



‘Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died’ (1 Cor 15:20)

This year, for the last time until 2025, Easter Day falls on the same date across the Church and across the world. So this year, in chorus, in West and East, in all languages, we proclaim together that Christ is risen.

Easter is the Feast of Feasts and Easter Day is the Day of Days. The Fathers speak of the Lord’s Day as the ‘eighth day’, a day without end, the beginning of a new creation and of eternity. St Augustine noted that in the account of creation in Genesis the seventh day had no evening; what followed was everlasting; the ‘eighth day’ is the day in which life is not destroyed or taken away, but made eternal.

The resurrection of Jesus changed everything. His followers were transformed from a frightened and dispirited group hiding behind locked doors to bold and courageous apostles spreading the good news of the resurrection to the ends of the known world. Down the ages lives have been transformed by the hope of the resurrection. Our own view of time and eternity is informed by the promise of eternal life that comes through the saving death and resurrection of Christ.

In a sermon on Easter Day (Sermon LXXI), St Leo the Great exhorted his congregation not to confine their thoughts of Easter hope to the Easter feast itself, but for the ‘sanctification of the whole life’. The transforming power of the resurrection should transform the lives of all Christians to make them more like Christ.

In the last year I have been struck by the courageous, selfless and Christ-like acts of Christians I have met who have been tireless in their support and help of the poor, the marginalised, the homeless and the displaced. In work among the hungry, refugees, those trapped in modern slavery and others in any kind of need, those whose lives have been transformed by the power of the resurrection are, in turn, ministering the love of Christ to transform the lives of others.

I pray this Easter that as we proclaim our hope and joy in the resurrection together so our Churches and people might join together in an ‘ecumenism of action’ to bring the transforming, serving love of Christ to the world.

Jesus taught his disciples to pray ‘Thy Kingdom come; thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven’. As we seek to transform the lives of those most in need we play our part in reflecting Heaven on Earth.

This year, once again, I am inviting Christians everywhere to join me in praying ‘Thy Kingdom Come’ in the period from Ascension Day to Pentecost. In this year in which the Eastern and Western calendars coincide there is a special opportunity for us to witness to our unity in Christ in prayer for our world and for the spread of the gospel. I am delighted, in this period of Easter joy, to invite you and your churches to join me in this time of prayer.

The calendrical differences that lead to us celebrating the resurrection on different days are a cause of continuing sadness. However, whenever we proclaim the resurrection we proclaim the same message, the message the angel gave to the women at the tomb: ‘He has been raised from the dead’ (Matthew 28: 7), and, in the words of St Paul, ‘in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died’ (1 Corinthians 15: 20).

St Basil notes in his Commentary on the Six Days of Creation that the Lord’s Day, whenever and however often it occurs is the same day: the day honoured by the resurrection of the Lord.

So even when our calendar is divided we are united in our proclamation. This celebration and proclamation of the resurrection of Christ from the dead is an act of Christian unity and Christian witness and is something which we proclaim not only at Easter but every Sunday: throughout the year and throughout our lives.

In the peace of the Risen Christ,

+Justin Cantuar:

The Most Reverend and Right Honourable Justin Welby

Archbishop of Canterbury

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