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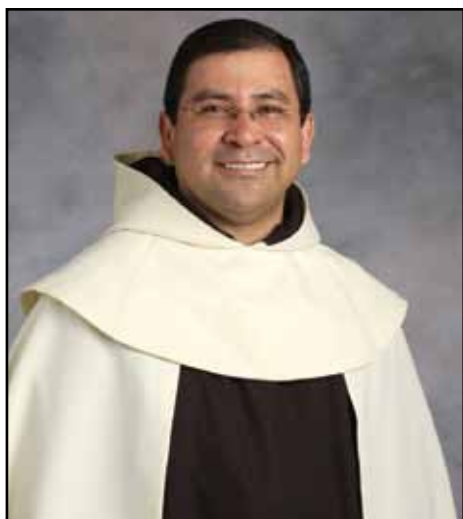
GENTLE BREEZES —OF CARMEL—

He is Risen! Alleluia!



*“Brothers and sisters:
If then you were raised with Christ,
Seek what is above,...”
(Col 3:1)*

Happy Easter!



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(Col 3:1)

Blessed Easter! Here we are, once again, meeting by means of this newsletter during the holy Easter Season. We have walked for nearly six months in this “Year of Faith” and have finished our Lenten journey. Now, we have begun this season which touches our faith through the mystery of Jesus’ resurrection. It is this mystery that gives us the refreshment that we need in our journey of life and faith.

Our souls sometimes feel tired from the daily routine, problems and worries of life. Likewise, after Lent, our souls can be tired from our efforts in trying to fulfill our Lenten practices. Moreover, our souls may be discouraged by our failures and limitations when we’ve realized, that even though we tried to do as much as we could in our penance, prayer and acts of charity, we did not accomplish much. When we feel this way, let us remember that “faith, how-

... “faith, however, teaches it (the soul) about where it (the soul) will find fulfillment.”
– St. Teresa of Jesus’ Interior Castle

Our Lord Jesus suffered, died and rose for love of us. So let us celebrate His love for us during this time of Easter.

ever, teaches it (the soul) about where it (the soul) will find fulfillment”. (St. Teresa of Jesus’ Interior Castle, Second dwelling place, chapter 1, paragraph 4).

Our judgment is not the same as God’s judgment. Only He can fulfill our life. It is important to remember that whatever we do is for the love of God and neighbor. Likewise, it is important to keep in mind that God is the only One who can make our love perfect. Our Lord Jesus suffered, died and rose for love of us. So let us celebrate His love for us during this time of Easter. Let our souls be encouraged by remembering what St. Teresa says in the Interior Castle “... He must give the reward in conformity with the love we have for Him. And this love, daughter, must not be fabricated in our imaginations but proved by deeds. And don’t think He needs our works; he needs the determination of our wills”. (Third dwelling place, chapter 1, paragraph 7).

In other words, to celebrate and live fully this Easter season is to conform our wills to the Will of God. It is to do what we read in the Second Reading for Easter Sunday taken from Colossians chapter 3: “Brothers and sisters: If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Think of what is above, not of what is on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God”. (Col



3:1-3) Then let us leave the problems, worries and other things that are bothering us and place our heart in our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us ask our risen Lord to transform our lives according to His will.

Happy Easter! Our prayer for you and your loved ones is to ask our risen Lord Jesus Christ to bless all of you with His love.

Fr. Luis Joaquín Castañeda, O.C.D.

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The Mercy of the Risen Christ

By Fr. Gregory Ross, O.C.D.

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be with you.” When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. [Jesus] said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.” (John 20, 19-23)

It has always struck me how the theme of mercy is so present in the risen Jesus’ first appearance to his disciples as recounted in the Gospel of John. This evangelist presents Christ as immediately breathing the Holy Spirit into his Apostles and granting them the power to forgive sins. It is as though Jesus cannot wait to give to the Church this prize that he won for us through his Passion and Cross. He does not reproach his disciples for having abandoned him. Nor does he pretend that the Cross never happened, for he shows them the wounds still visible in his hands and side. His first impulse is to give: to breathe forth his Spirit, bearing his peace and mercy to his disciples and, through them, to the whole world.

We see this same dynamic of Jesus’ mercy in the life of St. Teresa of Jesus. Throughout her spiritual autobiography, *The Book of Her Life*, this great Carmelite teacher of prayer proclaims the many ways in which the risen Christ showed his mercy to her.

In *The Book of Her Life*, St. Teresa recounts how for many of her years as

a Carmelite nun, she felt called to give herself entirely to God, but found herself still very much “following the world.” But during these years of interior conflict, she experienced the mercy of Christ. “I see clearly the great mercy the Lord bestowed on me; for though I continued to associate with the world, I had the courage to practice prayer.”ⁱ She writes of Jesus: “In His sovereign largess He looked not at my great sins but at the desires I often had to serve Him and at the sorrow I felt for not having the strength in me to put these desires into practice.”ⁱⁱ She goes on to declare: “O Lord of my soul! How can I extol the favors You gave me during these years! And how at the time when I offended You most You quickly prepared me with an extraordinary repentance to taste Your favors and gifts! Indeed, my King, You, as One who well knew what to me would be most distressing, chose as a means the most delicate and painful punishment. With wonderful gifts You punished my sins!”ⁱⁱⁱ Just as the risen Jesus showered his mercy upon his disciples to bring them to believe and to love, so did he act with St. Teresa, encouraging her by his patience and mercy to give herself completely to him.

And just as his disciples, especially Thomas, were sluggish to believe, so, St. Teresa admits, was she sluggish in surrendering herself wholly to the risen Christ. Nevertheless, by the grace and mercy of Jesus, and by her perseverance in prayer, she eventually did. Looking back on the long journey of her wholehearted conversion to Christ, she exclaims: “May God be blessed forever, He who waited for me for so long!”^{iv}



Once the Lord had won St. Teresa completely over to himself, he began to grant her the very special favor of appearing to her as the Risen One, through what is called “intellectual visions.” This is a vision in which someone sees the Lord, or the Blessed Mother, or some other saint, not with the eyes of the body (as St. Bernadette saw Our Lady at Lourdes), but interiorly, with the eyes of the soul. The nature of the vision is not what is important, though. What is important is that St. Teresa clearly experienced Jesus as the Risen One. And she experienced his presence as a tremendous mercy.

She writes of this experience: “For if what is seen [of our Lord] is an image, it is a living image – not a dead man, but the living Christ. And He makes it known that He is both man and God, not as He was in the tomb but as He was when He came out of

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The Mercy of the Risen Christ

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the tomb after His resurrection. ... In this vision the powerlessness of all the devils in comparison with Your power is clearly seen, my Jesus; and it is seen how whoever is pleasing to You can trample all hell underfoot. ... This vision is the source of confusion and true repentance of sins; although the soul sees that He shows love, it doesn't know where to hide and so it is completely consumed.”^v St. Teresa is here describing her overwhelming experience of the risen Christ.

What was the effect of St. Teresa's privileged encounter with the risen Christ? Besides the true repentance that she mentioned above, St. Teresa asserts that these experiences left her changed: “The soul undergoes a change;...it seems that a new, living, high degree of love is beginning.”^{vi} She describes how the Lord removed her vices and bestowed virtues and fortitude. “For I saw clearly that by these experiences I was at once changed.”^{vii} Just as the risen Christ's gift of the Holy Spirit



transformed his Apostles from fearful men to faith-filled, bold proclaimers of his resurrection and Gospel of mercy, so the risen Christ transformed St. Teresa into a committed disciple and witness of his love.

Just as the risen Christ was eager to bestow the gifts of peace and mercy to his disciples on the day of his resurrection, so he was with St. Teresa of Jesus. And so he is with each of us. The message of Easter is one of mercy, the forgiveness of sins. As St. Paul writes to the Christians of Rome: [*Jesus*] was handed over for our transgressions and was raised for our justification. (Rom 4,25) If Jesus took our sins upon himself and offered himself for us upon the Cross, the resurrection is the manifestation that his offering was accepted by his Father and that Jesus has thus truly won for us the forgiveness of our sins. He has offered us the gift of justification, of once again “being right with God,” a gift commu-

nicated to us by faith and by our baptism into his death and resurrection.

Finally, let us ponder and find encouragement from these words of St. Teresa: “[We] should trust in the goodness of God, which is greater than all the evils we are capable of. And He doesn't remember our ingratitude when we...desire to return to His friendship. ... He never tires of giving, nor can He exhaust His mercies. Let us not tire of receiving. May He be blessed forever, amen – and may all things praise Him.”^{viii}

What a source of joy for us during these days of Easter! Christ is risen. Mercy and peace are ours in him. From sin, slavery, fear and death, the risen Christ frees us by his grace, especially through the gifts and ministry of his Church. May our Lord in his goodness grant to you these blessings during this Easter season. St. Teresa never tired of giving witness to her experience of these gifts of the risen Christ. She said that she would spend her heaven “forever singing the mercies of the Lord.” May we never tire of drawing near to Christ and showing forth his mercy in our own lives.

ⁱThe Book of Her Life, Ch. 8,2

ⁱⁱIbid., Ch. 7, 18

ⁱⁱⁱIbid., Ch. 7, 19

^{iv}Ibid., Prologue, 1-2

^vIbid., Ch. 28,8-9

^{vi}Ibid., Ch. 28, 9

^{vii}Ibid., Ch. 28,13

^{viii}Ibid., Ch. 19,15

*“I will spend my Heaven
doing good upon earth.”*

– ST. THÉRÈSE

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