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Father Cantalamessa on Resurrection as "New Creation"

Pontifical Preacher on This Sunday's Gospel

ROME, APRIL 28, 2006 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Here is a translation of a commentary on the Gospel passage of this Sunday's liturgy, by Capuchin Father Raniero Cantalamessa, preacher to the Pontifical Household.

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Third Sunday of Easter -- B

The Lord Has Risen Indeed!

The Gospel enables us to be present at one of the many apparitions of the Risen One. The disciples of Emmaus have just arrived out of breath to Jerusalem and are recounting what happened to them on the road, when Jesus appears in person in their midst saying: "Peace to you!" At first, fear, as if they saw a spirit; then amazement, disbelief; finally, joy. What is more, disbelief and joy at the same time: "And while they still disbelieved for joy, and wondered."

Theirs is an altogether special disbelief. It is the attitude of someone who believes (otherwise, there would be no joy) but does not know how to realize it. As someone who says: "Too wonderful to be true." We can call it, paradoxically, an incredulous faith. To convince them, Jesus asks them for something to eat, because there is nothing like eating together to comfort and create communion.

All this tells us something important about the Resurrection. The latter is not only a great miracle, an argument or a proof in favor of the truth of Christ. More than that, it is a new world in which one enters with faith accompanied by wonder and joy. Christ's resurrection is the "new creation."

It is not just about believing that Jesus has risen; it is about knowing and experiencing "the power of the resurrection" (Philippians 3:10).

This more profound dimension of Easter is particularly felt by our Orthodox brothers. For them, Christ's resurrection is everything. In Eastertide, when they meet someone they greet one another saying: "Christ has risen!", and the other replies: "He has risen indeed!"

This custom is so rooted in the people that the following anecdote is told that occurred at the beginning of the Bolshevik Revolution. A public debate had been organized on the resurrection of Christ. First the atheist spoke, demolishing for good, in his opinion, Christians' faith in the resurrection.

When he came down, the Orthodox priest went to the dais, who was to speak in defense. The humble priest looked at the crowd and said simply: "Christ is risen!" Before even thinking, all answered in unison: "He has

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risen indeed!" And the priest came down from the dais in silence.

We know well how the resurrection is represented in the Western tradition, for example, in Piero della Francesca. Jesus comes out of the sepulcher raising the cross as a standard of victory. His face inspires extraordinary trust and security. But his victory is over his external, earthly enemies. The authorities had put seals in his sepulcher and guards to keep watch, and, lo, the seals are broken and the guards asleep. Men are present only as inert and passive witnesses; they do not really take part in the Resurrection.

In the Eastern image, the scene is altogether different. It is not developed under an open sky, but underground. In the resurrection, Jesus does not come out but descends. With extraordinary energy he takes Adam and Eve by the hand, who were waiting in the realm of the dead, and pulls them with him to life and resurrection. Behind the two parents, an innumerable multitude of men and women who awaited the redemption. Jesus tramples on the gates of hell which he himself has just dislocated and broken. Christ's victory is not so much over visible but over invisible enemies, which are the worst: death, darkness, anguish, the devil.

We are involved in this representation. Christ's resurrection is also our resurrection. Every man who looks is invited to be identified with Adam, and every woman with Eve, and to stretch out their hands to allow themselves to be gripped and pulled by Christ out of the sepulcher. This is the new universal Easter exodus. God has come "with powerful arm and outstretched hand" to liberate his people from a much harsher and universal slavery than that of Egypt.

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