

THE Apostle Paul got it right: "If Christ is not raised from the dead, [our] faith is futile ... and we are the most pitiful of people" (1 Corinthians 15:17, 19).

Christianity depends wholly on Easter, on Jesus rising from the dead.

If he isn't raised after his brutal execution, Jesus is no more than a remarkable miracle-worker, a wise teacher or a fine moral exemplum; and if he's no more than that, then Christianity is no more than just another moralism urging us to try harder to make ourselves and the world better.

But if Jesus is in fact risen from the dead, then everything is changed - not magically or instantly, but nothing is the same.

The Risen Lord is no longer "once upon a time" but is always and everywhere.

The encounter with him, wherever, becomes Christianity; and the Church becomes the community of those who say with Mary Magdalene "we have seen the Lord" (cf John 20:18).

Those who see him and hear him and touch him and taste him also rise with him, because his resurrection wasn't just for him.

In his rising we all rise; his resurrection touches the entire cosmos.

Yes, the forces of death remain potent.

At times we seem to drown in their dark waters as war, disease and all kinds of social disruption come upon us.

That's the way it seemed on the dark mountain of Calvary.

But the Cross, for all its horror, wasn't the end of the story. That came on Easter morning when Jesus stood in the morning light, scars shining like the sun, and greeted the astonished disciples, "Peace be with you".

He says, "I have seen the worst and you have nothing to fear. Your fears are a bluff".

So the resurrection is the death of death and of the fear that death generates.

That's why if Jesus is in fact risen, then we Christians, far from being the most pitiful of

people, are the most blessed, because we can say to the world, "We have seen the Lord".

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