The Feast of the Resurrection
Rolling Meadows - 1968

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IN NOMINE JESU

Acts 2: 32: THIS JESUS GOD RAISED UP, AND OF THAT WE ARE ALL WITNESSES.

Today - once more - we are eye witnesses of the RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD! It seems far-fetched to risk such a statement when we are almost 2000 years removed from the events of Joseph's Garden and the witnesses that ran to see the empty grave of our Lord.

But it is not far-fetched! Whoever draws such a conclusion has never really caught the reality of the Resurrection in the celebration of the Christian Church We do NOT look backward as though we were listening to history being retold - but we always celebrate what is present with us now! - The Risen Lord in the midst of a living congregation with a living witness for our time!

Certainly this is founded on the history of the event once long ago. We know that the empty tomb in Joseph's Garden was a fact - but it is astounding to remember that the apostles NEVER led anyone back to see the empty grave and the stone rolled away as proof of the fact that Christ was raised up.

They had an entirely different evidence of the Resurrection. WE HAVE SEEN THE LORD! This is the message! HE SPOKE WITH US SUCH WORDS AS ONLY HE COULD SPEAK. HE CHANGED US INTO NEW MEN AND WOMEN - NOT WHILE HE WAS HERE WITH US BUT AFTER HIS RESURRECTION! AND EVEN AS WE EXPERIENCED HIS PRESENCE WITH US AS WE FOLLOWED HIM OVER THE DUSTY ROADS OF PALESTINE - SO WE NOW EXPERIENCE HIS PRESENC EN EVERY SINGLE DAY! THAT'S WHY WE ARE EYE WITNESSES - HE HAS TRULY RISEN FROM THE DEAD! In this witness of the apostles the Church of Today joins in as a group of witnesses to the GREATEST TRUTH in the world!

Not in the same way - not in the same form - does He appear today. That ceased with the plan of God on the Day of the Ascension of our Lord. But He IS with us now in a new form - the form of the Bread and Wine in the celebration of HOLY COMMUNION. And we have something more than the disciples had, something much greater than the witness of the chosen few - WE HAVE THE WITNESS OF THE EXPERIENCE OF THE WHOLE CHRISTIAN TRADITION IN THE WHOLE CHURCH OF CHRIST ON EARTI

Today we sing it better than we say it HE IS RISEN! - HE IS HERE! - He works wherever they are gathered in His Name! He brings about the eternal renewal and revival -

the glorious power in all Christendom! The Gospel has always been something greater and better than a mere doctrine about God. It has always been something greater and better than even a mere call to repentance!

The Gospel in its truth has always been the PROCLAMATION OF A TRIUMPH that has been won in the blood of the Son of God. CHRISTUS VICTOR! is still the sloga of the true Church of God. He, the Living, Risen Christ, is the CONQUEROR of sin and sorrow, and fear and death, for all mankind. THAT'S THE REAL GOSPEL!

You know the Triumphant One! This is not only the Jesus who once lived and then died! No dead man can, through all the centuries, inspire to new deeds of love and new life! The VICTOR is the LIVING, RISEN CHRIST who holds fast to His promise: I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS EVEN TO THE END OF THE AGE!

In the lives of Christians nothing has ever been great, or important, or worthy unless HE, THE RISEN LORD, stood behind it. NEVER in the 2000 years has a missionary gone out to the heathen unless he was inspired by the RESURRECTED ONE who had overwhelmed him. I can well imagine why unbelieving and unknowing people shake their heads about the impossibility of anyone of sound mind and body going to Asia, or Africa, in order to PREACH THE GOSPEL. Always they suspect that ther is something else behind it - some political power move - some ulterior motive. They cannot imagine that there is ONE - THE INVISIBLE ONE - who is so powerful that men now have no higher goals than to proclaim HIS ETERNAL SALVATION to othe

In all these 2000 years there has been no great, truly unselfish work of mercy undertaken exeept the LIVING CHRIST was the motivating, driving power. It makes no difference whether it was Scheitzer's work in the fever belt of Africa, or the Child Welfare Work in Chicago, or a Freedom March in Alabama, or the martyrdom of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Where HE LIVES, there IS LOVE!

Wherever the men and women of God have come up to true devotion and courageous strength, the RISEN LORD had inspired it. Luther, in his deepest moments of depression buoyed up his spirits with the one word "VIVIT" - HE LIVES! He added it in the later years to his own COAT OF ARMS as a steady, never-failing,

constantly present REMINDER of the RISEN CHRIST.

Even if our own personal experiences of this GLORY seem rather poor and dull we have all experienced something on days of Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage, or Burial which causes us to look up and suddenly find the peace of forgiveness and the glory of His Presence. Were it not for Him, our lives would be very poor indeed. That is WHY we say we have experiences even better than those of the disciples who heard Him and saw Him as the RISEN LORD!

That gives us the certainty that we know more about life than the unbeliever At EASTERTIME, with the RESURRECTION GLORY, we have to talk about the MEANING OF LIFE. WHAT IS LIFE REALLY? Do they really understand life who know nothing more about it than to eat well, and to drink well, and to try to find ways of dodging taxes, and to keep from being injured inwardly and outwardly under the dreadful traffic of the world today? It reminds you of the Parable which is told about the Moles. The moles had a convention in which they thanked God that He protected them from the terrible rays of the sun - so that they could live under ground in peace and safety. Well, if you want to live like a mole, that may be perfectly all right - but certainly we would have to admit that they know very little about life.

The RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST opens up a WHOLE NEW DIMENSION to life. It is as though the WINDOWS OF HEAVEN had suddenly OPENED UP and everything looks different. Once more there is HOPE, and ASSURANCE, and the PROMISE OF THE LIFE THAT IS FOREVER. We know this - and that is why we affirm again that the life of a man is more than eating, and drinking, and competition, and rivalry, and the pride of life that drives him on. That is why we must proclaim THE POWER OF THE RESURRECTED CHRIST FOR ALL THE WORLD!

This we MUST do! What very unworthy servants of the Lord we would be if we would let this greatness fade in our lives so that people would have to write over our ministry: YOU WERE NO MAN OF LOVE OR HATE, OR RIGHT OR WRONG - YOU WERE A MAN OF LUKEWARM TASTE AND SHALLOW IDEALS. YOU HEARD THE ANGUISHED CRY OF MAN-

KIND AND YOU WENT BY ON THE OTHER SIDE! We must tell others! You must not allow yourself to be drawn down into hate and bitterness because of the hate and bitterness that others have shown you. You must not allow yourself to be drawn down into an empty, fruitless existence. You must seek HIM who can make you sure that you are being made ready for great things to come in the life which is everlastin

This we must say to the people of the whole earth! Most of our statesmen will smile when you say that the RISEN CHRIST could solve all their problems. Bu you have only to look at the new waves of bitterness and hate which are rolling oversour world - the lack of understanding that confronts us on every hand. The RISEN CHRIST could give us understanding because He gives us forgiveness. He opens our eyes to the proper order of things. He makes new bonds of love and understanding which give us the power to make peace, and free men from their fear

Men may cry "BARABBAS" all they like; but theirs is never the last word! God in the end says "CHRIST," and He says it unmistakably. He is saying it still They went around once before, looking for thorns and reeds and purple robes and worse! They went around once before, striking out in hatred and bitterness and violence! BUT THEY DID NOT FINISH THE STORY! There is ONE who finished it! Nobody can ever hurl up into God's face such a ghastly contradiction as that CROSS on which the PRINCE OF GLORY DIED, and then go about his business as if he had won!

All the atrocities of every war, especially the awesome reports that have come to us in the past two weeks of the terrors and hatred in our own country, reminds us how bad it looks for mankind when the beast in us triumphs. The RISEN CHRIST alone can help us triumph over ourselves. He is the SAVIOR and we hail Him as our RISEN LORD. We can force no one to believe in Him, but we MUST proclaim Him more joyously and fervently than ever before. THIS JESUS GOD RAISED UP, AND OF THAT WE ARE ALL WITNESSES!

We Christians of TODAY are EYE WITNESSES! We know how to live our lives more fully than anyone else. That is why we proclaim the power of the RESURRECTE ONE.to the whole world. Amen.