

B001**St. Vincent Ferrer, O.P. – Easter Sermon**

"He has risen, he is not here, " (Mt 28:6)

In the present sermon on the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, God wishes to pour into our hearts a spiritual feeling of sweetness and of blessings of the feast for the consolation of our souls. We return to the virgin saying to her, Hail Mary, etc.

Note, the assigned text implies the good news of the glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ which the good angel announced to these three Marys, who with great devotion running together arrived at the tomb of Christ, saying to them, "He is risen," as if he said, "His body has already left the tomb, his soul is no longer in limbo, because he is already gone. And his humanity is not here, nor his body, because he has already risen," as if he said, you should not seek him here.

To explain these word it must be known that the resurrection of Christ above all other resurrections of dead persons which had ever happened previously, had two great excellences.

First because it was powerful [virtuosa].

Second because it was glorious.

POWERFUL

Many had risen from the dead to life, both in the Old Testament and in the New, but they did not rise through their own power, but by another's. Christ, however, rose from the dead to life by his own power and not another's, as true God. Because his body in the tomb had infinite power for raising itself from its conjunction with divinity, and also his soul in limbo, as St. Thomas says, III, q. 53, a. 4. It was not such for any other dead person, because a dead body otherwise has no power, nor even the soul to raise itself up, as David says, "A spirit that goes," supply, to death, "and returns not.," (Ps 77:39), supply, by its own power to life.

Of Elijah and Elisha we read that they raised the dead in the Old Testament. Likewise we read that the apostles and other saints raised various dead people, but how? By praying and petitioning not of their own power nor of the dead, but the power of God and only ministerially. St. Thomas says, I, q. 110, a. 4, where he concludes that only God can make miracles, in the response to the first objection, that "Some angels are said to work miracles; either because God works miracles at their request, in the same way as holy men are said to work miracles; or because they exercise a kind of ministry in the miracles which take place; as in collecting the dust in the general resurrection, or by doing something of that kind." (ad 4). These words, he [Thomas] in the above location. *Also the same St. Thomas, II-II, q. 7, ch. 78, a. 1 to the first objection, and III, q. 88, a. 3, ad 4m [These references in the Latin edition are erroneous]*. And in De potentia, q. 6, c. 4, that the saints can work miracles in two ways, namely by petitioning and by power, that is without a manifest prayer preceding. However in both cases God works principally, the saints only instrumentally. From these words it is clear that the saints do not work miracles by their own virtue or power, but by God's. because they work miracles only by praying and ministering instrumentally. But the resurrection of Christ today happens only

through his own power, and so Christ was saying, "I put down," that is, lay down, "my life and take it up again." "No man takes it away from me." that is, violently, "but I lay it down of myself, and I have power to lay it down," namely, through death, "and I have power to take it up again," (Jn 10:18), namely, through resurrection.

GLORIOUS

The second excellence was because this resurrection was glorious. Christ rose to a glorified, immortal and invulnerable life. Others who have been raised in the Old and New Testaments, and who have been raised by the general law and course are raised to mortal life to the hurtful miseries [*miseriam passibilem*] of this world, and afterwards would have to die again. But Christ, by a singular privilege [arose] from death to glorious life. Authority. "Christ rising again from the dead, dies now no more, death shall no more have dominion over him." (Rom 6:9).

St. Thomas lists three reasons for this glorious resurrection III, q. 54, a. 2. Because his resurrection was the model and cause of our resurrection, as is clear in 1 Cor 15. And second, because of the humiliation of his passion, from which he earned the glory of the resurrection. And third, because with the accomplishment of the mystery of redemption, from the glory of the soul glory overflowed into his body, although before by special dispensation, that overflowing had been impeded, so that he might complete the mystery of our redemption by his passion.

These two excellences of the resurrection of Christ are subtly touched on in the theme. First, namely that it was powerful, it touched in that word, as if active, "He has risen." It doesn't say "He has been raised," by another, as was Lazarus, but "He has risen," namely through his own power. Christ has risen from the dead through the glory of the father, Rom 6: "Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father," which is his glory with the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The second excellence, namely that it was glorious, is shown where it says: "He is not here," namely the body in the tomb, nor the soul in limbo, nor the humanity in this mortal life, but sacramentally in the sacrament of the altar. Thus the angel said to the women seeking Christ in the tomb, "I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he is risen, as he said. Come, and see the place where the Lord was laid. And going quickly, tell ye his disciples that he is risen: and behold he will go before you into Galilee; there you shall see him. Lo, I have foretold it to you." (Mt 28:5-7). The theme is clear.

About the blessed resurrection of Jesus I have noticed three points, in which is contained the whole practicality [practica] of this blessed resurrection.

The Resurrection of Christ was: celebrated lovingly [celebrata affectuose];
 Revealed graciously [demonstrata gratiose]; and
 Publicized virtuously [publicata virtuose].

In these three points or conclusions stands the whole meaning of my sermon [practica sermonis].

CELEBRATED LOVINGLY

First, I say that the resurrection of Christ was celebrated lovingly. So many holy fathers, almost innumerable, who were in limbo, were ardently desiring to see that glorious body, which sustained the blow and the whole burden of the passion. The holy patriarchs seeing that Good Friday and Saturday had already passed, were desiring to witness the resurrection and his wounds tonight, just as a man desires to see the horse on which a king has triumphed. The holy fathers, together, entreated Christ that he rise, because although God from eternity certainly had predestined the resurrection of his Son, he also predestined it that it would happen through the prayers and supplications of the holy fathers. Thus the faithful soul here can sweetly contemplate the intense desire of the holy fathers in limbo, how, with one heart, they begged Christ to rise in the order and fashion here noted.

First, Adam, the first patriarch, with Noah, Methuselah, Melchisedech, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and others who had the first place for offering, and on bended knees before the soul of Christ proposed their supplications, which David registered in his record book, namely in his Psalter, and they said to Christ, "Arise, O Lord, into your resting place: you and the ark, which you have sanctified," (Ps 131:8). Note, you most holy soul "Arise...in your resting place," namely flesh, which never opposed the spirit; and "you," soul, and "ark" of your holiness, namely flesh, full of all the fruits of virtues.

The second supplication was of the holy prophets, namely, Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, others saying Psalm 67:2 "Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered," namely, demons and the soldiers who watch over his tomb, "and let them that hate him flee from before his face," like the Jews, who flee the face of Christ even today.

Third was of the holy priests, Aaron, Eliezar, Ithamar, Phinees, and others saying Ps 7:7-8: "And arise, O Lord my God, in the precept which you have commanded: and a congregation of people shall surround you." Note "in the precept which you have commanded," namely, "...he who humbles himself, shall be exalted." (Lk 18:14). "So Lord, because you humiliated yourself so much, arise etc," and "the synagogue," i.e. the congregation of your disciples, "who lost faith shall surround you," believing your resurrection.

The fourth supplication was that of the holy kings: David, Hezekiah, Joshua, Josaphat, and of the holy judges and leaders, Gideon, Jephte, Samson, Judas Maccabeus and others saying: "Arise, O Lord, help us and redeem us for your name's sake." (Ps 43:26). Note, "help us,"

because it was permitted that they have essential glory just as today, nevertheless, they did not have a place of glory. So they said "and redeem us, with regard to our place," because with respect to place they were not redeemed, because they were yet in the prison of limbo and thus were not able to exit without God's help.

The fifth was [the petition] of the holy women: Eve, who after her sin did great penance, and Sara, Rebecca, Rachel, Leah, Judith, Esther, Hannah, Elizabeth and others repeating what Eve proposed saying, "Arise, and be attentive to my judgment: to my cause, my God, and my Lord," (Ps 34:23). While Eve was living in this life, the living were able to say to her when they were suffering some evil: "because of you we have this evil." Even in limbo they spoke thus to her, not with injury or indignation; "because of you we all are here." So Eve was saying and praying that he would rise, that they could be led out of there, so that from now on they wouldn't say such things to her.

The sixth was of the saints of the New Testament: John Baptist, the Holy Innocents, Joseph, and the good thief saying, "Arise, O God, judge your own cause: remember your reproaches with which the foolish man has reproached you all the day." Ps. 73:22. Note Eve spoke "judge my cause," and John and others say "your cause": Each speak the truth in different ways, because as I say, John and the saints of the New Testament say: "Arise O God," and "judge," etc. For the Jews when they heard it said that Christ shall rise on the third day, laughed, and ridiculing said: "He cannot come down from the cross and escape the tomb," and they placed guards, lest the disciples steal his body; and they were hurling many insults at Christ, on this account they say, "Arise O God, judge your cause" and the Jews were silent who believed he did not have the power of rising. And why Eve said "my case," is already explained in the fifth petition.

The seventh petition is that of the holy Angels, who associated with the soul of Christ, who seeing that the holy fathers had prayed to Christ that he rise, also offer their good desire humbly pleading saying, "Arise, why do you sleep, O Lord? arise, and cast us not off to the end," (Ps 43:23). The angels spoke as a friend speaks to a friend, rousing him from sleep. The angels knew that the general resurrection would happen at the end of the world so they were saying "Arise, why are you sleeping," i.e. you sleep too much, because today is the third day, and "cast us not off to the end," i.e. you delay your resurrection "to the end," namely in the general resurrection when we all will rise and be 30 years of age or thereabouts. St. Thomas says in IV [Sentences], Dist. 44 q. 1, art 3 that all will arise in a youthful age, not just with respect to the numerical age but with respect to condition.

When these seven supplications were proposed to Christ, at dawn, with great desire, Christ, responded to all those about him, saying, "On account of the suffering of the helpless and sighs of the poor, now I rise, says the Lord" (Ps 11:6), "Save me." (v. 2) Note: because of "the suffering," of the local saints, and "the sighs of the poor," i.e. his disciples now weeping, "now I rise." Behold how he wished that his glorious resurrection be brought about through the supplications of the saints, although from eternity it had been predestined. And the soul of Christ with all the holy fathers came out of limbo. And that place remained empty, because no one was left there.

And the soul of Christ assumed his glorious body and he arose. At his resurrection the earth trembled and the guards became like dead, and Christ came out of the tomb without its opening, just as he was born of the virgin without destroying her virginity, and standing on [supra] the tomb he showed his glorious body, wounds and bruises to all the holy patriarchs, who with bent knees adoring said, "Glory to thee, O Lord, who have risen from the dead, with the Father and Holy Spirit," etc. See the first point of this blessed resurrection of Jesus Christ.

GRACIOUSLY REVEALED

The second point is how the resurrection was graciously revealed to Mary. It is the conclusion of many theologians saying that Christ in his resurrection, first appeared to the Virgin Mary his mother. This Ambrose expressly says in the book *On Virgins*, saying that Mary witnessed the resurrection of Christ and was the first to see him. But the gospel writers did not choose to include this, but they cared only to list undeniable witnesses, because the witness of a mother for her favorite son could be lying.

There are three reasons to believe that he first appeared to his virgin mother. First by divine precept because she suffered above all others in the passion of her son. Christ, by special privilege was born of his mother, so that she gave birth without pain, and contrary to the ordinary course of nature. So lest she perceive the sorrows in his death which exceeded all the sorrows of this life, as the lord Albert says on "He has been sent," [dominus Albe.super, missus est.) Death is the end of all terrible things because the whole soul is uprooted like a tree, but all the pains of birth and death came over her in the passion of her son. Since, scripture says, "Honor your father, and forget not the groaning of your mother," (Sir 7:29), Christ most perfectly kept the law of honoring parents. It follows that he appeared to his mother first, who was stressed [tribulata] more than all the others.

Second because of the merit of her faith. For certainly it happened and is shown clearly enough from the text that at the time of the passion of Christ all the apostles and disciples lost their Christian faith entirely; some doubting whether he was truly God and Messiah, although all considered him a very holy prophet. Only the Virgin Mary on that holy Saturday invariably believed. Because of this on every Saturday the office of the day in the Church of God is celebrated in her honor. When therefore scripture says, "The Lord shows himself to them who have faith in him," (Wis 1:2), it seems that as a reward of merit for her faith, that he would appear to her first.

Third because of the intensity of her love. There never was a mother who loved her son more than Mary loved Christ. Since therefore he said, "And he that loves me, shall be loved of my Father: and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him," (Jn 14:21) therefore it shall be etc. From these three reasons it is clear that he appeared to the Virgin Mother first, although the holy Evangelists are expressly silent about it.

Practically speaking, how it now happened could be as follows. The devout soul can piously contemplate, as God grants them to perceive the sweetness of this vision in their hearts.

The Virgin Mary was most certain that her son would rise on the third day, as he had predicted, but perhaps she did not know the hour of his resurrection, because it is not written that Christ had

revealed the hour of his resurrection, whether at prime or terce [first or third hour of daylight] etc. So the Virgin Mary on this very night, which was so long for her, awaited the resurrection of her son and she began to think at which hour he would rise, but she did not know. And knowing that among other prophets, David spoke most about the passion and resurrection of Christ, she set about by reading the Psalter, to discover if David had said anything about the hour, and she read the first psalm, the second, the third...and found nothing about the time.

Then reading Psalm 56:9 where it says and David speaks in the person of a father to son saying, "Arise, O my glory, arise psaltery and harp," Response of the son to the father: "I will arise at dawn." Note that the father calls his son three times. Namely, his glory, psaltery and harp on account of three [things] which Christ had in his life. First God the Father calls Christ his "glory" and this because Christ in this life, in all that he said and did procured the honor of the Father. Second he calls him "psaltery." A psaltery or lyre has ten strings and it is an instrument for a small room and doesn't make much sound and stands for the law of Moses, which like a small instrument was given only to the Jewish people, which consisted in the ten commandments, like ten strings. To this Christ was extremely obedient. So he said, "I am not come to destroy [the law], but to fulfill it," (Mt 5:17). From such obedience he is called by the father a "psaltery." Third he is called a "harp." The harp signifies the law of the Gospel. Why? Because it has a louder sound and is easier to hear. Such was the gospel law, which was heard through the whole world. "Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth," etc., (Ps 18:5, Cf Rm 10:18). The son responds to the father, "I will arise at dawn." Imagine, when the virgin Mary knew the time of resurrection, how she arose from prayer, to see if it was dawn, and saw that it was not.

Again Mary returned to her reading to see if she could find another witness to the time of the resurrection, and in continuing her reading she came to Psalm 107:2-3 namely: "My heart is ready, O God." Where she found the same verse again: "Arise my glory," and again she looked out her window to see if it was dawn yet.

Then she wanted to see if any of the other prophets had said something of the hour of the resurrection and she found in Hosea speaking in the person of the apostles: "He will revive us after two days: on the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. We shall know, and we shall follow on, that we may know the Lord. His going forth is prepared as the morning light," (Hos 6:3). Note, "He will revive us," because the apostles were mortified because of unbelief.

Then Mary got up saying, its enough for me to have three witness of the hour of the resurrection. And she prepared the room, and found a chair for her son saying "Here my son shall sit and here I will speak with him." And she looked out of the window, and she saw the dawn breaking, and she rejoiced saying "Now my son is rising." And on her knees she prayed, saying: "Rise up Lord to meet me, and behold: even you, O Lord, the God of hosts, the God of Israel," (Ps 58:6).

And Christ immediately sent the messenger Gabriel to the virgin saying: "Just as you announced to my mother the incarnation, now announce to her my resurrection." With unbridled great joy he came to the Virgin saying: "Queen of heaven rejoice, Alleluia. Because he whom

you did merit to bear, Alleluia. Has risen as he said, Alleluia," as was revealed to Blessed Gregory, who added, "Pray for us to God, Alleluia." [The *Regina Cæli*, an Eastertide replacement for the *Angelus*].

Immediately following that her blessed Son came to her with all the holy fathers. etc. If it is asked, how can they [all] be received in that little room? I say that such is their magnificence, that if they wish, a thousand thousands can be received in it, even a smaller place, through divine power helping them at his nod, as St. Thomas touches in the IV [Sentences] Dist. 44.

Christ greeted his mother saying: "Peace be with you." The Virgin fell to her knees and weeping abundantly for joy adored him kissing his hands and feet saying: "O blessed wounds, which have given me such pain on Good Friday." Christ kissing his mother said: "My mother, rejoice, because from now on, you will have nothing but joy and celebration." Drying her tears, he sat down on the chair and they spoke with each other very sweetly. Oh if only someone could have been present to this exchange! The Virgin said to her son, "Son, I am used to celebrating a feast on the Sabbath [Saturday], signifying [God's] rest from the creation of the world, but from now on I celebrate a feast on Sunday, in memory of your resurrection, and rest and glory." It pleased Christ.

Christ told his mother the things which he did in hell, how he had bound the devil, and he introduced her to the holy fathers, whom he had delivered from there. They then showed their great reverence to the virgin Mary. Imagine how Adam and Eve spoke to the Virgin Mary. "Blessed are you our daughter and the lady, about whom the Lord said to the serpent devil, 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman,'" (Gen 3:15). Eve said, "I by sin closed the gates of paradise, but you by grace have opened them."

Also each of the prophets spoke to the Virgin Mary, "I have prophesied of you in this place saying....," and humbly saluting her they all together said to the Virgin Mary: "You are the glory of Jerusalem, you are the joy of Israel, you are the honor of our people," (Judith 15:10). Saluting them, the Virgin Mary said. "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people: that you may declare his virtues, who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light," (1 Pet. 2:9).

Then the holy angels said to her, as before, "Queen of heaven rejoice..." etc., because this was one of the seven principal joys of the Virgin Mary. The Virgin humbly acknowledging their praises said, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation?" (Heb 1:14)

ANNOUNCED PUBLICLY

Third. The resurrection was announced publicly. After Christ had comforted the Virgin Mary, the virgin Mother of consolation asked her Son to please go to console the most beloved Mary Magdalen, who so greatly suffered his passion, so saying: "Although the Apostles had a great sorrows at your passion, Mary Magdalen however had the greatest, so would you please console her and my sisters, who today, at early morning went to the tomb to anoint you." "And early in the morning the day after the Sabbath they came to the tomb, the sun having just risen...And going into the tomb they beheld a young man sitting on the right, clothed in a white garment, and

they were amazed, he said to them 'Be not afraid; you seek Jesus of Nazareth,'" etc., (Mk 16:2, 5-6). – Note "early in the morning," that is in the first light of the sunrise, because the brightness of the dawn is the arrival of the sun – "So, Son, comfort them. Magdalen, your very beloved, is dying of your love. [Illa enim Magdalena philocapta vestra, moritur amore vestri.] Also the Apostles weep, especially Peter who hiding in some tomb can do nothing but weep. "

Immediately Christ sent an angel to the tomb, to announce to the three Marys his resurrection. He found them with their jars of ointment, worrying, "Who will roll back the stone for us?" etc. And "because the guards are not permitting us to enter." And when they were at the tomb, a second time they saw the stone removed. It was very big. "And going into the tomb they saw the young man," etc. as is said above. And when they left the tomb, Christ appeared to them. Adoring, they embraced his feet, perhaps saying to him, "Lord, we shall go to your mother, who endured so many sorrows at your passion." He replied to them, "It is not necessary for you to go, because I have already seen her, and have comforted her." But he sent them to the disciples, that they might announce to them his resurrection, and later he himself appeared to the disciples, who rejoiced at the sight of the Lord. They had not believed the women. See how [the glorious resurrection] was publicly announced.

Morally. It is clear that the resurrection of Christ was made public and manifest to three kinds of persons. First to the Virgin Mary. Second to the three Marys. Third to the disciples.

It is shown mystically, that he shall appear in glory in paradise to the innocent, because they are signified by the Virgin, always innocent of all sin. And so Christ was saying "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come to me: for the kingdom of heaven is for such," (Mt 19:14).

Second, he shall appear to the repentant, who are designated by the women. Penitents carry the containers of ointment, i.e. the body, in which are the medicinal ointments of repentance, curative of the wounds and the weakness of sins. So Christ said "Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," (Mt 4:17).

Third, he shall appear in glory to the obedient, who are signified by the disciples. Note, there are two grades of obedience. First is to obey the precepts or commandments of God, which generally oblige all, and to obey all the precepts of the Church, especially of fulfilling the precept of receiving communion today [Easter], unless at the good advice of your confessor it was anticipated or delayed, *Extrav. de peni. & re. omnis*. For today Christ has triumphed and set up camp. Today he wishes to enter the castle which he gained by so much effort, and so he was saying, "If you wish to enter life, keep the commandments," (Mt 19:17). Thus he shall appear to the Apostles at a table, to signify that today he appears to those who by grace are worthy of receiving communion..

The second grade of obedience is to obey the counsels. To this grade are bound those who oblige themselves through a vow to observe poverty, chastity, and obedience, etc., like religious. Of this grade Christ was saying, "If you would be perfect, go sell what you have," (Mat 19:21).