of the earthly city, as new men and women.

And this is not only the way to transform ourselves, but also to transform the world, to give the earthly city a new face that will encourage the development of humanity and of society, in accordance with the logic of solidarity, of goodness, in profound respect for the dignity proper to each one. The Apostle reminds us of the virtues that must accompany Christian life; at the top of the list is charity, to which all the others are related, as to the source and the matrix. Christian life sums up or summarizes the “things that are in Heaven”: charity, which, with faith and hope, represents the great rule of life of the Christian and defines its profound nature.

Easter, therefore, brings the newness of a profound and total passage from a life subjected to the slavery of sin to a life of freedom, enlivened by love, a force that pulls down every barrier and builds a new harmony in one’s own heart and in the relationship with others and with things. Every Christian just as every community, if he lives the experience of this passage of resurrection, cannot but be a new leaven in the world, giving himself without reserve for the most urgent and just causes, as the testimonies of the saints in every epoch and in every place show.

The expectations of our time are so numerous: we Christians, firmly believing that Christ’s Resurrection has renewed man without taking him from the world in which he builds his history, we must be luminous witnesses of this new life that Easter has brought.

Easter is therefore a gift to be accepted ever more deeply in the faith, to be able to operate in every situation with the grace of Christ, according to the logic of God, the logic of love. The light of Christ’s Resurrection must penetrate this world of ours; as a message of truth and life it must reach all human beings through our daily witness.

Dear friends, Yes, Christ is truly risen! We cannot keep for ourselves the life and joy that he has given us in his Passover, but rather we must give it to all who approach us. It is our duty and our mission: to kindle in the heart of our neighbour hope where there is despair, joy where there is sorrow, life where there is death.

Witnessing every day to the joy of the Risen Lord means always living in “a paschal mode” and causing to ring out the Good News that Christ is neither an idea nor a memory of the past, but a Person who lives with us, for us and in us, and with him, for him and in him we can make all things new (cf. Rev 21:5).

### **To special groups:**

I welcome the newly-ordained deacons of the Pontifical Irish College, together with their families and friends. Dear young deacons: in fulfilling the ministry you have received, may you proclaim the Gospel above all by the holiness of your lives and your joyful service to God’s People in your native land. Upon all the English-speaking pilgrims present at today’s Audience, especially those

from Sweden, Australia, the Philippines, Thailand and the United States, I invoke an abundance of joy and peace in the Risen Lord. Happy Easter!

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