

Dear Friends in Christ,

Happy Easter Season as we continue to celebrate our Lord's Resurrection for the fifty days leading up to Pentecost. Did you know that "Pentecost" means "fifty days" and was originally a Jewish feast celebrating the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai?

Someone asked me a question the other day: In the Apostles' Creed, what does it mean when we say, "he [Jesus] descended into hell"? Good question. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says the following: "The frequent New Testament affirmations that Jesus was 'raised from the dead' presuppose that the Crucified One sojourned in the realm of the dead prior to the resurrection. This was the first meaning given to the apostolic preaching of Christ's descent into hell: that Jesus, like all men, experienced death, and in his soul joined the others in the realm of the dead. But he descended there as Savior, proclaiming the Good News to the spirits imprisoned there."

From the time of Adam and Eve until the moment of Christ's death, the soul of every person who died, good and bad, went to the land of the dead ("Sheol" in Hebrew, "Hades" in Greek) where they awaited the Redemption to be wrought by the Messiah. And so, after his death, Jesus the Messiah "preached the gospel even to the dead." (1 Peter 4:6) Jesus himself had said, "the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live." (John 5:25)

There is a beautiful ancient homily read on Holy Saturday that describes imaginatively the Lord's descent: "Today a great silence reigns on earth, a great silence and a great stillness. A great silence because the King is asleep. The earth trembled and is still because God has fallen asleep in the flesh, and he has raised up all who have slept ever since the world began.... He has gone in search of Adam, our first father, as for a lost sheep. Greatly desiring to visit those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death, he has gone to free from sorrow Adam in his bonds and Eve, captive with him - He who is both their God and the son of Eve....I am your God, who for your sake became your son....I order you, O sleeper, to awake. I did not create you to be a prisoner in hell. Rise from the dead, for I am the life of the dead."

Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!
Thank God He is Risen!

Peace,
Fr. Peter