

A CONSOLING COMPANION, FAITHFUL BEYOND ANY DOUBT

George Aschenbrenner

IN RECENT MONTHS, TWO OF MY CLOSE FRIENDS have suffered the sudden death of beloved family members. One, whom I have known for over fifty years, the father of six grown children, lost his beloved wife to cancer. The other, a wonderfully generous father whose seven children now have their own families, also unexpectedly lost his wife, and a son and a daughter, within a period of about six months. These events had shattering effects on the families involved, and on many of their friends. As a friend I felt the shock of these deaths; and in some way the reality has still not sunk in. I felt privileged to be able to support, console and sympathize with my friends, but, however valuable my presence and support—and those of many others—might be, somehow it seemed paltry compared to the seismic events that had taken place. Some far greater consolation was needed—and existed in my friends' belief in the resurrection of Jesus.

Such sorrows as these highlight the significance and value of the presence of the risen Jesus, here and now, in our world. The victory of God the Father, radiant in Jesus' risen presence, happens within a history. This context increases the significance of the victory. The resurrection of Jesus is—and must be—born in the violent, gory facts of his suffering and death by crucifixion. Rather than correcting the mistake of the passion, the resurrection is the culmination of the glory, the victory that stirs in and through the whole passion. The fundamental unity pervading the two events, and running through the whole life of Jesus, the Messiah, confounded and challenged his early followers. What we may today mistakenly regard as obvious, then required much pondering, conversation and inspiration to piece together in some meaningful way: this event, this mystery. It revealed

finally a real personal presence that provided consolation, light and hope beyond any simply human support. The presence of the risen Jesus is at the heart of Christian discipleship and reveals a whole new conception of reality, a whole new vision of our universe.

The Presence of the Risen Jesus Among Us

I would like to investigate and describe some aspects of this centrally decisive presence of the risen Jesus. Though my reflections rest on an important dogmatic foundation, they will be more devotional and pastoral in nature. After reflecting on this special presence, I will look at some of its scriptural dimensions and also, since this presence is at the heart of the Fourth Week of the Spiritual Exercises, at some elements of this part of the Exercises. I shall conclude by thinking about the challenge and effect of the presence of the risen Jesus for our daily lives of faith.

Investigating this presence of the risen Jesus involves much more than St Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises. As the prominent scripture commentator N. T. Wright has said, 'The resurrection of Jesus *is* Christianity'.¹ Another renowned scripture scholar, Luke Timothy Johnson, puts it this way:

... for everyone else, Jesus is another dead man; for Christians, he is the Living One I think the writers of the New Testament would not have understood 'the resurrection' as a separate topic about which one could speak; for them it was rather the all-encompassing reality into which they had been caught up.²

So it is clear that I am exploring something essential to Christian belief. My hope is to increase the personal experience and sensitivity of many believers to this presence of the risen Jesus as part of their faith.

Belief in the resurrection necessarily begins from the life of Jesus himself: a Jewish man, in the Middle East, in what we now call the first century. His savagely cruel death and his bodily resurrection at first completely bewildered the followers who had come to identify him as the long-awaited Messiah. Slowly, they came to accept his divine credentials, but this realisation was not easy and involved the

¹ N. T. Wright, *Following Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 112.

² Luke Timothy Johnson, *Living Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper, 1999), 6, 12.

resolution of a long, difficult history. God's original covenant of love in creation had over many years received an unfaithful and unpredictable response. The purity of that original covenant had become marked by ugly, evil stubbornness, by deadly, impassioned selfishness, by anything but pure and beautiful reciprocation. Something had gone seriously wrong, and the question grew more pressing: when, if at all, would God intervene in power and set things right?



Resurrection, by Dieric Bouts the elder

In the midst of this long, depressing history of failure and evil, God called Abraham and Sara and made them an amazing promise:

I will make you a great nation: I will bless you and make your name so famous that it will be used as a blessing. I will bless those who bless you: I will curse those who slight you. All the tribes of the earth shall bless themselves by you. (Genesis 12:2–3)³

As Jesus' early disciples came to see and appreciate what had happened in his suffering and dying into resurrection, they realised that he was the One through whom God had finally intervened as He promised to Abraham and Sara. Now the final outcome and victory of what God initiated in creation was clear and had been reinstated.⁴ The climax of

³ Scriptural quotations in this article are taken from the Jerusalem Bible.

⁴ For a full presentation of this development, see N. T. Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2006).

this whole history is the real and personal presence of the risen Jesus for all of us.

It is the greater shame, then, if this presence is obscured, taken for granted, disregarded, or, even worse, simply disbelieved! In such a way, the life of Christian faith and the experience of the resurrection are domesticated and enfeebled. The resurrection of Jesus is not simply some dogmatic belief to be stored in safe keeping. The risen Jesus is not like a mist or a fog of ether, difficult to pin down, difficult to be sure of. No, this presence, more real and personal than our presence to one another, is the heart, the fire, the attraction of Christian interpersonal faith.

This special personal presence is not for some future time, some end time. It inspires an interpersonal liveliness in our hearts right now, in the midst of daily life. After Jesus' resurrection, nothing can ever be the same again. There will still be valleys of sadness, tombs of tears, Calvaries of suffering, dark clouds of forlornness. But none of this hides from us the consoling comfort of a risen, faithful Companion who knows all those hardships and now, filled with new life, accompanies us in hope and encouragement.

The victory of Jesus' being raised made a huge difference, first, in the nature of his own existence. His followers clearly perceived him to be alive—but with both a continuity and a discontinuity. Often when he appeared, his disciples did not recognise him at first: something was different. But after a time, they did acknowledge him as the Jesus they knew and loved before his death. N. T. Wright claims, 'his new life was not less than physical; but it seems to have had a new dimension to it as well, a kind of trans-physicality, humanity with more dimensions added'.⁵

Jesus Risen Presence: For Us and Our Deceased

The victory by which God raises Jesus to new life holds promise for us all. Wright, as he discusses the results of Jesus' resurrection, writes: 'we must build the resurrection into our thinking about what will happen to all of us'.⁶ He sees the results as stretching even further: 'finally, the resurrection gives a vision not only of a new life, but of a new world'.⁷

⁵ Wright, *Following Jesus*, 111.

⁶ Wright, *Following Jesus*, 111.

⁷ Wright, *Following Jesus*, 112.



Resurrection of Christ and Women at the Tomb, by *Fra Angelico*

This victory of Jesus' being bodily raised to new life holds special comfort for those who lose, or seem to lose, loved ones in death. In I Thessalonians 4:14, it is stated: 'we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and that it will be the same for those who have died in Jesus: God will bring them with him'. This comfort consists not only in the experience of the risen Jesus' consoling presence, but also in the realisation that our loved ones share in the victory of Jesus. After a life of faith, living 'in the Messiah', now to die 'in him' is to share in his new presence and life. The risen Jesus, 'living forever to intercede for all who come to God through him' (Hebrews 7:25), is now our great intercessor at God's right hand. This means that he has not retired to heaven in sheer inactive bliss. Even more than before his death, he is concerned about us all, and serving us all. Our beloved friends who have died, who lived and died in him, share in his intercessory love and mission. Thus, they are related to us in a new way, a way that makes them newly

present, loving and caring. We have not utterly lost them. Their former friendly and familiar presence we will surely miss, maybe in some cases till we die. But as we stay close to the risen Jesus, we also grow into a sense of their new presence and relationship with us. In this way what the risen Jesus shares with them provides comfort for us and readies us for the renewed relationship we will have with them when God invites us home with him and with our loved ones.

This is the comfort I am trying to minister to my two friends mentioned at the beginning of this reflection, inviting them to sensitivity to the presence of the risen Jesus. His intercessory presence can slowly heal some of their feelings of loss and separation. Though my compassion for them can in some way incarnate the risen Jesus' care for them, his real, personal concern will always far surpass what I can give. He is a much stronger reminder for my friends of their new presence and relationship with those who have died. In this way, this real serving presence of the risen Jesus is the bedrock for the Church's whole pastoral ministry, especially to those grieving for the loss of beloved relatives and friends.

The Easter Appearances

Many of us have not reflected seriously or carefully enough on the Easter appearances of Jesus. For N. T. Wright, whose mammoth study, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, is the fullest and most recent investigation of the resurrection, these appearances, together with the empty tomb, are crucial to the growth of the early Christian community. In a later, briefer book, Wright succinctly summarises his central point in the earlier major treatment when he says: 'the empty tomb and the appearances of Jesus together constitute a sufficient condition for the rise of early Christian faith as we have studied it'.⁸ These early appearances give us the clearest, most complete insight into the God revealed in the risen Jesus. They are not willowy ghost stories; nor are they the ambiguous, wishful projections of his early followers.

These appearances also do not distance Jesus further from us than he was during his earthly presence before his death. Being 'raised to the heights by God's right hand' (Acts 2:33) does not remove Jesus into the

⁸ *The Resurrection of Jesus—John Dominic Crossan and N. T. Wright in Dialogue*, edited by Robert B. Stewart (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 21.



The Supper at Emmaus, by Velázquez

mists of mystery but brings him even closer in faith to all of us. The limits of space and time on bodily presence have been transcended in a new, real bodily presence beyond sight and touch. The theologian Nicholas Lash writes about the fear of some early Christians that, with the passing years, 'the memory of Jesus may fade until he disappears into the "mists of time"'.⁹ In addressing this fear, Lash claims that 'to speak of "proximity" between *human beings* is to speak not only of physical factors but also of growth in relationship, understanding and reconciliation'.¹⁰ These elements, which enliven and keep a human relationship close over time, provide helpful support for our sense of the presence of the risen Jesus. In this way, the resurrection appearances of Jesus in the New Testament are not simply recorded to provide apologetic proof of the resurrection, but are a means to help the early

⁹ Nicholas Lash, *Theology on the Way to Emmaus* (Eugene, Or: Wipf and Stock, 2005), 68–70.

¹⁰ Lash, *Theology on the Way to Emmaus*, 68–70.

followers (and us today) to grow in sensitivity to Jesus' new, real, personal presence. The ascension, when Jesus' resurrected presence became invisible, plays a special role in this development. Despite his withdrawal from their sight, the early community continued to delight in his new personal presence everywhere, with which they had become familiar.

At the appearance in the Upper Room in John 20:19–29, the risen Jesus breathes upon the apostles, giving them his power to forgive sins and infusing a confidence in his perpetual presence with them. Thomas, absent from this appearance, has not been breathed upon, and so he demands tangible, visible proof before he will believe. One week later, when he is given this proof, he is humbled and awed into the same confidence as his friends: the risen Jesus, Messiah, Friend, and Lord is always present beyond sight and touch. The difference that this experience made to Thomas' personal relationship with the risen Jesus, the gift of intimacy, insight and courage, stayed with him right up to the moment when he gave his life for the Good News of this gratuitous love and forgiveness.

'Being breathed upon' by the risen Jesus is an intimate, personal encounter intended for all of us today. It suggests the intimacy of lovers, spouses and friends; we cannot breathe on one another across a large room. This spiritual experience can help us to transcend a prejudice reinforced over many years that without sight and touch personal presence is not possible. In this way, being breathed upon brings the necessary insight and sensitivity that opens us also to the perpetual presence today in our world of the risen Jesus.

Trinitarian Appearances

Catholic Christian experience is always Trinitarian. Jesus never sums up all of Christian belief simply in himself. In a sense, Jesus never stands on his own. In the fullness of the mystery, he exists in the whole Trinity of relationship. He is sent by a beloved Father to share the Love between the two of them, a Love that is the Holy Spirit. So in the resurrection appearances the risen Jesus does not appear by chance, nor accomplish his appearance all by himself. A Trinitarian decision out of joyous compassion sends the risen Jesus to people in need of encouragement and consolation. The Trinity is fully involved in planning and deciding the details of each appearance,

details that are uniquely fit to each follower and which then become a personal consoling mission of revelation on the part of the risen Jesus.

Such obviously anthropomorphic language is our limited expression of this amazing result of the mystery of the resurrection. This mystery reveals the Trinity to be intimately involved in the missioning of the risen Jesus. Our language falters in an attempt to express fully the power and glory of



The Holy Trinity, by Botticelli

this mystery. But disbelieving or attenuating the mystery deprives us of an intended, invaluable consolation, courage and hope in our daily life of faith. And so we *must* try, especially with the help of the Church's inspiration, to catch in word, image and symbol the infinitely personal implications of that mystery.

The Risen Jesus as LORD

Jesus, risen from the dead and with us all in our daily life, is more than just our friend. He is, certainly, a friend to us all. We are never alone. But his risen reality and his relationship with us bespeak also a dominion over the whole universe. The early followers expressed it in their first creed *Iesous Kurios* (Jesus is Lord). This lordship is not in any way incompatible with his love, compassion and care for all of us.

In some cultures lordship seems so masculine as to limit the usefulness of the idea. This linguistic problem is not easy to resolve. For example, it is difficult in English to find a suitable title that expresses the universal dominion of the risen Jesus. In this regard, it is crucial to realise that, just as during his earthly existence, the dominion of the

risen Jesus is always a matter of loving service, inviting people to faith. Walter Brueggeman states it thus:

The Bible provides an ultimate assurance to the issues of human history and destiny, the answer finally being that in God *self-giving graciousness and undoubted sovereignty* are identical.¹¹

Not to address Jesus as 'Lord' can lead to an impoverishment in our experience both of the glorious victory accomplished in the risen Jesus, and of the dimensions of his personal love and care for us all.

The risen Jesus' lordship is so universal and so concrete that it poses political challenges and gives rise to political implications. For the early followers to claim the risen Jesus as Lord conflicted with Caesar's lordship in ways that at times were dangerous. They could not accept an unqualified affirmation of Caesar's lordship. Persecution and imprisonment have resulted, then and now, from the conflict between these two lordships. Such conflicts are not always irresolvable, but believers in the risen Jesus must always carefully and courageously discern the relationship between the lordship of Jesus and of the secular government. In many parts of the world today, including the United States, this can involve a number of tangled practical issues.

A Misleading Grace?

In Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*, the grace to be prayed for in the Fourth Week is 'to be glad and to rejoice intensely because of the great glory and joy of Christ our Lord' (Exx 221).¹² This grace assumes an enormous importance in today's world. Some would doubt the reality, and even the possibility, of joy at a time so twisted in undeserved suffering and suffocated with breathtaking hardship. And yet we all know how insufferable and dreary life becomes without joy. It gives a sparkle to our heart and a sprightliness to our tread. Though such a grace is eagerly desired, our very desire for it can be misleading.

First, since joy is like a lifeline for our hearts, our focus in praying for this grace can easily slip into a fixation on our own joy. However, the grace that Ignatius speaks of clearly centres on the great glory and joy of

¹¹ Walter Brueggemann, *The Bible Makes Sense* (Winona, Mn: St Mary's, 1997), 121.

¹² The translation used here is that of George Ganss (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992).

the risen Jesus. The maturity of this advanced grace requires a selflessness no less than that involved in contemplating Jesus' passion and death. The gaze of our heart is directed to the joy of the risen Jesus, especially as revealed in his appearances. Our own joy shines forth from the sparkle of his. We are invited to transcend the longing of our own heart for joy so as to encounter and be with Jesus' joy and gladness. The importance of knowing exactly what we are praying for is obvious if we are not to stunt and misdirect the contemplations of this Fourth Week.

The joy and great gladness of the risen Jesus can be imagined in any number of graced ways. But, however we see it, the graced joy of Jesus is surely not superficial or sentimental. Jesus has been confronted with an unhappy situation. The communication of his heart's infinite love for every human being has been interrupted, blocked and even denied. But now, his utterly selfless self-emptying, his redeeming sacrifice on Calvary, confirmed in his Father's victoriously raising him from the dead, has cleared the channels of communication. Jesus has overcome the power of the enemy of our human nature, described so vividly in the Rules for the Discernment of Spirits (Exx 325–327). The prospect of his Love's now being received is joy beyond words for the risen Jesus, and it engages his mission with us all, until the end of time. But only one human being is capable of welcoming all of that joyous love. One woman, privileged beyond all other humans, unmarked by the stain of sin, greets and receives her victorious Son. No wonder that Ignatius in the Exercises gives such importance to this revelation (Exx 299–300).

A second potential misleading aspect of the grace of joy arises from the word 'intensely' (*intensamente*). Intense rejoicing can stir unrealistic expectations and tempt us to turn the grace into something of our own doing. In the human heart, intense joy is always more superficial than a profound, quiet joy. This distinction is often part of God's teaching in the Fourth Week, if the retreatant can be patient enough. Joy can come as suddenly as the spring. But often it is more gradual and organic in its development. To be at rest in a profound joy because of the risen Jesus' joyful gladness is not a failure of grace—just the opposite. Such joy is usually more durable than a sudden, intense experience. This can be especially true in a world so full of gloom and shattered dreams. Though we must desire it and pray wholeheartedly for the grace of joy, its delivery and style is God's work.

***Intense joy is
more superficial
than profound,
quiet joy***



Christ and His Disciples on the Road to Emmaus, by Pieter Coecke van Aelst

The gift of profound joy beyond the level of our emotional fluctuations also has important pastoral implications. People who are grieving do not display any lack of faith if they experience a sober numbness that seems to refuse intense joy. They need time to feel, to internalise the event that has overwhelmed them. Pastoral ministers recognise better how to be with such people through a graced profundity rooted in Jesus' joy, than through some excessive desire to help them find an intense rejoicing. Profound joy is usually more flexible and capable of a great variety of expression in different ministerial settings.

All of this is not to belittle 'intense rejoicing'. The amazing victory of God in raising Jesus from such a horrendous death is capable of detonating intense joy within us. Something of this nature may have happened to Mary Magdalene in the graveyard when she recognised the 'gardener', and to the two travellers to Emmaus when they recognised the 'stranger'. I do not intend to talk us out of praying for intense rejoicing, but to help us appreciate the many faces of joy and how it can suffuse our hearts on different levels.

The Extraordinary in the Ordinary

In the Fourth Week, Ignatius counsels the retreatant that,

... the divinity [of Jesus], which seemed hidden during the passion, now appears and manifests itself so miraculously in this holy resurrection, through its true and most holy effects (Exx 223).

The resurrection surely is a miracle of God, glorifying the divinity of Jesus much more clearly than do his suffering and death. But the miraculous show of divinity occurs often in true and holy ways that are quite ordinary. The risen Jesus did not swoop down on the dejected travellers to Emmaus in Elijah's fiery chariot. Rather he quietly, graciously insinuated himself into their sad journey and conversation. And when he took the lead in that conversation, his manner was not extraordinary. Even the actual revelation scene happens in the apparent ordinariness of breaking bread at a simple meal.

The recognition of the risen Jesus for the early followers was always a sudden joy, surprise and restored hope. Especially after the ascension, the issue for them was to recognise the extraordinary reality of Jesus' risen presence in the ordinariness of daily life. When focus on that presence is lost, daily life can become dull, boring, deadening. Finding the extraordinary disguised in the ordinary is the challenge that faces our daily faith. This enrichment of everyday life can be another blessing of that risen, faithful Companion, if we are eager enough and sensitive enough to his presence.

Another effect of Jesus' resurrection appears at the very end of Paul's lengthy reflection in chapter fifteen of his first letter to the Corinthians. This whole chapter is like a textbook exposition of many aspects of this central experience of the resurrection. But it concludes on a very practical note about daily activity and ministry. It reveals the enthusiasm and the steadfast confidence that Paul received from the risen Jesus' constant presence: 'never give in then ... never admit defeat; keep on working at the Lord's work always, knowing that, in the Lord, you cannot be labouring in vain' (I Corinthians 15:58). N. T. Wright comments on this verse that Paul 'does not say, therefore, sit back and relax because there's this wonderful future ahead of you'.¹³ He

¹³ *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 42.

finds in this whole chapter, and especially in the final verse, the belief that we Christians have important, daily, creative work to do in helping the new resurrected creation to be revealed.

However, Paul's great confidence in the effectiveness of this necessary daily labour is rooted in his heart's profound belief in the extraordinary victory accomplished by Jesus' suffering and death into glory. It is this victory that, as he describes it in the letter to the Philippians, shifted the whole centre of gravity in Paul's identity:

All I want is to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and to share his sufferings by reproducing the pattern of his death. That is the way I can hope to take my place in the resurrection of the dead. (Philippians 3:10–11)

The necessary cooperation of Christians in manifesting the resurrected newness of our world requires more than plodding hard work. A sensitivity to Love's extraordinary victory must inform the apparent ordinariness of Christian daily behaviour.

Finally, another effect of the presence of the risen Jesus results from graced inspiration in a person's devotional life. Often a phrase, a symbol, an image catches the beautiful attractiveness of the relationship. The diversity of such images for different people is almost limitless. I cite one example from my own experience. A single phrase from J. B. Phillips' translation of the New Testament never fails to touch my heart.¹⁴ In the fifth chapter of Mark's Gospel, Jesus tells a demoniac whom he has cured to go home to his own people and tell them what the Lord has done for him, and 'how kind he has been to you' (Mark 5:19). This simple phrase, 'how kind he has been to you', activates, inspires and makes concrete my relationship with the risen Jesus, who is more really and personally present to me in faith than anyone else. It comes alive with an allure and an attractiveness that captivates my heart. For almost fifteen years, first thing in the morning, last thing at night and at countless moments throughout the day, my gratitude to the risen Jesus stirs in my heart: 'how kind you are to me!'

This expression concretises, activates, inspires my relationship with the risen Jesus, more really and personally present in faith than anyone else is to me. Of course any other special friendships in faith get swept

¹⁴ *The New Testament in Modern English*, translated by J. B. Phillips (New York: Macmillan, 1952).

up into this central identifying relationship. I humbly share the truth of this daily mantra that resonates so often in the quiet of my heart, simply as an example and an invitation. Many of you, I suspect, have your own similar intimate communications which incarnate your faith in the risen Jesus. Such expressions embody our faith and make it personal, as we all become ever more sensitive to the presence of this faithful consoling Companion.

Daily Dying into New Resurrected Life

The final contemplation, 'To Gain Love', summarises and synthesizes the whole experience of the Spiritual Exercises as a vision and a way of daily living. The Fourth Week flows right into and intermingles with this final contemplation. Consequently it never ends, but becomes an important part of Ignatian daily living. As this reflection stresses, the real personal relationship with the risen Jesus is at the heart of daily living in faith, until the moment of ultimate surprise when this relationship no longer mirrors but bursts forth in vision of the One always desired. At that point faith melts into face-to-face vision. Then the personal relationship with the risen Jesus scintillates, glistens, with an astonishing glory that would overwhelm us now, but then will fulfill the eternal yearning of our hearts.

Recently in a programme for a funeral I attended, I came upon this excerpt from an anonymous poem. It reflects explicitly on the relationship between human friends and a departed loved one. Such a continuing relationship implies, and is based on, a belief in the deceased friend's new life and presence in the risen Jesus. Thus the poem illustrates, in its own way, a number of the elements in this paper.

So grieve a while for me, if grieve you must.
Then let your grief be comforted by trust.
It's only for a while that we must part.
So bless the memories that lie within your heart.
I won't be far away, for life goes on.
So if you need me, call and I will come.
Though you can't see or touch me, I'll be near.
And if you listen with your heart, you'll hear
All of my love around you soft and clear.
And then when you must come this way alone . . .
I'll greet you with a smile and 'welcome home'.



The Holy Trinity, by Masaccio

Daily life with the risen Jesus serves as preparation for the final extraordinary revelation that awaits us all. Jesus' resurrection is always contextualised and born in the paschal suffering and death of Calvary. The victory revealed in such suffering is nothing less than a miracle of grace accomplished by the Trinity. This victory is beyond any merely human capacity.

Many times in Scripture Jesus is spoken of in the passive voice, as *being* raised from the dead. At other times in Scripture, and in the Nicene Creed, Jesus is presented as raising himself. The miracle of resurrection is surely a work of the Trinity of God. But in this stupendous occurrence the role of Jesus in his human nature is simply to die, to die in a way that becomes the occasion for the Trinity's work of resurrection.

Jesus dies, intentionally sacrificing himself in love for the whole human family and entrusting himself in hope into the hands of his dearly beloved Father. Jesus' human nature is not empowered in itself to raise him from the dead. His human challenge and his human accomplishment are to endure courageously and to find a beloved Father in the humiliating, horrendous suffering and death of crucifixion. His heart and soul are filled with the Father's Love for the universality of the human family. The death of Jesus as a living, fully human being overwhelms death's own power ultimately to destroy, in

the Trinity's glorious power of resurrection. Having died in such a human fashion, this One, sharing the Godhead, not only rises from the dead himself but, as Son of God, shares the miracle of resurrection with others.

The drama whereby Jesus entrusts himself in dying and the Trinity miraculously raises him to life presents an example for the daily life of us all. The challenge facing us Christians is surely not to raise ourselves. However much we may desire such fulfillment, no Herculean effort can possibly achieve it. Rather, our challenge is to learn, in everyday situations, how to die to our old lives so that our resurrection is possible for God into a daily life in faith, a life not centred on ourselves but heartily engaged in a personal, real relationship with our consoling Companion whose faithfulness is beyond doubt.

George Aschenbrenner SJ is rector of the Scranton Jesuit Community, Scranton, Pennsylvania, USA. He gives retreats and convocations to bishops and priests and is a co-founder of the Institute for Priestly Formation in Omaha, Nebraska.