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SERMON 21: RESURRECTION SUNDAY

1. *Rise up, Lord, and save me, for you have struck all those who are my adversaries without cause.* Psalm 3:7.

[Protheme] *Lord God, be merciful I beseech you, who will raise up Jacob, for he is so small.* Amos 7:2. The words proposed for us in the second verse are read from Chapter Seven of Amos, in which the immeasurable nobility of the risen Christ with regard to his excellence is properly demonstrated, while, in a certain manner, with regard to his exaltation he dies in our way of thinking, with regard to his certainty he is concealed from our understanding, and with regard to his magnitude he is despised according to our estimation. And since in our way of thinking he dies with regard to his exaltation, Amos anxiously asks: *Who will rise up?* that is, the one who died according to our way of thinking. He is concealed to our understanding with respect to his certainty, therefore it says: *Jacob*, who is interpreted as the usurper; for our understanding is usurped from his certainty, while it anxiously tries to comprehend excellence according to Psalm 63:8: *A person will come to a depth of heart and God will be exalted.*³⁷⁵ In our estimation, he is despised with respect to his magnitude, therefore it adds: *for he is so small.* Although the sun, in fact, is eight times larger than the earth, if it is measured with the earth, it appears to be smaller al-

³⁷⁵ See Ps 63:7-8.

though it is larger.³⁷⁶ Amos, however, wanting to remove this incongruity from the minds of the faithful, invoked first the authority of the Father to raise the dead, saying *Lord*, that is, you who are able to raise the dead in our way of thinking; second, the eternal truth to demonstrate what is unknown, when it adds: *God*, that is, you who are able to demonstrate what is unknown to our understanding; third, paternal piety to exalt Christ, adding: *be merciful I beseech you*, because you need to exalt him according to our estimation. Since we are longing to offer something worthwhile concerning the immeasurable resurrection of Christ, we invoke first, following Amos's example, the authority of the Father so he might raise the dead one in our manner of thinking; second, eternal truth so he might demonstrate what is unknown to our perception; third, paternal piety so that he might exalt Christ in our estimation; so that he who gives life to all may be raised up finally within us, and he who clarifies all things may be demonstrated within us, and he who overcomes all things may be exalted in us. With him mediating, may those things said by me and heard by you concerning his resurrection be to the glory and honor of the one who himself is risen and the consolation of souls. Amen.

[Sermon] 2. *Rise up, Lord, and save me, for you have struck all those who are my adversaries without cause.* Today the festive day of exultation and happiness dawns upon us, the joyful Easter of immense happiness has

³⁷⁶ See I, 20, 32 of *Macrobius, Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, translation, introduction, notes by William H. Stahl (NY: Columbia University Press, 1952), 174: "Now geometry teaches us that when the diameter of one sphere is twice as great as the diameter of another sphere, the sphere with the larger diameter is really eight times as great as the other; so we must agree that the sun is eight times greater than the earth...."

come, because we are invited to the marriage of the risen Lamb and his bride, mother Church. Dearly beloved, let us therefore, rejoice in soul, exult in sign, and give glory to God in word, so that *happy and fitting praise be*³⁷⁷ offered to Christ, our redeemer, and his spouse. Let us rejoice, I say, for the increase in our happiness, exult for the fruit of our faith, give glory to the Lord for the enlargement of our victory, and say to the triumphant Christ with happy hearts: You are our certain hope, you are the glory of our race, because you have overcome all adversaries. For in birth you brought about a partnership with nature, in suffering the benefit of grace, and in rising the completion of glory. Moreover the prophet David, desiring this paschal joy and infinite benefit of glory to come about in his day, exclaimed with the most fragrant desires: *Rise up, Lord, and save me*. In these words the correct order is noted in three aspects: clearly the affectionate acclamation of the Lord's resurrection, the perfect liberation of captive humanity, and the just extermination of diabolical power. For today, our Lord Jesus Christ rose by virtue of his own power, liberated captive humanity³⁷⁸ from diabolical power, and submerged the devil and his army into the abyss of the infernal sea.³⁷⁹ First, therefore, the affectionate acclamation of the Lord's resurrection is noted, when it says: *Rise up, Lord*, namely from the dead; second, the perfect liberation of captive humanity, when it adds: *save me*; third, the extermination of diabolical power, when it includes: *for you have struck all those who are my adversaries without cause*. It says *without cause*, because although humanity was detained justly, never-

³⁷⁷ See Ps 146:1: "Praise the Lord ... to our God be joyful and fitting praise."

³⁷⁸ See 2 Cor 10:5.

³⁷⁹ See Ex 15:4-5: "Pharaoh's chariots and his army he has cast into the sea. His chosen captains are submerged in the Red Sea. The depths have covered them...."

theless the devil was detaining them unjustly. Therefore, the extermination of his power was just.

3. It says, therefore, *Rise up, Lord*, where the affectionate exclamation of the Lord's resurrection is noted. Truly that resurrection needed to be desired affectionately from the depths of the entire heart and proclaimed with melodious voices and relaxed vocal cords because of three spiritual privileges, which Christ possessed in his resurrection that above all others are advantageous for us. The first privilege was the originality of unusual uniqueness; the second privilege was the strength of one's own power; and the third privilege was the exemplarity of our need, or resurrection.

4. First, Christ possessed the originality of unusual uniqueness in his resurrection. No one indeed, with the age-old, sorrows of death left behind, rose from the dead and commenced the inestimable joy of new life. For in this manner Christ was the *first born of the dead*,³⁸⁰ he who, with the imperial power of death defeated, is crowned with the newness of incorruptibility. Who had to defeat first the majesty of age-old death and commence our everlasting happiness, if not he who was in possession of the key opening the entrance to eternity? He in fact had such authority that he was able to command angels: *Lift up your gates, O princes, and raise up your eternal gates*;³⁸¹ for through my blood the restoration of universal concord and the easing of judicial punishment are accomplished. Now that the flaming sword has been removed from the gate of paradise,³⁸² I want the door to heaven to be opened up, because I am the *Lord of power*, who, through my own

³⁸⁰ See Rev 1:5.

³⁸¹ See Ps 23:9.

³⁸² See Gen 3:24.

blood acquired the kingdom of heaven with the defeat of the devil. *He is the king of glory*,³⁸³ therefore, not inso-much as he is God, but as a human being. 1 Corinthians 15:20-22 speaks of this uniqueness: *Christ has risen from the dead, the first fruit of those who have fallen asleep, for since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes through a man. And as all die in Adam, etc.* The Apostle is prudent and discrete in explaining the original uniqueness Christ possesses in rising. First he sets forth, lest consolation dissolve in happiness, the misery of death that is a material cause of desolation, when it says: *death came through a man*. Second, lest desolation be swallowed in sadness, he included the medicine of the resurrection that is a material cause of consolation, when he adds: *through a man, Christ, the resurrection of the dead*. One is mitigated by the other. Even though death draws forth the opportunity for the enemy's deception, nevertheless, the cause or origin of death is arrogance of mind and the consummation of death is carnal concupiscence. Therefore it says: *For as all die in Adam, due to his transgression*. But since the medicine for death is through the divine mercy that is merited by the Lord's passion. It adds: *and in Christ all will live*, by the merit of his passion. Whence the first and immediate cause of death is not God, since he is the highest being and without defect, and death is the greatest privation among all punishments, but in fact the will, which falls from rectitude and eternal justice, as Wisdom 1:13 says: *God did not make death nor find happiness in the destruction of the dead. For justice is perpetual and immortal*. Indeed injustice gains death.

5. Second, in his resurrection Christ possessed the strength of his own power. He did not need the suffrage

³⁸³ See Ps 23:10.

of devout prayer or the support of angelic care, as much as it may be the occasion in the service of celestial warfare. Psalm 11:6 speaks of this: *Because of the misery of the needy and the groans of the poor, the Lord says, Now I will arise*. The poor and needy were the holy fathers who were placed in limbo similar to the most hideous prison without any way to redeem themselves; therefore, miserable and crying, they longed with affectionate desire to hasten the blessing of the resurrection; hearing their wishes, the *Lord says: Now I will arise*. He speaks in the first person like one who *has the power to lay down his soul* in the passion, and the *take it up again*³⁸⁴ in the resurrection. Perhaps the philosopher of nature may say: In what way could this be done such that an animal-like body composed from contrasting parts is indissoluble and endures forever?³⁸⁵ To which the theologian responds: If you want your argument to hold in all cases, I will lead you to its many inconsistencies. First, you want God to be unable to go beyond nature, the worker unable to go beyond the work: no one doubts that to be inconsistent. He argues further: It is impossible according to nature: thus it is simply impossible. Certainly not. The second inconsistency is that you want nature to possess hidden powers, such that a magnet attracts iron, a salamander does not burn in fire,³⁸⁶ and many other things. However you do not want God to have power that you are unable to observe with your eyes: this stands out as most inconsistent when: *We have seen only a few of God's works*,

³⁸⁴ See John 10:18.

³⁸⁵ Cf. c. 23 in Aristotle, *De iuventute et senectute, de vita et morte, de respiratione*. See WAE, vol. 3, 479ab.

³⁸⁶ For these common examples see Book XXI, c. 4 n. 1 of Augustine, *De civitate Dei* in FC 24, 345, 348: "If we may trust the reports of workers in the field of natural phenomena, the salamander lives in fire.... Or take the lodestone. Everyone now knows of its marvelous magnetic power of attracting iron, but when I first saw one I was immensely amazed."

and there are many things hidden greater than these, as stated by Sirach 43:36. The third inconsistency is that you want God to have promised obedience to nature: if that were true, God would not have illuminated the blind, cleansed the leper, or raised the dead. The fourth is you suppose what is false: you proceed by saying things that are not conceded such as the animal-like body is composed out of contrary parts: it is not animal-like, however, but spiritual, elevated above every contrariety through the condition and disposition for glory to be preserved in soul for everlasting life. And a summary of these words can be drawn from what is stated in Augustine's "Epistle to Consentius," where it says as follows: "It is common for human infirmity to move from activities that have been experienced to measure divine activities that have not been experienced, and for a person to babble on with stinging comments, saying: If there is flesh, there is blood; if there is blood, there are certain fluids; if there are certain fluids, there is, therefore, corruption. In the same manner, a person may say: If it is a flame, it blazes; if it blazes, it burns; therefore, fire burned the three boys in the blazing furnace. If you believe this is a miracle, why are you ambiguous about miraculous things? If you do not believe, you will be blinder than the blindness of the Jews. The divine power is able to take away those qualities it wishes from the natural body while leaving others; it is able, therefore, to establish the mortal members in strength when mortality has been taken away; and that an image may be true, that there be no more imperfection, that motion be true, that there be no more fatigue; and that there be a true power to eat, without the necessity of hunger."³⁸⁷

³⁸⁷ Bonaventure greatly adapts Augustine's Letter 205 c. 1 n. 4. See PL 33:943. For example, the "blindness of the Jews" is not found in Augustine.

6. Third, that resurrection is worthy of desire due to the exemplarity of our resurrection or need. Christ, head and exemplar of our resurrection rose to this end, that he might bear witness of our resurrection to us, his members; otherwise, it would be a monstrous thing if the head were to rise without the members. And this is why the Apostle argued so well and effectively against those who were denying the resurrection, saying in 1 Corinthians 15:16: *If the dead do not rise, neither has Christ risen*. If it is necessary then that Christ rose, because what was just about to take place is impossible if it had already taken place; it is necessary that the dead rise. Whence it immediately follows: *For this corruptible body must put on the incorruptible and this mortal body must put on immortality*.³⁸⁸ In order to place faith in the resurrection into the hearts of the faithful and remove the ambiguity of distrust and desperation, 1 Thessalonians 4:14 says: *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so with him God will bring those also who have fallen asleep through Jesus*. Having then this firm faith with blessed Job,³⁸⁹ we need not be saddened by the death of some good Christian, *like others who do not have hope*.³⁹⁰

7. Second, the perfect liberation of captive humanity³⁹¹ follows, when it adds: *save me*. Indeed Christ perfectly liberated or saved wretched humanity, because he first saved human beings from the offense of complete blame through the infusion of justifying grace. Second he saved them from the obligation of culpable punishment by bearing a satisfactory death. Third, he completely liberated them in the general resurrection from the calam-

³⁸⁸ See 1 Cor 15:53.

³⁸⁹ See Job 19:25 from the Vulgate: "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and on the last day I will rise out of the earth."

³⁹⁰ See 1 Thes 4:12.

³⁹¹ See 2 Cor 10:5.

ity of corporal misery in the bestowal of transformative glory.

8. First, he saved them from the offense of complete blame through the infusion of justifying grace. And Ephesians 2:4-5 speaks about this: *But God who is rich in mercy because of his exceedingly great charity, with which he loved us, when we were dead because of our sins, brought us to life in Christ by whose grace you have been saved.* In truth God the Father was rich and abounding in mercy, when in order to extend the exceedingly great charity and love which he had toward us, he wished to give life to us who were dead from sin and save us from the death of any sin, by infusing us with the life of grace merited by the passion of his only begotten Son. Certainly, if the torrent of such sweetness reaches Christian souls, it is not the place for ingratitude; indeed, they would continually give thanks in many places in the face of this overflow of devout love. The angel said something similar to the Virgin Mary in Matthew 1:21: *He will save his people from their sins.*³⁹²

9. Second, he saved them from the obligation of culpable punishment by bearing a satisfactory death, as Isaiah 63:1-3 says: *Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, this beautiful one in his robe, walking in the greatness of his strength. I, who speak justice, a defender to save. Why then is your apparel red and your garments like theirs that tread in the winepress? I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the peoples, there is not a man with me.* Angelic spirits, seeing Christ, beautiful in his robe and walking in the greatness of his strength, break forth in overflowing admiration with these words: *Who is this that comes from Edom? Edom is*

³⁹² In reality the angel addresses Joseph in Matt 1:21.

interpreted as bleeding; with dyed vestments, due to the abundant sprinkling of his own blood, which flowed from his hands and feet in the crucifixion, from the head due to the crowning, from the entire body from the flagellation, and from the heart when the side was opened. *Who is this, once more, who comes from Bosra, that is, from a place of tribulation and distress? For Bosra is interpreted as distress.* Jesus responds to them: *I, who speak justice, while offering it in word and fulfilling it in deed; for I have accepted death due to the inflexible rigor of divine justice that punishes because of the first transgression; and a defender to save your fathers from the infernal limbo, on account of the immutable decree or promised oath; which God the Father swore to Abraham, giving me to him as the price of liberation; so that without fear my people, liberated from the hand of demons, may freely serve God.*³⁹³ And for this reason, the apparel of my body is red and bloody; and *garments, that is, my members, are compressed as if clusters of grapes tread in the winepress, because a winepress is a vessel appropriate for pressing the grapes clusters of death and distress. I have trodden alone, so that my blood, which is compressed from the entire body, may remove the condition of indebted punishment proper to human poverty.* Whence Psalm 71:12 says: *For he delivered the poor from the mighty and the poor who had no helper. He will spare the poor and the needy and he will save the souls of the poor. Our king, Christ, brought about salvation on the earth before the ages.*

10. Third, he saved humanity in the general resurrection from the calamity of corporal misery in the bestowal of transformative glory. Philippians 3:20-21 speaks of this:

³⁹³ See Luke 1:74: "... that, delivered from the hand of our enemies, we might serve him without fear."

We await our Lord Jesus Christ, who will refashion our lowly body, conforming it to the body of his glory. Indeed the person who wishes that his body be conformed to the splendor of Christ's body in heaven, must first in this life, in accord with Christ's example, mortify the body in fasting, humble the body with afflictions, and even submit the body to contemptible service; because one will arise in glory more conformed to the splendor of Christ, to the degree one was more humble in this life out of love of him.

11. Third, the just extermination of diabolical power is noted in the proposed words, when it includes: *for you have struck all those who are my adversaries without cause.* The just extermination of the devil is said moreover to have a threefold cause: first, because of deceitful deception and fraud in usurping the domination of the first human; second because of malevolent presumption and injustice in suggesting the murder of the innocent Christ; third, because of equitable rectitude and justice in not suffering the perturbation of universal order. Whence it was just, that diabolical power then be exterminated, because it deceitfully and fraudulently usurped the dominion of the first human, then because it unjustly and wickedly prompted the death of the innocent Christ, and then because the equitable nature of divine justice did not need to suffer disorder throughout the entire universe.

12. First, the extermination of diabolical power was just due to deceitful deception and fraud in usurping the domination of the first human. Numbers 24:17-18 is able to explain this: *A star will rise out of Jacob and a scepter will spring up from Israel and shall strike the chiefs of Moab and lay waste all the children of Seth. And he will possess Idumea.* That *star* is the Virgin Mary because of resplendent virtue and grace; but the *scepter*, which has the virility to subdue in assistance to the wretched, is our

Lord. By virtue of his own blood he struck the infernal chiefs of proud *Moab*, and with the art of his multiform wisdom he tricked the devil, the fraudulent traitor who introduced death, and took for himself captive humanity,³⁹⁴ which was being held, and offered the remedy of salvation from there, namely from the wood, where the enemy had wounded him through deception. The previously mentioned theme speaks in a similar way of this: *Rise up, Lord, and save me, for you have struck all those who are my adversaries without cause.*

13. Second, the extermination of diabolical power was just due to malevolent presumption and injustice in suggesting the murder of the innocent Christ. Habakkuk 3:13-14 speaks of this: *You struck the head of the house of the wicked, laying it bare from the foundation to the roof. You have cursed his scepters, the head of his warriors, those coming out of the whirlwind to scatter me.* Since the devil presumptuously and unjustly laid hands on Christ, upon whom he had no right, by persuading his infernal members *coming out of the whirlwind to scatter* the innocent one so they might crucify him; it was just, therefore, that the devil, the head of the infernal house, be struck, laid bare, and deprived of power and dominion over his own servant.

14. Third, the extermination of diabolical power was just due to the equitable rectitude and justice in not suffering the perturbation of universal order. Whence Exodus 15:6 says: *Your right hand Lord struck the enemy and in the multitude of your glories, you deposed your enemies. You sent your anger, which devoured them like straw.* In fact, the equity of divine justice "commands the order of the universe to be conserved and forbids it to be

³⁹⁴ See 2 Cor 10:5.

disturbed."³⁹⁵ Whence lest the devil might obtain comfort from his malady and sin with which he had disturbed the entire universe, it was just that he was struck, deprived, and punished. Because of this Isaiah 30:31 says: *The Assyrian will fear being struck by the rod. The Assyrian signifies the devil who fears; when he is struck by the rod, of divine equity. Let us ask, etc.*

³⁹⁵ Bonaventure adapts Book IV, prosa 2, n. 36 of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*. See CCSL xciv (Turnhout: Brepols, 1957), 68-69.