

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESURRECTION

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is such a momentous, earth-changing event, it's not easy in a few words to encapsulate its significance. But let's mention 3 things: that first, by His resurrection, Jesus has overcome death. He is the one Person in human history Who really *did* rise from the dead and He promises to those who live in Him, that we too, even though one day we die, can nevertheless rise to live with Him forever in the happiness of heaven. As St. Paul puts it: *we believe that having died with Christ we shall return to life with Him*. He has opened the gates of Paradise. Or as He Himself said in John 14: *Do not let your hearts be troubled. There are many rooms in my Father's house. I am going now to prepare a place for you and I shall return to take you with me, so that where I am, you may be too.*

But secondly, by His resurrection, Jesus has overcome sin, evil, Satan. The most shocking atrocity possible, the crucifixion of God the Son - creation killing its Creator - God has forgiven. The resurrection shews us the mercy of God. It shews us how much He loves us. It shews us that His Love is stronger than hatred, revenge, sin, evil. On Calvary, the Devil thought he'd had the last word, but he hadn't; he's been utterly squashed. And instead of being severely punished, the Father has forgiven us, even this, and if we heartily repent, He'll now forgive us any sins we commit. St. Paul again: *The first man, Adam, became a living soul, but the last Adam [Jesus] has become a life-giving spirit*. In other words, Jesus now invites us, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to live *His* kind of life, a new life dead to sin, selfishness and the old ways. He invites us to imitate Him, to follow Him, to be His disciple and He gives us His Spirit to live a new and authentically human life.

And thirdly, by his resurrection Jesus has overcome sickness, suffering and unhappiness. He gives us the grace, that is, the power of the Holy Spirit, the attitude, the ability, strength and courage, even the cure we need, to carry the cross, to soldier on, to transform our suffering. Sometimes people ask: If God is so good, why does He allow so much suffering in the world? I always say: *I don't know, although a lot of suffering is caused by sinful, fallible people. But what I do know is that God is loving, and has Himself on the Cross taken on suffering, to give us the ability to persevere, to flourish, to offer up our pain for the salvation of all*. This healing power to endure we receive in the Church and her sacraments. The sacraments, above all the Holy Eucharist, bestow the grace of the resurrection to transform our sufferings.

So Jesus by His resurrection has overcome death, sin and suffering.

Yet Easter is such a mega event, it's impossible to capture its meaning in words alone. It's only in living our lives by its power that we begin to grasp its significance not only for our families and ourselves, but for our community. Britain today is a pluralist, secular culture, yet one in which Christian values, history and patrimony are still there, however hidden, weakened or compromised. They came to the surface again this week in response to the terrorist atrocity in Belgium. We don't want that kind of world with its fundamentalism, injustice to women, fear, violence: we want freedom, respect, prosperity. This is why the new evangelisation, calling Britain back to its Christian roots, is crucial if our 21st century society is to flourish, and why as Catholics we need to be clearer, holier, bolder in professing our faith. After all, the Holy Spirit goes before us preparing the way, helping us put into words the Good News we share. And Jesus Himself promised: *I am with you always to the end of time*. We've nothing to lose, but everything to gain.

So in this Mass, in which six people are baptised, confirmed or make their First Holy Communion, let us pray for them and their families, that as disciples of Christ, they may persevere in faith by the grace of the Lord's resurrection. Let us pray also for our country, in many ways morally and spiritually adrift, yet ripe for mission and evangelisation, that the Holy Spirit will prepare the way and that our words, the Word of God, may find fertile soil. And we pray for ourselves too, that forgiven our sins and bearing the Cross, faithfully imitating Jesus and close to Him in Word and Sacrament, we may one day reach that heavenly home the Lord Jesus by His resurrection has prepared for us.