

(English translation)

Rocca di Papa, 18 March 1981

Word of life

“I am the resurrection and the life” (Jn 11:25).

Jesus – as you may remember – said these words on the occasion of the death of Lazarus, whom he later brought back to life.

Lazarus had two sisters, Martha and Mary.

“As soon as Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him” and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

“Your brother will rise,” Jesus answered.

She replied, “I know that he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day.”

Then Jesus declared: “I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die” (Jn 11:20-26).

“I am the resurrection and the life”

When Jesus uses the expression “I am” he wants to make us understand who he is. And in this case he wants to tell us that he is the one who possesses the most precious thing anyone could want: life, the life which does not end.

If we read John’s Gospel we find that Jesus also said, “Just as the Father has life in himself, so he gave to his Son the possession of life in himself” (Jn 5:26).

Since Jesus has life in himself, he can give it to others.

“I am the resurrection and the life”

Martha, too, believed in the final resurrection. “I know that he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day” (11:24). But with his wonderful affirmation, “I am the resurrection and the life,” Jesus tells her that she does not have to wait for the future to hope in the resurrection of the dead. Right now, in the present moment, for all those who believe in him, he is already that divine, ineffable, eternal life that will never die.

If Jesus is in them, if Jesus is in you, you will not die. This life in the believer is the same life that is in the risen Jesus and is, therefore, quite different from the human condition in which believers find themselves.

And this extraordinary life, which already exists in us, will become fully manifest on the last day when, with our whole being, we will take part in the resurrection that is to come.

“I am the resurrection and the life”

With these words Jesus is certainly not denying that physical death exists. But that does not imply the loss of true life. Death will remain for us, as for everyone, an experience that is unique, intense, perhaps feared. But death will no longer be a sign that our existence is pointless or absurd, or the failure of our life, or our final end. Death, for us, will no longer be really a death.

“I am the resurrection and the life”

When was this undying life born in us?

In our baptism. There, even though, as human beings we were destined to die, we received immortal life from Christ. In our baptism, in fact, we received the Holy Spirit, the one who raised Jesus from the dead.

The condition for receiving this sacrament was the faith we professed, perhaps through our godparents. On the occasion of the raising of Lazarus, Jesus stated clearly to Martha, “Whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live ...” (Jn 11:25-26).

“Believing,” here, is something very serious, very important. It does not mean simply accepting the truths Jesus has proclaimed; it means adhering to them with our whole being.

To have this life, therefore, we must say our “yes” to Christ. And this means adherence to his words, to his commands: living them. Jesus reinforced this: “Whoever keeps my word will never see death” (Jn 8:51). And since the teachings of Jesus are summed up in love, St. John writes: “We have passed out of death and into life, and of this we can be sure because we love our brothers!” (1 Jn. 3:14)

“I am the resurrection and the life”

So we cannot but be happy: in us there is life!

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