

A GREAT DISCOVERY

People are always discovering things, inventing things, and achieving things – usually small things but sometimes great things.

The discovery of fire was a transformative force that shaped human evolution and behavior. It has had and still has a huge impact on our cooking and nutrition, protection and safety, environmental management, and social and cultural development.

The invention of the wheel is considered a turning point in human history, driving progress in transportation, agriculture, industry, engineering, technology, and shaping the development of civilisations.

The achievement of the Apollo 11 moon landing in 1969 was the achievement of not just one man but of a whole society. Beyond being a remarkable technical feat, it became a powerful symbol of human potential and curiosity. It was a monumental event in human history.

Over the next few days, Christians will be celebrating a very different kind of discovery and event. Very early on a Sunday morning, almost two thousand years ago, three women discovered an empty tomb – the tomb of Jesus Christ. He had been laid there after his brutal crucifixion and agonising death on the Friday, but now it was empty.

For Christians, the resurrection is the validation or proof of Jesus' divinity and the foundation of Christian faith. But the effects or the fruits of Jesus' resurrection are not just for Christians. They are for everyone, because Jesus' resurrection from the dead gains for all people the forgiveness of sins, the defeat of death, and hope not just for the near future but for eternal life.

A recent official Church document had this to say about the resurrection: "The Church exists to bear witness in the world to the most decisive moment in history: the resurrection of Jesus."ⁱ This suggests that of all humanity's great discoveries and achievements, the event of the resurrection is the most important of them all and is the turning point of human history.

Yes, the resurrection of Jesus is the most important and decisive thing that has ever happened. Not the discovery of fire; not the invention of the wheel; not landing on the moon; it's not even the birth of Jesus when, as Christians like me firmly believe, God became one of us. No, the most decisive moment in human history is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

That's because Jesus' resurrection from the dead won for all of humanity the victory over sin and over death. As Saint Paul once said, "If Jesus Christ has not been raised then our faith is futile, and we are still in our sins."ⁱⁱ But Jesus has been raised, and the Bible tells us of hundreds of witnesses who saw and encountered Jesus after he had been crucified, buried, and had risen.

Every 25 years the Catholic Church celebrates special Jubilee Years. This year, 2025, has been designated by Pope Francis as a Jubilee Year of hope, emphasising the hope that all humanity gains from Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead and of his promise that we too can be raised with him.

Pope Francis reminds us that the death and resurrection of Jesus is the heart of Christian faith and the basis of hope because Christian hope consists precisely in this: that in facing our own death, which appears to be the end of everything, we have the certainty that, thanks to the grace of Christ, life is changed, not ended, and death becomes our passage to eternity.ⁱⁱⁱ

As that official Church statement said, "The Church exists to bear witness in the world to the most decisive moment in history: the resurrection of Jesus." So, when you consider all that the Church is and all that the Church does, the many works of worship and many works of justice, charity, and mercy, it all boils down to this one essential thing: the Church exists to bear witness to the resurrection of Jesus.

Each and every Christian is called to bear witness to the resurrection of Jesus. The first Christians didn't so much share with others that they had discovered an empty tomb, but that they had met and encountered the risen Jesus. This was their great discovery, the great event in their lives that impacted and changed them more than anything else they could ever experience.

This is what Christians today are all called to share with the world: that we have in some way encountered Jesus in our life and so can attest that Jesus is truly risen and that this has changed our life.

We will all do this in our own way, but whatever we do and however we do it, whatever we say and however we say it, we are proclaiming to the world that we can all have hope and be joyful, because Jesus truly is risen from the dead.

I wish you and your family and loved ones a very happy and hope-filled Easter.

ⁱ For a Synodal Church: Communion, participation, Mission. Final Document

ⁱⁱ 1 Corinthians 15:17

ⁱⁱⁱ Spes non confundit 20