

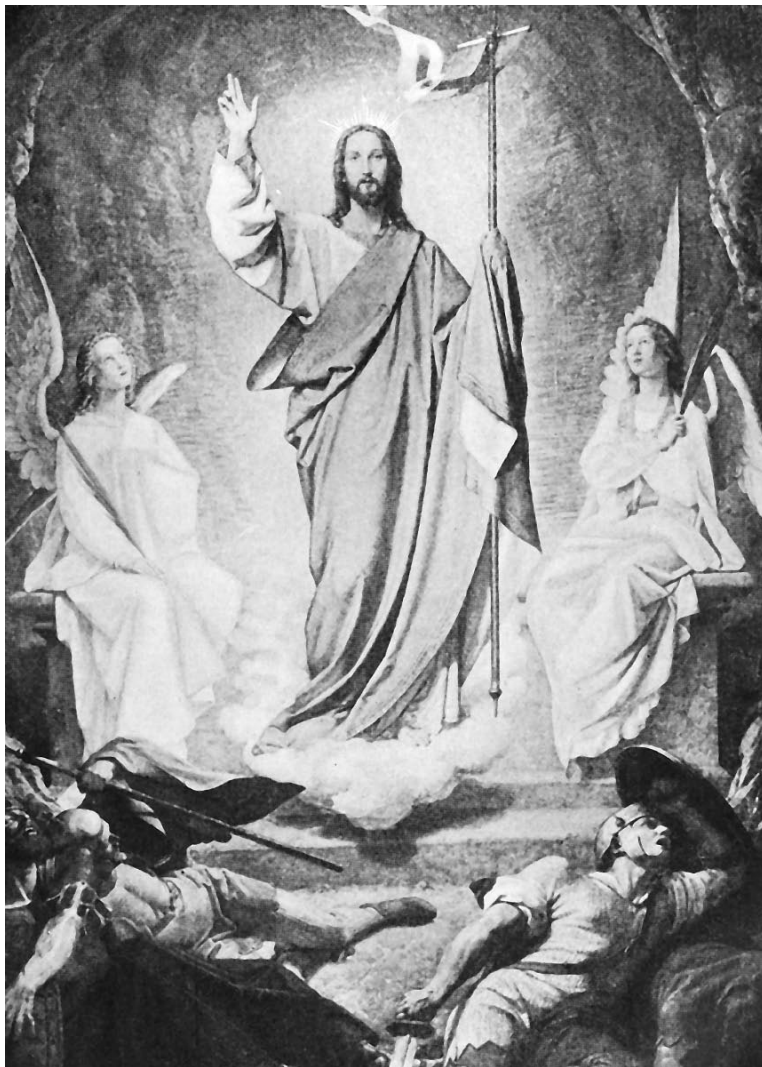
Resurrection

Do not be afraid; for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. ~ Matthew 28:5-7

ST. PAUL SAYS, “If Christ has not been raised [from the dead], then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain” (1 Cor 15:14): no Resurrection, then no faith. Anyone who says, “If the bones of Jesus were discovered tomorrow, my faith would not be affected,” is speaking heresy of the most dangerous kind. Why? Why is it so important that Jesus rose from the dead? Why does it matter to us two thousand years later whether his tomb is empty or not?

The Resurrection represents the crowning victory of Jesus over sin and death. It is in Christ’s Resurrection that God the Father has exercised “*the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe*” (Eph 1:19). The Resurrection is recorded in all four Gospels, handed on as a fundamental truth in Sacred Tradition and believed everywhere throughout the early Church.

While it is true that no one witnessed the Resurrection of Jesus, two historical facts make it impossible to deny it. First, when the disciples ran to the tomb on Easter morning, they discovered it empty. “*He is not here, for he has risen*” (see beginning verses). When the beloved disciple saw the empty tomb, he believed that Jesus had indeed risen like he said he would: “*I lay down my life, that I may take it again*” (Jn 10:17). Second, the appearances of the Risen Christ attest to the reality of his Resurrection. He appeared to Mary Magdalene and the other women, to the apostles, to his disciples, and, on one occasion, to a crowd of more than five hundred



The Resurrection, late 19th century lithograph

people. People touched him; he ate food. Given all these witnesses, it is impossible to believe that the Resurrection of Jesus is merely a “spiritual” truth produced by the faith of the early Church, and to

deny that it was a historical and physical reality. On the contrary, the early

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Church's "faith in the resurrection was born, under the action of divine grace, from [the apostles'] direct experience of the reality of the risen Jesus" (CCC 644).

Thus the Church has always taught the historical and physical truth of the Resurrection. However, because Jesus is the Son of God, his Resurrection transcends or goes beyond time and history, making it more than a fact of history. The reality of this event was Jesus' passage from earthly existence to a glorified Heavenly existence. This change cannot be perceived apart from faith, and so in its essence it is an event that surpasses history and remains at the very heart of our faith.

What does Jesus' Resurrection mean for us? St. Paul, as quoted above, explains that without it our faith is in vain. Jesus' Resurrection constitutes the fulfillment of all that he promised while he walked on this earth. To all those who believe in him, it is the definitive proof of his divine authority. Jesus is the great "I Am," the name revealed to Moses when

God called him to lead his people Israel from the slavery of Egypt into the Promised Land of Canaan: "Moses said to God, 'If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, "The God of your fathers has sent me to you," and they ask me, "What is his name?" what shall I say to them?' God said to Moses, 'I Am who I am.' And he said, 'Say this to the people of Israel, "I Am has sent me to you'" (Ex 3:13-14).

Jesus' Resurrection confirms that he is God, "I Am Who Am" himself whom Israel has worshipped from the time of Abraham (see Gn 12:1-8) and who gave his name to Moses. Lastly, his Resurrection opens the way to a new life and gives us the promise of future resurrection. "Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father; [so that] we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:4). His Resurrection completes the work of justification, and he alone is the source of our future resurrection. "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor 15:22).

(CCC 272, 638-655)

"Jesus' Resurrection is the definitive proof of his divine authority."



Jesus as Judge, by Fra Angelico, 1387-1455