

# EASTER: A NEW PARADIGM OF GOODNESS

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In our post-modern era of high-tech culture and social mobility, human life, precious as it is, continues to be alarmingly under severe forms of threat even as socio-cultural and political evil stalks lands and peoples across the world putting security and order in serious jeopardy. In the world disturbing events are darkening the horizons of humanity and despite an incredible level of scientific and technological feats, civilization does not seem to be having moral integrity and decent ethical behaviour.

There is a shocking rate of abortion and euthanasia worldwide with these crimes even legalised in many countries. There is tension in the Russian and Chinese borders with the sovereignty and territorial integrity of adjoining nations and their national borders in danger. The manufacture, sale and the deployment of weapons, even Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) go unabated, with even in some instances the threat of them being used in warfare.

Easter 2022 provides an opportunity to recall the terrible tragedy of the massacre in Sri Lanka three years ago in two Catholic churches, a Christian place of worship and in three hotels with instant death brought to 269 innocents and mortal injury to over five hundred others. It was a national tragedy that shook the entire island and one without precedent: a catastrophe of unimaginable proportions, never seen before.

This Dhammadipa (Land of Dhamma) has seen many a callous tragedy of loss of life, limb and property during the past seven decades of post-independence. Beginning with strikes and hartals in the early fifties, followed by the youth insurrection of 1971, with violence continued in the chilling Black July of 1983.

During the time of a festival that celebrates life triumphant forever over death, one should raise the question of how much of life has been imparted by the four living world religions that are in vogue in this country. The liberating power of religions rests on the fidelity of their adherents to the pristine and unsullied truths enshrined in them. Funda-

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mentalisms and extremisms have no place in wholesome thinking and practice of religious beliefs.

## The Risen Lord

When everyone including the closest disciples of Jesus and his family circle were weighed down with the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, with the news of his being alive in glorified and luminous body of incomparable blaze and beauty, things began to change radically. Their faith returned, courage was restored, joy and a sense of security and hope began to replenish their once sunken souls. The Risen Lord, the only religiously recorded Resurrection of someone dead coming back to life, is the dramatic revelation that came to them on that first Easter morning.

Though slow to believe and trust what they saw and experienced, there was an eventual surrender to the reality of the Resurrection. In fact, this faith was so fundamental that all preaching was centred on it; forgiveness of



sin was in its name and communities of faith were anchored firmly on it. Jesus the Nazarene who walked their villages, healed their sick, welcomed the sinners and brought a social revolution that levelled all ethnic differences, religious prejudices, social distinctions and even gender discrimination had brought together his fellow Jews and the gentiles, the so-called uncircumcised into brotherhood and proximity.

The story of the Samaritan who returned to give thanks following his being cleansed from leprosy and the moving parable of the Good Samaritan, which by now has become proverbial globally, are by now classic instances of reconciliation of races and social classes. He became acquainted with tax-collectors who were considered outcasts and betrayers and went out in love, compassion and forgiveness towards those considered public sinners and questionable characters.

Even the Roman centurions felt at home in their petitions to him. In a society of his time which had depreciated the status of children and women, Jesus of Nazareth willingly welcomed them, the children with fond embrace and blessing, the women with freedom to move in his company and his disciples. It is

very striking that the first news of the Resurrection was revealed to a woman who in turn became a missionary announcing the imposing first Easter event to the world: Mary of the sea-side village of Magdala in Galilee who had been freed from multiple demonic possessions.

The raising of Lazarus at Bethany, restoring him back to life, was indeed a forestalling of the great event to come of the personal Resurrection and transformation of Jesus. So was the resurrection of the widow's son in the town of Nain and that of the synagogue official's daughter in Capernaum.

Besides restoring physically the dead to life, there have been numerous instances of people healed from all kinds of diseases like leprosy, dropsy, issues of blood, lameness, deaf and dumbness, not to mention demonic possessions which witnessed dramatic exorcisms of Jesus who subdued those evil spirits oppressing their victims.

## Divine Power

Easter, therefore, presents the divine power of the Risen Lord continuing to bestow life and heal wounds of our world. He has invited

all those who labour and are heavily burdened to come to him for solace and consolation since he can make their yokes easy and burdens light. To the massive crowds coming from distant villages to hear him at the mountains and seaside of Galilee, he not only fed them spiritually but took measures to fill their hunger by providing food in abundance that saw in these miracles many baskets of leftovers spilling over.

It shows that when God gives, it is always in abundance and not just thriftily. Christianity today is alive in a mosaic of various Christian denominations and Churches across the world, embracing people of all languages, cultures, social classes and civilizations.

Let Easter, the festival of life and luminosity be a compelling inspiration for restoring life wherever it is in danger, threatened, weakened, lost or destroyed. Let Easter, the hope-giver coming from Him who conquered evil and death itself, make us strive to heal the wounds of our world. Easter is the final war on evil and the smoothening balm for wounds.

The new world born of the Resurrection is kept alive when modern man rediscovers the culture of life and embraces a civilization of brotherhood.