



**Easter Day**

# **THE NEW SHOFAR**

**He Is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!**

**He is risen and alive in the world through us**

## ***In the Risen Christ we are living in a new creation***

If we have prayed our way through the Easter scriptures, we may be surprised as to the way the early faith communities understood the meaning of what had just happened. It was not, for them, primarily about receiving the gift of life beyond the grave. It was about coming to realize how Jesus was and continues to be the LORD of all, the promised Messiah. As Jews they understood this meant that it was *in him* a new era had been inaugurated. Along with this revelation came a Spirit driven awareness of what it meant for the direction they were to head in the future. They had been called to be heralds of the Christ of God. Their work has now begun in earnest as they begin to take this truly Good News out into the world so that all may be free. They were to bring his Kingdom alive on earth (*let your Kingdom come, on earth, as in heaven*) by living and dying for the sake of others.

## ***He is Risen indeed! Alleluia!***

Easter, and so our entire faith as Christians is firmly rooted in the reality of the resurrection. We believe Jesus the Christ rose from the grave, leaving it empty but for a few pieces of clothing. We know from our Gospel accounts that his risen form was such that people could recognize him, speak with him, eat with him and listen to him teach them. He was not a ghost, not some phantom and the resurrection was not simply some good idea. He was not resuscitated corpse but a resurrected Christ with a body that had been transformed (remember how he passed through locked doors). The Jesus of Galilee, the Jesus of Golgotha rose from the grave and the certainty of this is what accounts for the confidence with which those early believers proclaimed it as a reality. As good Jews, they were expecting it to happen at the End of all things when God came as Judge but not now in the present. That it happened *three days later* was as much a surprise for them as it was for their opponents.

## ***Believing in the resurrection is vital for discipleship***

A problem with parts of the liberal theologies that seem to abound today is the way they appear to be embarrassed to proclaim a bodily resurrection of Jesus. It is too “unscientific”, too implausible and very difficult to speak about with unbelievers. Better to speak of it being a spiritual idea, or a theological concept created by the Church to validate the continuation of the Church. Here is their real difficulty: in accepting the reality of the resurrection of Jesus we are all bound to take up the meaning of that gift of life and ***live the Gospel***. We are called upon to live in this New Creation, to put aside the ways-of-the-world, our *former* lives and imitate Christ.

This is why the disciplines of Lent were of such enormous importance for us. Through prayer, through self-denial, by works of charity and time spent in prayer and meditation on the scriptures we are preparing ourselves for the tough work of living the Resurrection. We have to live the truth of Easter

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and that is not something to be done in a half-hearted manner. A whole-of-life transformation is demanded and that will only be possible through a personal response to Christ Risen.

The way we look on others, on the world around us; the way we respond to those who misunderstand us, seek to reject us or harm us; how we judge others and set about bringing the gift of the Risen Christ into all areas of our lives and not just into specific religious moments. These are the implied demands of Easter, demands able to be fulfilled because the Risen Christ is with us as LORD in this New Creation. For our lives to return to “normal” on Easter Monday is to fail not just our time of *testing* throughout Lent but to fail to take up all Jesus has said and done, particularly his suffering and horrendous death on the wood of the cross.

### ***Not a new religion or new set of teaching but a New Creation***

It is Jesus who gives us a clue to what is happening to our world. He has a “resurrected” body, a body that has been transformed. It is the same but different and that is the same with our world. It has been transformed. It is the same world as it was before Maundy Thursday only there is now at work within creation a new reality making it possible for us to live in a kind of reconstituted *Garden of Eden*. Not paradise in the sense of a creation of abundance, a world without pain, suffering, hardship and death. The Garden of Eden is a paradigm for our new creation. The man (*adam* refers to all men) and the woman (the name *eve* means the mother of all mothers) are together as one. Nothing stands between them to cause animosity, or jealousy (this is the meaning of them being naked). One does not seek to harm the other or take advantage of them. They are united in a union that comes about through the intimacy of their relationship with the *God who walks with them in the cool of the evening*.

Now, look around at our own lives and the wider world in which we are living. It is as far from the image of Eden as we could get. People are not *as-one*. Within families, neighbourhoods, nations and even strangers on the street we find tensions, violence, murder, hatred and every kind of nastiness and judgmental attitudes possible in the human heart and mind. This is what happens when God is moved from the centre of life. We feel we need to protect ourselves from others and put up barriers to keep others at bay (symbolized by the clothing they had to wear). This is what we did to God’s wonderful gift of life through hubris, the human arrogance that insists we go our own way.

### ***Only in Christ can we find and share this gift of a New Creation***

If we are not prepared to allow the Spirit to transform us so that we are empowered to *live* the reality of Christ’s resurrection, then the world remains tied to darkness and death. We are not to live in hope of this New Creation for it is a reality already upon us. It was inaugurated in the Christ. What is demanded of us at Easter is a firm commitment, a determined striving to live the Resurrection as a reality. Deeds and not just words. It will not happen by accident but will grow through grace. This is where our Lenten commitments come into play.

It is when we and our small faith communities live the newness of the Risen Christ’s transformed world that it becomes a reality. God is changing creation through the life and witness of the disciples of Christ. While the world remains stubbornly caught up in the quagmire of sin, hopelessness, suffering, meaningless and pain, then we have a mission to complete: Live the reality of Easter.

**Easter** is but a beginning. A new beginning for us. An opportunity from God to take our part in the rebuilding a whole new world in which all men and women live as Adam and Eve, as one around the Living and Loving Creator and Father of all. All we need for that is a union with the Risen Christ.

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