

# Both the Cross and Resurrection Necessary

Following is excerpted from a homily at Mass for university students.

Christ says, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know..." You will learn; you will find the answer to this question you now ask me, not believing the words I tell you.

The "lifting up" through the cross constitutes in a certain sense the key to learning the whole truth which Christ proclaims. The cross is the threshold through which man will be granted to approach that reality which Christ reveals. To reveal means "to



make known", to "render present". Christ reveals the Father. Through him the Father becomes present in the human world.

"When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I AM, and I do nothing on my own authority, but speak as the Father has taught me."

Christ refers to the Father as the ultimate source of the truth that he proclaims: "He who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him."

And finally, "He who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him."

These words reveal to us that unfathomable loneliness that Christ has to experience on the cross, in his "lifting up." This loneliness will begin in prayer in Gethsemane — which must have been a true spiritual agony — and will become complete in the crucifixion. Then Christ will cry out, *Eli, Eli, lema sabactani*. "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"

Now, however, as though anticipating those hours of tremendous loneliness, Christ says, "He who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone..." As though he meant to say in the first place: even in this supreme abandonment I will not be alone! I will then do "what is pleasing to him," what is the Father's will! And I will not be alone!

And besides, the Father will not abandon me to the power of death, since in the cross is the beginning of the resurrection. For this very reason the "crucifixion" will after all become the "lifting up": "Then you will know that I AM." Then too you will learn that "I declare to the world what I have heard from him."

The crucifixion truly becomes Christ's lifting up. In the cross is the beginning of the resurrection.

Therefore the cross becomes the definitive measure of all things that are between God and man. Christ measures them by this very criterion.

In today's Gospel we hear what he says:

"You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world."

The dimension of the world in a certain sense is opposed to the dimension of God. In the conversation with Pilate, Christ will also say, "My kingdom is not of this world."

The dimension of the world meets the dimension of God precisely in the cross: in the cross and in the resurrection.

For this reason the cross becomes that ultimate criterion by which Christ measures. It becomes the central reference point. In the cross the dimension of the world is definitively referred to the dimension of the Living God. And the Living God meets with the world in the cross. He meets it through the death of Christ. This meeting is totally for man.

At times we ask ourselves, "Why did that meeting of the Living God with man take place in the cross? Why did it have to be done this way?"

Christ gives the answer to this in today's conversation: "If indeed you do not believe that I AM, you will die in your sins."

Over the dimension of the world is placed the dimension of sin . . . For this very reason the meeting of God with the world takes place in the cross.

The cross and death are necessary, so that man "will not die in his sins."

The cross and the resurrection are necessary; that man may believe in Christ, that he may accept this "world" that Christ reveals through himself.

In Christ, the Living God is revealed to man. God the Father.

Not only that: in Christ there is revealed to man — revealed to the very depths — the mystery of man himself.

We must learn to measure the problems of the world, and above all the problems of man, by the cross and resurrection of Christ.

To be Christian means to live in the light of Christ's Paschal Mystery. And to find in it a fixed reference point for what is in man, for what is among men, for what makes up the history of mankind and the world.

Looking at himself, man discovers also — as Christ says in the dialogue with the Pharisees — what is "from below" and what is "from above." Man discovers within himself (this is a constant experience) the man "from below" and the man "from above"; not two men, but almost two dimensions of the same man, the man that is each one of us: I, you, he, she . . .

And each one of us — if he looks carefully within himself with a critical eye, if he tries to see himself in truth — will be able to tell what in him belongs to the man "from below" and what belongs to the man "from above." He will be able to call it by my name. He will be able to confess it.

And finally, in each one of us there is a certain spontaneous tendency from the man "from below" towards the man "from above." This is a natural aspiration. At least let us not smother it, let us not crush it within us.

It is an aspiration. If we cooperate with it, this aspiration develops and becomes the propelling force of our life.

## Deadline

The deadline for submitting news to the Courier-Journal is noon on Thursday preceding the following Wednesday's publication.

Christ teaches us how to cooperate with it, how to develop and deepen what in man is "from above", and how to weaken and conquer what is "from below."

Christ teaches this to us with his Gospel and his personal example.

The cross becomes here a living measure. It becomes the reference point through which the life of millions of men passes from what in man is "from below" to what is "from above."

The cross and the resurrection: the Paschal Mystery of Christ.

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