

The Power of Resurrection Defies the Power of Destruction

Christ is risen! With this certitude of faith, I wish a blessed Holiday to all radio listeners in Transcarpathia, Ukraine and beyond. The feast of the Resurrection brings hope, light and encouragement into our lives, once again. In the past I have often asked myself, if our parishioners are not bored with the yearly, returning cycle of church celebrations. With their central message and meaning.

And now, in 2022, when we are living in a time of war here in Ukraine, I have come to understand that this repetition also has a very important message. People's life situations and goals might change. But the creation is the same, the sun rises at the right time and place. The position of the stars is the same as it was thousands of years ago. Our holidays teach us that God's eternal plans are coming to fruition and they will all be realized. His power dwarfs human power and all its selfishness and unbounded ambition, and the great love of God overrides the aspirations of the weapons and the human powers.

Christ is risen! The resurrection of Christ has a huge impact in our lives. It is because Christ's resurrection reveals a power that surpasses all earthly might and power. This is what the Word of God teaches us in the third part of Apostle Paul's letter to the Philippians. In verse 10 we read: "I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection". The purpose and meaning of the Christian life is to recognize Jesus Christ as the Messiah, the Saviour and to know the power of His resurrection. May our celebration of this Easter also help us to move forward and grow in this insight, so that all the knowledge we have received as children, adults, mothers and fathers, as people who have experienced many joys and sorrows, may be strengthened in our souls and in our minds. May the Easter joy, the message of the resurrection, be for us , time and time again, a source of strength.

The power of the Resurrection must be manifested in our own lives, in our individual life stories. When the power resurrection is manifested and becomes visible and real in our personal lives, it means for us a sense of security and strengthens the hope of others. I have heard people saying that the disciples, who loved Jesus fervently, missed him so much after the crucifixion that they made themselves believe that Jesus had risen. In my childhood, when we were still living in the era of atheism and the denial of God in the Soviet Union, such nonsense and the like was often

quoted. And they can be heard also today. Many people prefer to give in to this nonsense and go on with their life journey, practically denying their own life, denying their purpose in life.

But what do I, what do such people and the unbelieving world do with the story of the apostle Paul, who as Saul was originally very much against the message of the resurrection, who believed that the falsehood of Jesus' life and deeds was completely revealed in the idea of resurrection. It was unbearable for him. He was a great enemy of the gospel. He was a great enemy of the disciples. On one occasion, he asked permission to go to Damascus and seek out the disciples there. Those who were preaching the message of the resurrection. And he would drag them before the tribunal in chains. But something happened. This angry, impetuous man on the road to Damascus stumbles, falls to the ground. "Who are you, Lord?" he asks. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he hears the answer. It is pointless for you to kick against me, against his goads. The light he saw, blinded him, and the sound he heard made him aware. He fell to the ground at the moment of the miraculous encounter, the encounter with the risen Christ, but rises as a new man, a man who was not a disciple before, but became now a faithful witness of the resurrection. Because he has met Jesus, whom he had been persecuting before. And Jesus spoke to him, did not punish him, but lifted him up.

Thus the gospel, the message of the resurrection, became the most important force and experience in his individual life, a motivation that changed his life completely. Apostle Paul was convinced by the power of the resurrection and came to the conviction that Job had wonderfully confessed in the Old Testament: "I know that my Redeemer lives". Saul also recognised, experienced and proclaimed this. How could he proclaim it? Until then he had been a herald of other doctrines, ideas and beliefs. The power of the resurrection liberates us today, just as it liberated Paul from everything that had made him a persecutor, as Saul. He was freed to faith, to humility, to service, to preaching the gospel. The chains that had hitherto defined him and made him someone that people feared, even his name, were cast off. He became the man through whom the gospel reached even us, gentiles.

And the power of the resurrection can be experienced not only in our personal lives, but also in the life of the church. Today when so many people have left the country, and they are not there in their family houses or in the churches, many people ask me what will happen to the church, what will happen to the Reformed Church in Transcarpathia. What will happen to this small Hungarian community? Can we still stand on our feet? The power of resurrection is to know him, the risen Lord and the power of resurrection. This is opportunity and task for us at the same time. I would

like to say a few words about this. The church has risen from the ashes, it was restored. Not once, not twice. Just think of the Church at the time of the Reformation, when she was spiritually, morally and humanly in decline and so much destroyed, but with the gift of the Reformation the Church was renewed from the ashes.

The power of the resurrection raised her up and renewal came, life came. Thousands, even millions of people experienced and embraced the wonderful work of the Word of God through the Holy Spirit. For the Church of the Word, the Church of the Scriptures, has lived ever since and lives today. The power of the resurrection in the life of the Church has also been experienced by those who were told in Stalinist times that the Church was done, will disappear. It is only a matter of days, they said, and no one will be left. There will be neither shepherds nor a flock, neither pastors, nor congregations. And yet, those who returned home from the forced labor camps could see that the church was alive. Despite all the efforts and aggression, the church was alive.

And if someone would say that this was long time ago and maybe was not even true, let me tell you what I experienced in 1990, during the communist era. Admittedly, we had already felt its decline and its twilight. But this was the very time when the Church was revived. The preaching of the Word, by the miracle of the Holy Spirit, brought conversion and revival in the hearts of young and old people in the congregations. The power of the resurrection in the church can be experienced again and again. We do not know what impact the events of the year 2022 will have on us. Nor do we know how much and what kind of suffering the Church will still have to endure as a result of these changes, which now present a gloomy and sad picture, and suggest that there is no hope. We do not know this. But we do know that, despite all the destructive powers, the Church will rise again and again. This is because it is not the church, the church members, the pastors who carry the gospel of resurrection in this world, but the other way around: the gospel of resurrection carries the church members, the pastors, the religious teachers; our children and the elderly who live out their faith in the community of the Church.

May the power of the resurrection be known to us and manifest through us in the world. Let us look at one another with love, because when we love one another, we realize the opportunity and the obligation to tell one another the story of Christ. And once we speak about Christ, people will experience the power of the resurrection. But now, when our world is being shaped as if it were in the hands of human beings alone, can the power of the resurrection be experienced in the world, in the live of the human race? My clear answer is 'yes'. The power of the resurrection is stronger than the force of any earthly power, stronger than the power of weapons of mass destruction,

stronger than the devastating power of the nuclear bombs. The power of resurrection gives hope to us who we live in war. The power of the resurrection teaches us responsibility, because we know that the last word in the world does not belong to man, but it is God, our Creator, who has the final say. The power of the resurrection makes us aware that above all human power, above all forces, there is God. He who created heaven and earth, who sent his only begotten Son Jesus Christ, who conquered death and who overcomes the power and might of all evil by the power of the resurrection.

This present feast is a gift to all those who still hear these words, so that they may recognize Jesus Christ and the power of His resurrection. May the Lord grant us that we may know Him and His power in our individual and Church lives, and in the life of the whole world. The Lord is God.
Amen

*Easter Radio Message of Bishop Sándor Zán Fábán
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