

Catholic

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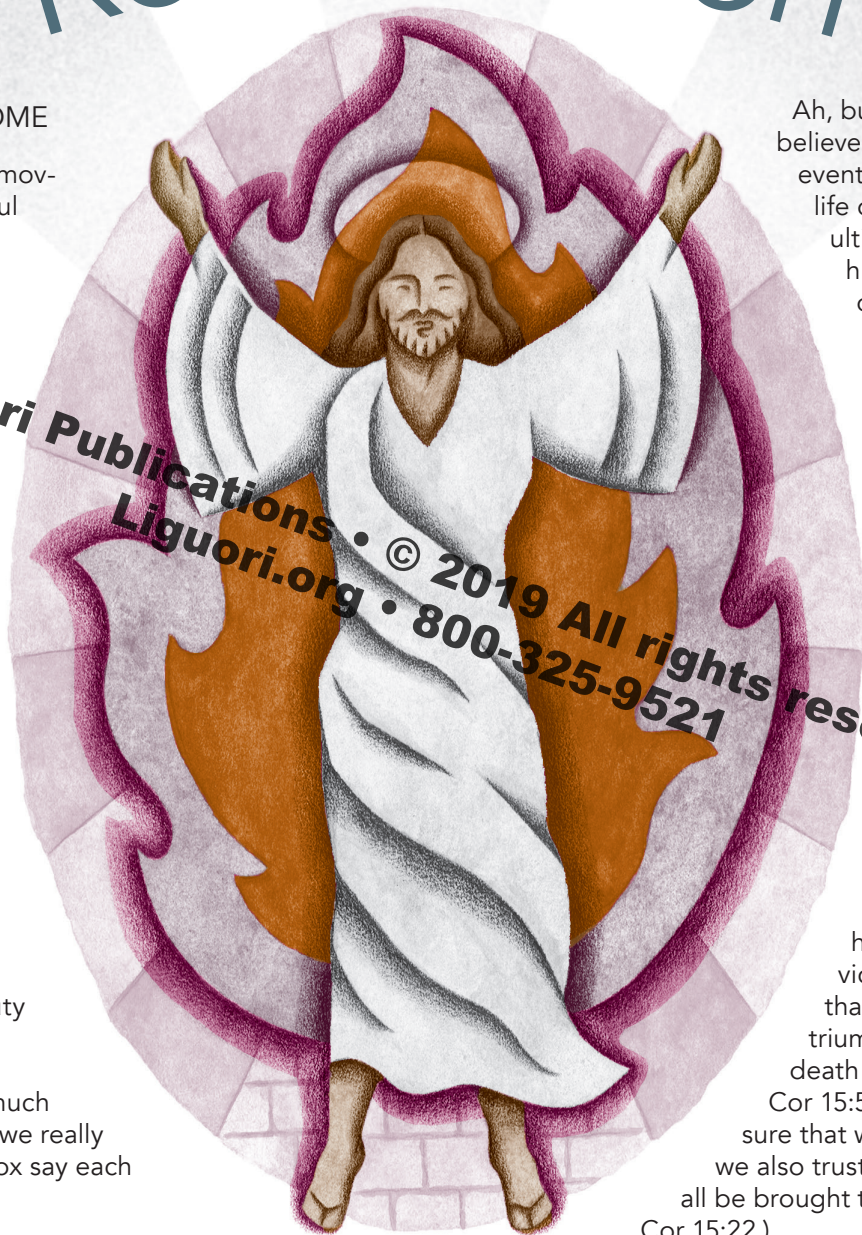
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We Believe in the Resurrection

THOMAS H. GROOME

One of the most moving and powerful poems written by William B. Yeats was his "Easter 1916." Skeptical at first, Yeats had reluctantly come to recognize the transforming effect on Ireland of its "Easter Rebellion." Launched on Easter Monday, 1916—the timing no coincidence—by a "motley" crew of unlikely leaders, Yeats had come to appreciate "the Rising" as the rebirth of the Irish nation. His refrain throughout the poem is "All changed, changed utterly. A terrible beauty is born."

I propose that Christians can say as much at every Easter time if we really believe as the Orthodox say each Easter, "Christ is risen; He is risen indeed."



Ah, but do we really believe it—this crowning event in the historical life of Jesus and God's ultimate seal upon him as the Christ of our faith? For Easter is a lot to believe. That Jesus lived, died and then was raised up by God on our behalf (Rom 4:25); that bonded with Christ by Baptism, we, too, are raised up and can "live in newness of life" (Rom 6:4). It's ~~also~~ to believe that "the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also" (2 Cor 4:14), that his resurrection has given us "the victory" over sin, that evil cannot finally triumph—why, even death has "lost its sting" (1 Cor 15:55-57). We know for sure that we will all die, but can we also trust that "in Christ, shall all be brought to life" again? (See 1 Cor 15:22.)

There, surely, is the greatest stretch for our faith: that death—our ultimate concern—is not really for real, that it is no more than a “change of life” (Preface, Mass of Resurrection). Has the rising of Jesus Christ really made death to go backwards for us all—into new life? It was this amazing conviction that launched the Christian faith. If Jesus had simply lived and died, he might be remembered as another great Israelite prophet. But his disciples became fully convinced that God had raised him from the dead, and so embarked on their own distinctive path that we know as Christianity.



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