

REMEMBERING THE LORD'S RESURRECTION

Rev. Frederick L. Schnarr

Lessons: John 20:11-18; Arcana Coelestia 2916 (selections).

We are gathered together today to remember the time of the Lord's resurrection; that is, the time, when from living on earth, the Lord arose from the sepulchre into the heavens. And we have brought our flowers to the Lord's altar as a sign of our thanks and our love for all the many things He did for us by being born into the world, and living as a Man among us.

The Pharisees and the Sadducees thought they had killed the Lord by crucifying Him, didn't they? Even the disciples, forgetting how the Lord had told them that He would have to suffer and be crucified and then would rise again, thought the Lord was indeed dead. They wept and were sad, and some of them even left Jerusalem because they thought they would never see the Lord again. They thought that if the Lord really had been the God of heaven and earth, He would not have allowed Himself to be killed by the Jews. He would have called great armies of angels to come and fight for Him, and finally He would have established Himself as a great and powerful king on the earth. But the Lord did not come on earth to make Himself a great king, did He? He was already the King of heaven and earth, for He had created the earth, and every single person upon the earth was the work of His hand. He had created the heavens as a place for human beings to live in joy and happiness, after they died. He was the source of their life, and of everything they used for work and play, both in heaven and on earth. There was no greater King than the Lord, nor could there ever be; so He didn't come to earth to make Himself a King. Why, then, did He come?

The Lord came into the world to live among men, in order to teach them about Himself, and at the same time, to show them how to get to heaven. And why do you think it was so important for the Lord to do this? Didn't people know about the Lord from the stories of the Old Testament? Yes, at one time, when the Ancient Church existed, people did know about the Lord from the Old Testament. But gradually this knowledge was lost, wasn't it?

Do you remember how the Children of Israel thought that the Lord was an angry God? They thought He liked to punish people; they thought He was only the God of Israel, not of all the world. They thought that if somebody did something wrong or bad, he could not be forgiven. Do you remember how surprised the Pharisees and Sadducees were when the Lord sat down to eat

with publicans and sinners, with those who had done bad things? Do you remember how surprised they were when the Lord forgave those who were sorry for having done bad things? Think what a wrong idea of the Lord people had, when they were willing to fall down and worship a golden calf, or some other image made of wood or stone. They didn't think of the Lord as a human God, did they? And because they didn't, they couldn't understand Him, nor could they understand the things of His creation. When the Lord came into the world, people didn't know anything about heaven, they didn't know anything about the holiness of marriage, and they didn't know why the Lord had created people at all. They thought of the Lord as some far away force. They thought of Him as the wind or as the lightning, and they didn't think of Him as a loving Father, a human God from whom we receive all of our human qualities; a God who cares for us, forgives us when we are sorry for our bad deeds, and tries to lead every one of us to the happiness and joy of His heaven.

Because people could not find out what the Lord was really like by themselves, the Lord allowed Himself to be born into the world, so that He could walk and talk with men, teaching them and showing them what He, their God, was really like. Throughout His whole life on earth, even to the time when the Pharisees and Sadducees killed His body, the Lord tried to show men how much He loved and cared for them. This is why He healed the lame, the sick, and the blind; it is why He forgave all of those who were sorry for their bad deeds; it is why He permitted Himself to be accused before Pilate, and finally to be crucified; and it is why, after His death, He arose and showed Himself again to all who truly loved Him, and wanted to be led by Him.

Now everyone could see that the Lord was not an angry God, but that He loved mankind so much that He was willing to suffer and die for people. He wanted them to come to heaven and be happy forever, and He showed them how they could do this: by shunning selfish and evil loves, and by learning how to love others more than themselves, and 'the Lord most of all. And He had the record of His life written down, which we call "The Four Gospels", Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, so that all men for all times, could come to know the Lord as a human God; a God of mercy, and love.

This, then, is why we meet on Easter, that we may offer the Lord our love, and thank Him for coming to earth to tell us how to love Him, and how to lead a life that will bring us to heaven.

We cannot see the Lord, as did Mary Magdalene when she looked for Him by the sepulchre, but if we love Him as she did, we will search in His Word, to find out about Him and to come to know Him. And if we obey His teachings, He will become our Master, and call us to His presence in heaven. *Amen.*