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Holy Father

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"Christ Is Our Hope, He Is the True Peace of the World"
excerpt from Easter Sunday Homily
 Pope Benedict XVI

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

"Christ, our Paschal lamb, has been sacrificed!" (1 Cor 5:7). On this day, Saint Paul's triumphant words ring forth, words that we have just heard in the second reading, taken from his First Letter to the Corinthians. It is a text which originated barely twenty years after the death and resurrection of Jesus, and yet – like many Pauline passages – it already contains, in an impressive synthesis, a full awareness of the newness of life in

Christ. The central symbol of salvation history – the Paschal lamb – is here identified with Jesus, who is called "our Paschal lamb". The Hebrew Passover, commemorating the liberation from slavery in Egypt, provided for the ritual sacrifice of a lamb every year, one for each family, as prescribed by the Mosaic Law. In his passion and death, Jesus reveals himself as the Lamb of God, "sacrificed" on the Cross, to take away the sins of the world. He was killed at the very hour when it was customary to sacrifice the lambs in the Temple of Jerusalem. The meaning of his sacrifice he himself had anticipated during the Last Supper, substituting himself – under the signs of bread and wine – for the ritual food of the Hebrew Passover meal. Thus we can truly say that Jesus brought to fulfillment the tradition of the ancient Passover, and transformed it into his Passover.

On the basis of this new meaning of the Paschal feast, we can also understand Saint Paul's interpretation of the "leaven". The Apostle is referring to an ancient Hebrew usage: according to which, on the occasion of the Passover, it was necessary to remove from the household every tiny scrap of leavened bread. On the one hand, this served to recall what had happened to their forefathers at the time of the flight from Egypt: leaving the country in haste, they had brought with them only unleavened bread. At the same time, though, the "unleavened bread" was a symbol of purification: removing the old to make space for the new. Now, Saint Paul explains, this ancient tradition likewise acquires a new meaning, once more derived from the new "Exodus", which is Jesus' passage from death to eternal life. And since Christ, as the true Lamb, sacrificed himself for us, we too, his disciples – thanks to him and through him – can and must be the "new dough", the "unleavened bread", liberated from every residual element of the old yeast of sin: no more evil and wickedness in our heart.

Q & A

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"A Mature New Life-Style"
with Fr Anthony Bannon LC

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Q. Dear Fr Anthony,

What do you do if you give your life to God and you are never really happy with it? You always feel like you can never have a good time or relax, and I don't mean in an immoral way, but you are never allotted time for it.

-Doug

A. Dear Doug,

It depends on what you are focused on.

I think I can say almost for certain that in all religious communities there is time for relaxation and friendship. It would be very unusual not to. What very often happens is the concept of relaxation may be a little different and the individual may have to mature in this regard, and grow into a new life-style that is not exactly what he was accustomed to before.

A young person probably relaxes by chilling out with his friends at the mall, or maybe just hanging around, listening to music, watching TV, or not doing much. Like you say nothing bad. If you give your life to God things will probably be different, and you will acquire new tastes in music, friendship and relaxation. It may entail letting go of some things, and finding enjoyment and happiness in new ways; it will mean growing into something new. This is not all that unusual as a person finds his call in life.

Like a man who gets married. Before he found nothing more boring than holding babies in his arms, or

playing with them on his lap - but look at him after he has his first child, you can't take the baby away from him, and he's happier than ever bouncing it up and down on his knees, something he used to hate!

Another thing a person learns as he matures is that he can't do things exactly when he would like to. If you're a skier and there's been a good storm, you can't just call in sick and take off for the slopes, not if you want to keep your job and feed your family, that is. So your fun and relaxation is going to be a little more constrained than it might have been before.

When you follow a vocation you make the same kinds of adjustments and have to be open to the same type of growth.

God bless.

-Fr Anthony

Q & A

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"Temperament and Communal Life"
with Fr Anthony Bannon LC

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Q. Dear Fr Anthony,

I tend to be rather quiet and private. I have a few close friends and am close to my family but am not very social. I've been wondering if I am just not fit to live in a communal environment. How does one know if they are really fit to live in a communal environment?

Thanks.

-Pearl

A. Dear Pearl,

There are several factors to take into account when wanting to know if you would fit in a community despite your reserve: the type of community it is, what there is behind your reserve, its causes, the degree to which it affects normal living, and also your motivation to overcome it. Naturally, a community in which the emphasis is on prayer and manual labor will place different demands on a person's temperament than one that is essentially apostolic (teaching, home visitation, etc...), with much more interaction between the members.

The root of an individual's reserve could be one or a combination of elements such as one's natural temperament, or a trauma suffered, or one's education, or external circumstances... Some of these will be easier to overcome than others. And also your motivation will be an enormous factor. Very often simple exposure to new circumstances and challenges is enough for a normal but reserved or shy person to begin to acquire more social skills, especially if he or she really wants to improve and really want to go out and help others. I've seen it happen more often than you can imagine.

Usually the best way to find out is to visit the community you are interested in, and through your interaction with them and their advice you will most probably get a clearer answer to your question.

God bless.

Meditation - 3rd Sunday in Easter

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"The Making of a Witness"
Lk 24:35-48

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Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread. While they were still speaking about this, he stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." But they were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost. Then he said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do questions arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have." And as he said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While they were still incredulous for joy and were amazed, he asked them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of baked fish; he took it and ate it in front of them. He said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and in the prophets and psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures. And he said to them, "Thus it is written that the Messiah would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things."

Introductory Prayer: Lord Jesus I believe that you have called me to be a witness today to your living presence and undying love for us. I trust that through prayer you will make me a more authentic witness, not of my life but of yours. I love you Lord, for you have loved me and continue to love me, especially through your death and resurrection made present in the celebration of the Eucharist. Help me to experience your love here so that I can better share it with those you send me today.

Petition: Lord, make me a witness of your truth and love.

1. "It Is I Myself." Why does Jesus appear only to his disciples? Simply, they were the ones who best knew him. If someone else were to come along and claim to be Jesus, his followers would be the first to expose the imposter. They knew Jesus well, but they also had witnessed his death, at least those closest to him. Before they could be witnesses of the Risen Lord, they would have to know him well in life, know him dead and then recognize him alive before them.

So Jesus did all that was necessary to help them recognize him again. He stood before their eyes, spoke to their ears, showed them his wounds, let them touch him and ate fish at their table. He then spoke to their hearts, which may have been their most powerful proof. He rekindled their faith.

In my relationship with Christ, in order to be his witness, I too must come to know him alive, dead and risen. I cannot know him without first entering into prayer and focusing on Him. There I must especially learn to listen. He will then open my eyes in faith to see him present in my life, even in the midst of great difficulties. I must know his death through suffering. The world is calling for evangelizers to speak to it of a God whom the evangelizers themselves should know and be familiar with as if they could see the invisible (Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 76).

I must be ready to experience Jesus each day of my life. But the most real, personal and direct experience of his life, death and resurrection comes to us in the Eucharistic Celebration. Here we mysteriously become present once again at his death and resurrection. The Eucharistic Sacrifice makes present not only the

mystery of the Savior's passion and death, but also the mystery of the resurrection which crowned his sacrifice (Ecclesia de Eucharistia, #14).

2. Everything Fulfilled. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else, believe because of the works themselves (Jn 14:11). The greatest sign of authenticity is when there is coherence in our lives. Jesus' life is consistent with his teachings; he lives what he preaches. He also foretells his passion and death. And now I have told you this before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe (Jn 14:29). Finally, he fulfills the Father's Will, made known through the Law and Prophets. It all fits! Jesus has not lived a life according to his own ideas and desires but only to fulfill the Father's Plan.

The message of the Lord and the life of the messenger are intimately tied together. And so it must be with the life of his apostles, his witnesses. To be an authentic witness we must live according to our beliefs. A failure to do so leads us not only to become less credible but with time to fall entirely away from our faith. Instead of adjusting to God's way, we adapt our faith to fit the counterfeit we are living.

A witness must know the Plan of the Father. He then must strive to live it, despite the difficulties and obstacles. Jesus opened their minds so that they could recognize with faith the fulfillment of God's Plan. We must listen to God's word speak to us in Scripture and ask with faith that he open our minds to his plan, and his plan over my life.

3. "You Are Witnesses of These Things." Jesus reveals that the same plan that called him to suffer, die and rise includes his disciples. It all happened so that the forgiveness of sins could be preached to all nations. Who, if not them, would preach it? You are witnesses of these things, Jesus concludes. And for this reason he appears to them.

Each one of us has received the faith. Through Baptism, Jesus has in some sense appeared to us. He has stepped into our lives and changed them forever. And this grace is not meant for us alone. It is a gift we must share. Because others shared it, some at the price of their lives, we have received it. We know him through Scripture and in the Sacraments, as well as in our lives. We are witnesses of who Jesus is.

Others will come to know him only through us. It is a duty of love. In the words of John Paul II, "Those who have come into genuine contact with Christ cannot keep him for themselves, they must proclaim him." This proclamation must not be imposed but proposed with confidence (World Missions Sunday, June 5, 2001).

Conversation: Lord Jesus, help me to know you more personally, that I might become a true witness of your love. I so often seek myself and my way. Teach me your life and give me the courage and strength to live it to the full. Help me to be an authentic witness by knowing and fulfilling your Will for me. I know others depend on my witness. Grant me an undying thirst to witness faithfully to your love, to your death and Resurrection, to your forgiveness and the power of your grace. Help me to reach those for whom you died and rose.

Questionnaire:

1. In what ways have I come to know Jesus more in prayer? How can I improve the quality of my prayer? What will help me go deeper and know him more personally? How well do I recognize him in my daily life?
2. What is the point in which I am least consistent with my condition as a baptized person and an apostle of Christ?
3. To what degree have I embraced God's call to become his witness? How am I Jesus' witness in my daily life?

"The Cornerstone of All Our Certainty"

This faith in the risen Christ is the cornerstone of all our certainty, as St. Paul tells us in chapter fifteen of his first letter to the Corinthians, which is helpful to meditate on during these days. When we find weakness, cowardice, fear, hesitation, insincerity, sin in our life, is it not because our faith in the risen Christ has clouded for shorter, or at times longer, periods of time? Faith in Risen Christ has a revolutionary and transforming power. Perhaps the clearest example is a certain impetuous Jew born in Tarsis, a Pharisee, persecutor of Christians. By a mysterious and moving grace of Christ who went sought him out on the road to Damascus, he arrived at a simple conviction: Jesus of Nazareth rose from the dead; he is alive and he makes himself one with his members.

This single truth, seen with supernatural evidence in his encounter with the Risen Lord, shatters all his old religious certitudes, his mentality, his cultural world, his fanatical reactions and his tiny horizon, and it provokes a revolution, or better said, it causes a recasting of his personality preserving nonetheless all his most personal characteristics. The new man is born, an apostle convinced for life of the cause of Christ, a giant of the mission, ready to die rather than betray his Lord in the slightest. This new man meets persecution from enemies, scourgings, stonings, shipwrecks, sickness, fatigue, ailments, misunderstandings and intrigues of false brothers, and finally, martyrdom for the cause of the risen Christ, whose apostle and servant he calls himself with holy pride.

Special

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"10 Ways to Know He Rose"
Tom Hoopes

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Saturday, April 11, 2009

These "Reasons to Believe in the Resurrection" were derived in large part from Tim Drake's Easter Evidence.

- 1. The testimony of the texts.** It is significant that Scripture, Tradition and the Church thereafter all agree that Christ rose. That kind of unanimity of witness is rare — and meaningful.
- 2. The testimony of the Twelve.** If the apostles were making up a religion, they were making themselves look really bad in the process. In the Gospels, cowardly apostles flee in fear and embarrassment; they even greet the news of the Resurrection with doubt, at first. Says the Catechism: "The hypothesis that the Resurrection was produced by the apostles' faith (or credulity) will not hold up" (No. 644).
- 3. Transformation of Saul.** St. Paul went from persecutor to believer after seeing Christ alive.
- 4. No early Church debate.** The early Church debated many fundamentals, but not the Resurrection.
- 5. Centuries of martyrs.** Christians, from the Church's first days to our own day, have been willing to die for their conviction that Christ rose from the dead. For them, the Resurrection wasn't a sweet dream that they indulged in, but a hard reality they suffered and died for.
- 6. Diverse sources.** Gospel writers included different details and material from different sources — all of which agreed on the fact of the Resurrection.

7. Eyewitnesses. St. Paul spoke of how Christ appeared, alive, to 500 at once. If it weren't true, he couldn't make that claim so soon after the event occurred.

8. Non-Christian historical accounts. Tacitus and Josephus mention Christ and describe how Christians endured torture when simply renouncing him would end it.

9. Not dead again. Other resurrections are mentioned in the Bible — chiefly Lazarus — but of these, Christ's is unique in that it is never suggested that he died again.

10. Rise of a historical religion. Christianity spread and grew, even though, as St. Paul told Christians from the beginning, and here in 1 Corinthians 15:17, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is vain."

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Upcoming Events & Retreats

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((Listed here are retreats directed by the Legionaries of Christ and Regnum Christi members. For a listing of diocesan activities and other events, click here to go to the vocation.com website))

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- Retreats for Men
 Retreats for Women

LEGIONARIES OF CHRIST

Mark Your Calendars! Test Your Call Weekends for the 2009

Calendar Year. Experience the novitiate in Cheshire, CT with retreats for young men ages 16-27 sponsored by the Legion of Christ. These weekend retreats combine time for personal reflection, preached meditations, conferences, and opportunities for confession and spiritual direction with the experience of the day to day life of the seminarians. For more information, please call Br. Francois at (800) 420-5409 or email vocation@legionaries.org. Dates in 2009: April 24-26, May 22-25, June 19-21, July 3-5, July 24-26, August 14-16, September 4-6, October 23-25, November 25-29, December 19-23, and December 26-30.

REGNUM CHRISTI consecrated women

Come and See Weekends. Spend a weekend with the consecrated women of Regnum Christi, learning about their life, spirituality and mission within the Church. Activities include: Talks/conferences about the Church, Regnum Christi, the Spiritual Life, and consecrated Life in Regnum Christi; a half-day retreat; opportunities for confession and Spiritual Direction; daily Mass and time for prayer, silence and reflection; sports and meals with the consecrated women; vocational panel: Questions & Answers with consecrated women. Ages 16-30. For more information, contact Jill Swallow at vocation@inteducators.org or 401-949-2820. 2009 dates: May 22-25, and July 10-13

ShoreLines welcomes your questions and comments at questions@shorelines.org. If you do not specify otherwise, your question may be posted in the Vocations Q&A section.

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