

THE GOD WHO IS
Part III
I Am The Resurrection and The Life

Three days later, after Christ was crucified, died, was taken down from the Cross, his Mother and His followers hurriedly placed His mortal remains in a borrowed grave, a tomb cut out of virgin, living stone, because His dead body offended the Laws of the Sabbath. Just think about that! The Lord of the Sabbath is an offense to His Sabbath.

At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat them. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to Him, “Look, Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath.”

Jesus replied, ...If only you had known the meaning of ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.” (Matthew 12:1-2, 7-8)

It is not The Lord Who makes His Sabbath, His Sunday, His Temple or His Church an offense or unclean; that is the work of man and woman. We must always be on guard lest our ways become an offense to God and Jesus be unwelcome or a stranger in His Own Body, the Church.

If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each of you is a member of it.

(1 Corinthians 12:26-27)

Jesus rose from the dead. Jesus said:

Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. (John 11:25)

You're never going to die spiritually, because Jesus died on the Cross, was buried and was raised from the dead by His Father God, and your Father God. And what God the Father did for His son, He will do for you, His children through faith in Jesus Christ.

Some of you need a resurrection; you may be young in years, but you have already become old in sin—experienced. You know about sin because you have practiced it a lot. And you do know right from wrong, good from evil, sin from right-living even if you don't want to admit this to yourself or anyone else. On the one hand you use your feigned ignorance as an excuse for not knowing what you do. On the other hand, there is that spiritual part of you that is still alive and is offended and defiled by your acts—your conscience. It's the last part of your soul that dies in this world. As He hung upon the Cross, His mother and follower John at her side and suffering the agony of crucifixion, Jesus said:

**Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.
(Luke 23:34)**

They were not ignorant of their cruelty, of their false witness and condemnation of an innocent person, of their wicked fascination and delight in his agony and shame, just like a mob in the street, with laughter and glee caught up in the moment—they knew, they knew. And so do you.

What Jesus is saying is different, and I am saying this to you. If you only knew that Jesus is the Son of God, you would not do this. You are ignorant of His divinity, His true nature as God, and in your ignorance you sin against God every time you do wrong by another person. That is the only ignorance permitted, and it is no excuse for sin and in no way mitigates the penalty, for the wages of sin is death. That is why Jesus must become your sin and suffer the wages of sin, death, because you commit the crime but don't want to pay the fine. This is an act of love, and if anyone is making an excuse for you or for me, it is Jesus, pleading for His Father, the Just Judge, for your life. He offers his life as a substitute for yours. He takes your place. That is Atonement, this is Reparation; this is Expiation for sin—your sin, my sin and the sin of the whole world, that is to say, the sins of all the people in the world, because the world, society, the system, the structure do not sin, people do, and so do you. You really ought to educate yourself and look up ATONEMENT for yourself. This is the center of all Christianity, and as Catholics, we recognize Jesus' act of atonement as the center of our worship and Faith—the Eucharist. Remember, the Holy Mass is Calvary.

If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with your heart you believe and are justified, and with your mouth you confess and are saved. (Romans 10:9-10)

That can happen to you right now wherever you are. What are you supposed to do in response so that you can know, really know, that your sins are forgiven; know that you are going to Heaven and know with absolute

certainty that your heart is right with God, that all is right is well with your soul?

First you must be honest to acknowledge your sins and repent of your sins. What does acknowledge mean? It means confess them with our mouth. Not mumble to God, not think them, review them, try to understand them and dig in the mud to find the reason for them, but confess them, name them by name, with a voice. Why speak? Because you must consider your words and formulate them as an expression of your understanding. Babies whine and gurgle and utter all manner of gibberish and noise to get your attention because they are aware their needs and senses but lack the means—cognition and language—to organize and express or communicate them. You do this when words fail you—tears, sighs, moans, screams, laughter.

What does repent of your sins mean? The first time that Jesus spoke of repentance is in The Gospel of Matthew, the Fourth Chapter. In the desert Jesus confronted the Devil, Satan, the Tempter, the one behind the sins, the motivator and facilitator of your sins. Then when the Devil had failed to tempt Jesus to sin, and departed from Jesus to wait for another opportunity, Jesus went to Galilee and near the Roman city of Capernaum, spoke to people on the shore of the lake:

From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” (Matthew 4:17)

Repent, then, and turn back, so that your sins may be wiped away. (Acts 3:19)

God commands all men and women everywhere to repent. Repentance means being sorry enough to quit. To repent means to turn around and go in the opposite direction. But you say you've tried to quit many things—overeating, profanity, criticism, smoking, taking drugs, pornography, stealing—and it's never worked. **I can't; I'm hooked! With Jesus, you can become un-hooked by the same power of the spirit of God by which Jesus overcame the Devil and His power to tempt.**

Repentance means to change your mind, change your ways, change your habits and the second thing is to come by Faith. Faith is not some blind, irrational leap in the dark. Søren Kierkegaard was a famous Danish philosopher and theologian known for the *Leap of Faith*. His work influenced the development of existentialism and postmodernism, the two systems that best describe the person in society in the modern world. He stressed the importance of the individual and subjectivity with its emphasis on the way people relate themselves to objective truths. It all becomes a matter of personal choice, of one's own conscience, one creates his or her own truth. Remember this from J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*:

One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them, One Ring to bring them all, and in the darkness bind them.

As Bilbo and later Frodo Baggins would come to learn, much to their suffering and loss, the ring wielder himself was enslaved, because its maker was evil. Faith is not like that; it's a free act of the person's will made knowingly but perhaps without knowing all, for we are talking about coming to God Who cannot be known as God know us. Be honest: you don't know yourself or the

people closest to you. You know some, but not all, and yet you trust them, you love them, you come to them. Then, come to God in Faith. Faith is commitment. When your parents got married, when I was ordained a priest, when I swore before God to tell the truth, they nor I had our fingers crossed behind our backs. The minister, the bishop did not say: As long as love shall last; he said: until death do you part. The Bible Speaks this way:

Consequently, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. (Romans 10:17)

We must commit. A cartoon appeared that said: **Dear Preacher, what does God forgives you mean?** The Pastor wrote back: **All of your files are deleted.** And that is true. All of our files are deleted, and that is exactly what God does when He forgives you. You don't have to live with worry about some things that you did that are wrong. It's all taken care of at the Cross. You can receive it by Faith. When you receive Jesus in Holy Communion you receive Christ on the Cross: **Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.** Faith mean commitment. When I get in a car, stand on a stage, board a plane, whatever, I do it by faith. I make a commitment that the people who built these things to hold me or to convey me knew what they were doing. That's commitment. Have you committed your life to Christ that way? Are you sure if you died tonight that you are ready to meet God? Are you certain that all is right all is well with your soul? You'd better be, because you are making a commitment when you lay down to sleep tonight. You may wake up in eternity, and it will be too late then. If you have any doubt, you make sure now. I am going to ask you to do something. Come to Church,

kneel down in a pew. It doesn't matter which one or who is or is not there. Maybe you are curious, confused, uncertain, desperate, I don't know, but I'm asking you to say: Lord Jesus, come into my heart. And by Faith, commit your life to Him. As you come forward to receive Jesus Christ in Holy Communion, ask Him again: Come into me, into my life, my heart and my mind and change me. Ask Him to give you peace, joy, certainty, clarity, purpose...whatever it is that you know you lack or need more of. You cannot do that from a distance. You need to come to Mass. All other ways are a figment of the imagination, a trick of the mind, a conversation in your head. You need to come to Calvary and meet Jesus at the Cross where he takes your sins away and you give Him your life as a commitment. You may be Christian or nothing, Catholic, Jewish, you may be a leader in your church, a priest or a pastor, a bishop...I don't know. You may have been a good person all of your life, but down deep, you're not sure about your relationship with Christ and where you will be in eternity. You can settle that now. You get up and go to Mass. Don't think about your friends and relatives and what anybody will think. That will take care of itself, later. For now, you just come, and Jesus will do what only He can do. You say: I'm sorry that I've sinned, I turn to You by faith, and receive His Body and Blood that he offered for me on Calvary.

This ends the three-part series **THE GOD WHO IS. I pray that it has blessed you and that you will allow God the Holy Spirit to use you to bring this message to someone who needs to know Christ and a change in his or her life. I encourage you to share this with your family and especially with a young person. I see young people today filled with enthusiasm and energy and yes even rage but lacking a leader, a purpose and a goal**

worthy of them. Remember, Christ will do the work; only He forgives sins and makes new beginnings. You and I are here to bring them to Christ, to direct them to Him and we do this most effectively when our lives reflect the Life of Christ in us. Young people are looking at us and will judge Christ by you and me, so behave, clean up your act, get your own house in order, stop complaining and start being a good shepherd. I will be praying for all of us.

Sincerely in Christ,

Pastor Julian Harris