THE FEAST OF THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD
Rolling Meadows -- 1978

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IN NOMINE JESU

REVELATION 1: 17-18 "WHEN I SAW HIM, I FELL AT HIS FEET AS THOUGH DEAD. BUT HE LAID HIS RIGHT HAND UPON ME, SAYING, 'FEAR NOT, I AM THE FIRST AND THE LAST, AND THE LIVING ONE; I DIED, AND BEHOLD I AM ALIVE FOR EVERMORE, AND I HAVE THE KEYS OF DEATH AND HADES.'" (HELL)

Easter is the ZENITH, the CLIMAX, the CROWNING POINT of all Christian theology. In this vision of St. John, CHRIST claims to be "THE FIRST AND THE LAST" and He says, "I HAVE THE KEYS OF DEATH AND HELL." Before the Book of Revelation is finished, the reader will understand that DEATH IN CHRIST is GAIN. The NOBLE ARMY OF MARTYRS marches through the pages of Revelation and moves THROUGH DEATH with WAVING PALM BRANCHES -- SYMBOL OF MARTYRDOM, but even more, the SYMBOL OF TRIUMPH IN CHRIST Who opened for every witness the DOORS OF DEATH and shut to them the DOORS OF HELL. Somewhere near the end of the Revelation, we are assured that the GATES OF HELL with SATAN INSIDE will be LOCKED FOREVER.

IN CHRIST the BARRIERS BREAK and TUMBLE TO THE GROUND. "O DEATH," we cry with St. Paul, "WHERE IS YOUR STING? O GRAVE, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? .....THANKS BE TO GOD WHO GIVES US THE VICTORY THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST." CHRIST holds the "KEYS OF DEATH AND HELL."

So we follow CHRIST and HIS HOLY RETINUE as they move from the AGONY OF THE CROSS to the JOY OF PARADISE. The first stop is at the VERY GATES OF HELL. St. Peter tells us that "HE WENT AND PREACHED TO THE SPIRITS IN PRISON." The PROCESSION is MAJESTIC!

SATAN is VANQUISHED! CHRIST is VICTOR! Behind the GREAT GATES the spirits in prison TRENBLE. SATAN HIMSELF COWERS behind its forbidding wall. The VICTOR signals the HERALD ANGEL near the head of the great column of ANGELIC HOSTS -- and the HERALD cries out: "LIFT UP YOUR HEADS, O GATES! AND BE LIFTED UP, O ANCIENT DOORS! THAT THE KING OF GLORY MAY COME IN." There is SILENCE for a moment -- and then the SENTRY OF HELL'S GATES cries out: "WHO IS THE KING OF GLORY." The HERALD answers: "THE LORD, STRONG AND MIGHTY, THE LORD, MIGHTY IN BATTLE! ..... LIFT UP YOUR HEADS, O GATES! AND BE LIFTED UP, O ANCIENT DOORS! THAT THE KING OF GLORY MAY COME IN." Again the sentry wants to know: "WHO IS THIS KING OF GLORY?" And once more the HERALD answers: "THE LORD OF HOST HE IS THE KING OF GLORY." ..... Slowly, reluctantly, the GATES OF HELL open and the PROCESSION moves in.. the VICTOR "PREACHES TO THE SPIRITS IN PRISON" and then turns and moves on.

#135

The Victor did the foe repel;
He sounded Satan's final knell;
He closed the yawning gates of hell.
Alleluia!

The PROCESSION proceeds to the STRONGHOLD OF DEATH. DEATH is the LAST ENEMY to be conquered. It was conquered by CHRIST'S DEATH AND RESURRECTION. It's TERROR is now gone DEATH has become a FRIEND -- the GATEWAY TO ETERNITY and GLORY for every person IN CHRIST..... But for the moment, there ahead looms the CITY OF DEATH -- DARK and FORMIDABLE -- so long the TERROR and the ENEMY of mankind. Once again the VICTOR nods to the HERALD -- and the cry goes forth: "LIFT UP YOUR HEADS, O GATES! AMD BE LIFTED UP, O ANCIENT DOORS! THAT THE KING OF GLORY MAY COME IN." And from behind those

FORMIDABLE DOORS there again comes the question: "WHO IS THE KING OF GLORY?" And the answer: "THE LORD, STRONG AND MIGHTY, THE LORD, MIGHTY IN BATTLE!" Come on: "LIFT UP YOUR HEADS, O GATES! AND BE LIFTED UP, O ANCIENT DOORS! THAT THE KING OF GLORY MAY COM IN!" But the sentry still wants to know: "WHO IS THE KING OF GLORY?" And the HERALD responds: "THE LORD OF HOSTS, HE IS THE KING OF GLORY!"..... And the GREAT DOORS OF DEATH swing open to reveal to all the faithful the GLORIES OF GOD'S PARADISE.

Death's mightiest pow'rs have done their worst,
And Jesus hath His foes dispersed;
Let shouts of praise and joy outburst.
Alleluia!

The PROCESSION now moves on to the THIRD DAY -- the Day we know as EASTER. Only a few moments remain before the CROWING COCK will announce the DAWN. Only a few moments -- and CHRIST will return to the LAND OF THE LIVING. He will show Himself alive to the WOMEN and to His SLOW-TO-BELIEVE DISCIPLES. He will offer His wounded HANDS, and FEET, and SIDE to THOMAS ..... And when it is all over -- when their DOUBTS and SCEPTICISM give way to FAITH ----- then there is NOEW STRENGTH, NEW PURPOSE, NEW POWER. ..... The PROCESSION pauses. The voice of the HERALD addressing the LAND OF THE LIVING can be heard: "LIFE UP YOU HEADS, O GATES! AND BE LIFTED UP, O ANCIENT DOORS! THAT THE KING OF GLORY MAY COME IN." And WE, the LIVING respond -- because we are still now so sure and our faith is weak: "WHO IS THE KING OF GLORY?" And the HERALD replies: "THE LORD, STRONG AND MIGHTY, THE LORD, MIGHTY IN BATTLE." ....."LIFT UP YOUR HEADS, O GATES AND BE LIFTED UP, O ANCIENT DOORS! THAT THE KING OF GLORY MAY COME IN." ..... "WHO IS

THE KING OF GLORY?"....."THE LORD OF HOSTS, HE IS THE KING OF GLORY!"

On the third morn He rose again
Glorious in majesty to reign;
Oh, let us swell the joyful strain!
Alleluia!

The PRINCE OF LIFE lives visibly with His disciples for FORTY DAYS after His resurrection. Our fellow Christians SAW HIM -- SPOKE TO HIM -- WERE BLESSED BY HIM -- BEGAN TO UNDERSTAND HIM -- LOVED HIM. ..... Then it came time for Him to RETURN TO HEAVEN and HIS FATHER. His TASK was finished. He had given the POSSIBILITY OF NEW LIFE and the HOPE OF GLORY to MANKIND. He commissioned His disciples to SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS of FORGIVENESS, LIFE, AND SALVATION to the "UTTERMOST PARTS OF THE EARTH." ..... Then, in a AWESOME MOMENT, He ASCENDED INTO THE SKIES AND DISAPPEARED..... A MULTITUDE OF ANGELS greeted Him and the GREAT TRIUMPHANT MARCH of the RETURNING, VICTORIOUS SON OF GOD moved to the SHINING GATES OF GLORY. A SENTRY on the BATTLEMENT OF HEAVEN -- at the NODDING OF THE FATHER -- cried out: "LIFT UP YOUR HEADS, O GATES! AND BE LIFTED UP, O ANCIENT DOORS! THAT THE KING OF GLORY MAY COME IN."

He opened Paradise once more,
He leads the way through heav'ns great door
Where saints shall praise Him evermore.
Alleluia!

Then before the RANKS UPON RANKS OF ANGELS -- before the SERAPHIM AND CHERUBIM -- befor the MIGHTY ARCHANGELS -- before ALL THE SAINTS IN GLORY ------- the FATHER receives the <u>CROWN OF GLORY</u> from a shimmering angel. He places it on JESUS' HEAD. "Thank you, My

Son, for Your faithfulness." The SAINTS and ANGELS begin their chant: "WORTHY IS THE LAMB.... WORTHY IS THE LAMB WHO WAS SLAIN TO RECEIVE POWER AND WEALTH AND WISDOM AND MIGHT AND HONOR AND GLORY AND BLESSING."

CROWNED NOW, the VICTORIOUS CHRIST returns: "BEHOLD, I STAND AT THE DOOR AND KNOCK. IF ANY MAN WILL HEAR MY VOICE AND OPEN THE DOOR, I WILL COME IN TO HIM." The VICTOR comes to YOU and ME. And the HERALD'S CRY sounds in our ears. He calls us to OPEN the GATEWAY of our hearts: "LIFT UP YOUR HEADS, O GATES! AND BE LIFTED UP, O ANCIENT DOORS! THAT THE KING OF GLORY MAY COME IN."

Lord, by the stripes which wounded Thee,
From death's dread sting Thy servants free
That we may live and sing to Thee.
Alleluia!

"HE LAID HIS RIGHT HAND UPON ME, SAYING, 'FEAR NOT, I AM THE FIRST AND THE LAST, AND THE LIVING ONE; I DIED, AND BEHOLD I AM ALIVE FOR EVERMORE.'" Amen.