

THE RESURRECTION

ST AUGUSTINE¹*Translated by E. J. B. Fry*

Two lives are set before us in the Lord's passion and resurrection: the life that we now endure and that for which we long. For he who deigned to endure this life, is well able to give us that other life. Indeed by this he shows us how much he loves us, and how he wishes us to believe that there we shall be given the good things that belong by right to him who willed to share in our ills. We are born, he is born; because we shall die, he has died. These two we have known in this life of ours—the beginning and the end, being born and dying: in being born, the beginning of labour; in dying, a passage to uncertainty. These two we have known, to be born and to die: this abounds in our land. Our land, the earth: the land of the angels, heaven. And so our Lord came to this our land out of that other: to the land of death from the land of life; to the land of toil from the land of bliss. He came bringing us his own bounty, and patiently he bore our ills. Hiddenly he brought his bounty; openly he bore our ills. The Man was seen, God hid; weakness was apparent, majesty hid; the flesh was apparent, the Word hid. The flesh suffered. Where was the Word when the flesh suffered? The Word did not hide; He taught us sufferance. And see, the Lord Christ rose on the third day: where is the mockery of the Jews? Where is the mockery of the insensate chiefs of the Jews who raged about him, putting to death the Physician? Recall, dearly beloved, what you heard when his Passion was read: *If he is the Son of God, let him come down from the cross, and we will believe in him* (Matt. xxvii. 40, 42). He heard that and was silent. For those who said it he prayed and kept himself hidden. It is certainly written in another Gospel that he cried out for them, saying: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* (Luke xxiii. 34.) He saw those who would be his. He saw those who would always believe in him. He willed them to obtain forgiveness.

You have already heard, when the Acts of the Apostles were read, how those who were gathered together were astonished that the Apostles and their companions spoke the tongues of every race. For they had not learnt them, but the Holy Ghost whom they had received inspired and taught them. You have also heard that, while they were still wondering, the Apostle Peter spoke to them about the miracle.

¹ *De Secunda Feria Paschae. Tractatus inediti. Ed. Dom Germain Morin IX.*

He showed them that, through ignorance, they had committed the crime of putting the Lord to death; but told them that God had thus fulfilled his plan that innocent blood should be shed for the whole world, and the sins of believers washed out. For he had died in whom no sin can be found. The bond of our sins had been held: the devil held the writing against us. He possessed those he had deceived, he held those he had vanquished. We are all debtors, since in the debt of our race we are all born; sinless blood was shed and made null the bond of sin. And so, in the Acts of the Apostles, those who believed when Peter spoke were troubled and said: *Tell us, brethren, what shall we do?* (Acts ii, 37). For they despaired of being forgiven such a crime. And they were told: *Do penance and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and your sins shall be forgiven* (Acts ii, 38). What sins? All. Really all? Even your sin of putting Christ to death. For what more criminal could you have done than killing your Creator, become creature for you? A madman could have done no graver thing than to kill such a Physician. Yet they are told that even this is forgiven: everything is forgiven. You were enraged and shed innocent blood: believe and drink the blood which you shed. For those who despaired and said, *What shall we do?* had also been there. They were told that if they believed in the one they had killed, they could obtain forgiveness even for that crime. He had seen those very men. Before his cross he had seen those very men whom he had foreseen before the foundation of the world. For these he said: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* They killed the Physician; the Physician made of his blood a salve for his murderers. What great mercy and glory! Is anything unforgiven, if the killing of Christ is forgiven? Therefore, dearly beloved, no one should doubt that in the water of regeneration every single sin, great as well as small, is altogether forgiven: for this example is a strong proof. There is no more serious sin than to kill Christ. When even this is forgiven, what crime could remain in the baptised believer?

But we will consider the resurrection of Christ, dearly beloved. For just as his passion is the symbol of our old life, so his resurrection is the sacrament of the new life. That is why the Apostle says: *We are buried together with Christ through baptism in his death, that like as Christ rose from the dead, so we too should walk in newness of life* (Rom. vi, 4). You believed, you are baptised. The old life is dead, done to death on the cross, buried in baptism. The old is buried, in which you lived bodily: let the new rise again. Live well: so live that you may live. So live that when you have died you may not die.

Dearly beloved, consider what the Lord said in the Gospel to the man whom he cured: *Behold thou art made whole; now sin no more*

lest a worse thing happen to thee (John v, 14). In that sentence we have all been straitened and brought into great distress; but his mercy never forsakes us. Since one cannot live here without sin, he has given a prayer to the baptised so that every day we should say: *Forgive us our debts*. They are debts. That bond is general and we do not cease to be debtors. We have learnt why they are daily forgiven us, but we should not therefore calmly rest in infamy, in evil deeds and crimes, as though we were secure. Sins should not be our friends. We have spat them out and we hate them. We should not return, like a dog, to our vomit. And if they steal upon us, they should not steal upon us as willing them, nor as cherishing and carefully seeking them. For anyone who wishes to be friends with sin will be the enemy of him who came to wipe out sin, who himself had no sin.

My brethren, consider what I say: a friend of sickness is an enemy of the physician. If you were sick in body and the doctor came to you, in his professional capacity, tell me what he comes for? What but to make you well? Therefore, since he is your friend, he must be your fever's enemy; for if he loved your fever, he would not love you. Indeed, he hates your fever. To attack that he entered your house, against it he went up into your bedroom, against it he drew near to your bed, against it he felt your pulse, against it he prescribed certain rules, against it he made and applied certain salves: all against that, all for you. So if he does everything against the fever, everything for you, you, loving the fever, will alone be against yourself. I know you will answer: Whoever would love a fever? Of course I know that a sick man does not love his fever, but he loves what the fever needs. What did the doctor say to you when first he came in, armed with his skill against your fever? He says to you, for example: Drink nothing cold. When the doctor has gone, the fever says: Drink something cold. When the fever has spoken to you, you should say: That is the heat of the fever. A silent argument is put to you, dryness invades your mouth, cold things become a delight. Remember what the doctor said to you: Do not drink. But the doctor is absent, the fever present. What did the doctor say? You wish to quell that fever? Do not give way to it. If you ally yourself with the doctor against the fever, you will be two. If you give way to the fever, the doctor is vanquished—but to the patient's harm, not the doctor's.

But God forbid that Christ, the Physician, should be vanquished in those whom *he foreknew and predestined*, for *he also called the same*. And whom he called, them he also justified. And whom he justified, them he also glorified. (Rom. viii, 29, 30). Let vices be checked, lusts cured; let the devil and his angels be tormented with malice. *If God be for us, who is against us?* (Rom. viii, 31).

By living well, begin to enact spiritually what Christ showed forth in the resurrection of his body. Do not, indeed, now hope for that same thing, the possession, the truth, the actual incorruptibility of the body. That is faith's reward, and the reward will be given when the day is ended. Let us now labour in the vineyard, let us look for the end of the day. For he who hired us to work does not forsake us, lest we should become disheartened. He who makes ready to give the workman his reward when the day is done, also feeds him while he is working. In the same way the Lord feeds us, his workmen in this world, not only with bodily food, but also with food for the mind. If he did not feed us, I would not be speaking. Because he feeds us with his word, we also do this who preach him, not to your bellies but to your minds. You hungry men are being fed. You are giving praise while you feast. What does this sudden exclamation of yours mean, if no food has reached your minds? But we, what are we? His ministers, his servants. For what we give out to you we do not produce from our own store, but from his storehouse. Thence we also live, for we are fellow servants. And what do we minister to you? His bread, or the Bread himself? Anyone who hired a workman for his vineyard could give him bread, but not himself. Christ gives himself to his workmen. He gives himself in the bread; he lays himself up as reward. It is not as we say: If we eat now, what shall we have at the end? We indeed eat, but he is not consumed. He fills (*reficit*) the hungry, without lessening himself (*deficit*). He, then, feeds those who labour, and remains their full reward. For what can we receive better than himself? If he had anything better than himself, he would give that; but nothing is better than God, and Christ is God. Listen: *In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God* (John i, 1). Who can grasp this? Who can drink it in? Who can consider it? Who contemplate it? Who worthily reflect upon it? No one. *The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us* (John i, 14). He calls you to this—to labour as a workman. *The Word was made flesh*. He himself calls you. The Word will be your praise. The Lord will be your reward.