

The Risen One

We enter into the last movement or “Week” of the retreat. In the past weeks, we shared in Christ’s suffering and anguish. Now, in these weeks, we ask to share in the joy and peace of the Risen Lord. This joy, like any grace we pray for, is a gift from God: we cannot earn it or coerce it. We simply try to be open to receiving Easter joy by contemplating Christ as he shares the joy of the Resurrection with others.

The joy of these weeks eludes simple description, much as love can never be fully defined, even after countless poets, songwriters and lovers have attempted to capture the mystery of it. Easter joy is rooted in our relationship with Christ, cultivated over a lifetime, and deepened now through the Exercises. Joy comes as one grows in faith, hope and love.

In Scripture, in the First Letter of Peter (1: 8-9) we hear of an experience akin to living in the Fourth Week:

Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Note that we are not contemplating the actual, physical resurrection, which remains a great mystery. “Resurrection” refers to the reality of God’s transformation of life, his making *all things new*, as in a new creation. It is a conquering of sin and death, once and for all. Instead of being distracted with the mechanics of the resurrection, or what a resurrected body looks like, we simply contemplate the Risen Lord, his *presence* to others. We notice how his friends both **recognize and fail to recognize** the One whom they have followed and loved.

Grace: I ask for what I desire. Here it will be to ask for the grace to be glad and to rejoice intensely because of the great glory and joy of Christ our Lord.