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Year of Faith Continues

Continuing the catechesis for the Year of Faith, in his April 3 address Pope Francis stresses the reality of Christ's Resurrection, and speaks about the important role of women in the Church.

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today we turn to the Catechism of the Year of Faith. In the Creed we repeat this phrase: “He rose again on

the third day, in accordance with the Scriptures." This is the very event that we are celebrating: the Resurrection of Jesus, the center of the Christian message that has resounded since the beginning and has been handed down so that it may reach us today. Saint Paul writes to the Christians of Corinth: "For I handed on to you …what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures; that he was buried; that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures; that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve" (1 Cor 15:3-5). This brief confession of faith announces the Paschal Mystery, with the first appearances of the Risen Christ to Peter and the Twelve: the Death and Resurrection of Jesus is the heart of our hope. Without this faith in the Death and Resurrection of Jesus our hope would be weak, but it wouldn'0t even be hope, the Death and Resurrection of Jesus is the heart

of our hope. The Apostle says: “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is vain; you are still in your sins” (v. 17).

Unfortunately, there have often been attempts to obscure faith in the Resurrection of Jesus, and doubts have crept in even among believers themselves. A watered down faith, as we would say, not a strong faith. This is because of superficiality, sometimes because of indifference, occupied by a thousand things considered more important than the faith, or because of a purely horizontal vision of life. But it is the Resurrection that gives us the greatest hope, because it opens our lives and the life of the world to the eternal future of God, to full happiness, to the certainty that evil, sin, death can be defeated. And this leads us to live everyday realities with more confidence, to face them with courage and commitment. The

Resurrection of Christ shines a new light on these daily realities. The Resurrection of Christ is our strength!

But how was the truth of faith in Christ's Resurrection transmitted? There are two kinds of witness in the New Testament: some are in the form of the profession of the faith, namely, synthetic formulas that indicate the center of the faith. Instead, others are in the form of an account of the event of the Resurrection and the facts connected to it. The form of the profession of faith, for example, is what we have just heard, or that of the Letter to the Romans where Paul writes: " for, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved "(10.9). From the earliest days of the Church, faith in the Mystery of Death and Resurrection of Jesus is steadfast and clear.

Today, however, I would like to dwell the second, on testimony in the form of the accounts that we find in the Gospels. First, we note that the first witnesses to this event were the women. At dawn, they go to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus, and find the first sign: the empty tomb (Mk 16:1). This is followed by an encounter with a Messenger of God who proclaims: Jesus of Nazareth, the Crucified One, he is not here, he is risen (cf. vv. 5-6). The women are driven by love and know how to accept this proclamation with faith: they believe, and immediately transmit it, they do not keep it for themselves. They cannot contain the joy of knowing that Jesus is alive, the hope that fills their heart. This should also be the same in our lives. Let us feel the joy of being Christian! We believe in the Risen One who has conquered evil and death! Let us also have the courage to "go out" to bring this joy and light to all the places of

our lives! The Resurrection of Christ is our greatest certainty, it is our most precious treasure! How can we not share this treasure, this beautiful certainty with others! It's not just for us it's to be transmitted, shared with others this is our testimony!

Another element. In the professions of faith of the New Testament, only men are remembered as witnesses of the Resurrection, the Apostles, but not the women. This is because, according to the Jewish Law of the time, women and children were not considered reliable, credible witnesses. In the Gospels, however, women have a primary, fundamental role. Here we can see an argument in favor of the historicity of the Resurrection: if it were a invented, in the context of that time it would not have been linked to the testimony of women. Instead, the evangelists simply narrate what happened: the women were the first witnesses. This

tells us that God does not choose according to human criteria: the first witnesses of the birth of Jesus are the shepherds, simple and humble people, the first witnesses of the Resurrection are women. This is beautiful, and this is the mission of women, of mothers and women, to give witness to their children and grandchildren that Christ is Risen! Mothers go forward with this witness! What matters to God is our heart, if we are open to Him, if we are like trusting children. But this also leads us to reflect on how in the Church and in the journey of faith, women have had and still have a special role in opening doors to the Lord, in following him and communicating his face, because the eyes of faith always need the simple and profound look of love. The Apostles and disciples find it harder to believe in the Risen Christ, not the women however! Peter runs to the tomb, but stops before the empty

tomb; Thomas has to touch the wounds of the body of Jesus with his hands. In our journey of faith it is important to know and feel that God loves us, do not be afraid to love: faith is professed with the mouth and heart, with the word and love.

After the apparitions to women, there were others: Jesus becomes present in a new way: He is the Crucified One, but his body is glorious; He did not return to an earthly life, but a new condition. At first they did not recognize him, and only through his words and deeds were their eyes opened: the encounter with the Risen Lord transforms, it gives new strength to faith, an unshakable foundation. The Risen Christ also reveals Himself to us with many signs: Sacred Scripture, the Eucharist, the other Sacraments, charity, these gestures of love bring a ray of the Risen One.

Let us be enlightened by the Resurrection of Christ, let us be transformed by His power, so that through us the signs of death give way to signs of life in the world! I see that there are many young people in the Square! Young boys and girls, to you I say bring forth this certainty to the world: the Lord is Alive and walks beside us on our life's journey! Bring forth this hope, be anchored in this hope, the hope that comes from heaven! Be anchored and bring forth the hope! You witnesses of Christ bring forth hope to this world that is aged by wars and sin! Go forward young people!

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