

Our Gospel today speaks profoundly of new beginnings.

“He is not here, he is risen!” With these simple words, Matthew, Mark and Luke, announce the dawning of a new era in human history.

But why is it that God’s raising of Jesus from the dead is such a wondrous event?

Is it not true, after all, that during his earthly ministry, Jesus had raised others?

Did he not raise the daughter of the synagogue official Jairus? (Mark 5:21-43)

Did he not raise the son of the widow at Nain? (Luke 7:11-17)

And, did he not raise his friend Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary? (John 11:1-44)

Why, therefore, was his own rising from the dead so different from theirs?

The Universal Catechism teaches that, “These actions were miraculous events, but the persons ... would die again. Christ’s Resurrection is essentially different. In his risen body he passes from the state of death to another life beyond time and space. At Jesus’ Resurrection his body is filled with the power of the Holy Spirit: he shares the divine life in his glorious state, so that St Paul can say that Christ is ‘the man of heaven.’” (CCC. 646).

The Gospel alludes to this fundamental difference using the words, ‘On the First day of the week.’ This ‘First Day,’ does not merely signify the beginning of a new week, but rather the birth of the new age. We are reminded here, of the account of Creation that is given in the book of Genesis. There we read how, on that ‘First Day,’ God brought forth light, separating the light from the darkness. On the first day of that first week, light entered God’s creation. Now, on the first day of this new week, God brings forth the light of the Resurrected Christ, thereby shattering the darkness of sin and death, and renewing the face of the earth. This momentous event opened up, what Pope Benedict XVI calls a new dimension of human existence (Jesus Of Nazareth Vol. 2). Speaking analogically, Benedict XVI describes this moment, “ as something akin to a radical evolutionary leap... The man Jesus, complete with his body, now belongs totally to the sphere of the divine and eternal.” (Jesus of Nazareth, Vol. 2, p273-74.)

This work which had begun with the 'Second Person of the Blessed Trinity' becoming incarnate in the womb of Mary, reached its culmination in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Jesus is the 'New Adam' for this 'New Age.' And so it is that St. Paul, speaking of Jesus teaches, "...he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead." (Col 1:18)

Being fully human and fully divine, Jesus, in his own person, has become the bridge that spans the chasm between our fallen nature and God. We, through faith in him, have been grafted into his vine (Romans 11:11-31). We have become participants in his divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), and sharers in the infinite merits of his death and resurrection. As St. Paul teaches, "... you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ." (Eph 2:13) And St. John teaches, " God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." (John 3:16)

On this Easter day therefore, let us rejoice and proclaim, with John Paul II, "We are an Easter People and Alleluia (Praise the Lord) is our song!" (John Paul II, Nov. 30, 1986).