

Eritrean Catholic Gheez-Rite Chaplaincy (ECGRC-London)
St. Aidan of Lindisfarne RC Church
85 Old Oak Common Lane
London W3 7DD

CHRIST IS RISEN FROM THE DEAD AS THE FIRST FRUITS

It is written, "Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died." (1Cor 15:20) Thus we will follow suit.

When Adam sinned and brought condemnation and slavery into the world, we were not physically present there but we were already hidden in his loins and as the result, we inherited the Original Sin and all its consequences. In Adam we all experience death. But fortunately for us, our world did not see only one Adam. There was the New and the Second Adam who has reversed history for and within us. During these, the holiest of days of the year, we are celebrating this renewal of our history, our freedom and our new beginnings.

The First Adam lost the war in the Garden of Eden and as a result we are all born into sin. But today we are celebrating the victory of the Second Adam, Jesus the Lord, over sin and death for us. This true Adam of late, the Second Adam, whom Pilate called 'here is the Man' (Jn 19:5), has conquered our old foe, the enemy of humanity and of the entire world in the Garden. Yes, He was laid in the Garden, but He is no more there. He is risen from the dead.

As by the disobedience of one man death entered our world, by the obedience of One Man (or 'The Man' as Pilate would call Him), life is given to all.

As by the eating of a fruit from the tree of life sin was introduced, in the same way, by the eating of the Bread of Life, the Eucharist, everlasting life is offered to all who partake of it.

In the Garden of Eden, disregarding the Creator's command, Eve took the fruit from the tree and gave it to Adam and that resulted in the Original Sin. But in the New Order of creation, in obedience to the Creator's request, the New (the Second) Eve, Mary, issued the fruit of her womb, Jesus, to be the Savior of and the Bread of Life, for the world. Whoever eats of this Bread is not going to die but lives forever. What a great renewal of the Order of creation!

That old foe, the Serpent, the father of lies, deceived the First Adam and Eve beneath the tree of life. But here, that old foe, Satan, the accuser of our brethren, sees his head being crushed by the fruit of the Second Eve, Mary, who is the Second Adam, Jesus Christ, beneath a new and life giving Tree, the wooden cross. As it is written, the

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Serpent tried to bit (strike) the heel of the Man but failed miserably. Instead, his head is crushed by the Fruit of the Woman. Alleluia! And this event is irreversible. That great Apostle, Paul teaches us, "For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." (Rom 8: 3-4)

On that dreadful day when Adam sinned, he realized how naked he was and tried to cover up his shame by hiding from his Creator. On Calvary, the New Adam was stripped off of His clothes by cruel hands. But there was no endeavor to cover up neither the shame of sin nor an attempt of hiding from the sight of the Creator. Instead, sin was exposed for what it really was worth. Let all see how their betrayal shamed them by stripping the Creator off of His garments. He is always full of grace and He doesn't need to cover up sin's shame. Let sin be exposed that it might be blotted out once for all through the Lord's Precious Blood that flowed all through the New Adam's body. He was stripped off of His garments that we might be clothed in by his everlasting grace.

In the Garden of Eden, the First Adam shamefully attempted to hide from his Creator. But in the Gardens of both Gethsemane and Calvary, the Redeemer of the world, Jesus, the Second Adam, prayed and interceded for us all before His Father. At the Garden of Eden, Adam hides from the Father; at Gethsemane, Jesus entreated with His Father on behalf of the lost Adam. While in the Garden of Eden judgment and condemnation were passed against the fallen Adam, from the Garden of Calvary, justification and salvation were declared; and the fallen Adam was raised by the Risen Lord, the New Adam.

Here in the Garden of Calvary, the cherubim is not chasing away the wretched Adam. Rather, the portals of Paradise are wide open for all who listen to the word of the Risen One. At the Gardens of Gethsemane and Calvary, New Order and New Creation have been introduced. Here, there is no condemnation or death for our Lord Jesus has taken all of these upon Himself to give us back what was lost by the First Adam and even more. Scripture says, "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has become new!" (2Cor 5:17)

Instead of reading, "(God) drove out the man (Adam); and at the east of the garden of Eden He placed the cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life" (Gen 3:24), we now hear the Lord, the Second Adam, declaring, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise" (Lk 23:43), and again, "Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. ... Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and

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go out and find pasture.” (Jn 10:7, 9) And even more so powerfully He declares, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (Jn 14:6) Eden was shut and we had no access to Paradise because of Adam’s Fall; but now thanks to the New Adam, Paradise is wide open for us all. Now we have access to the Father and His eternal kingdom in, through and because of the New Adam, Jesus.

You and I had never been in person in the real times of neither of the Adams; but as the First Adam represented us in the Original Sin, we were also represented by the Second One in His victory over sin, death, condemnation and the powers of darkness. Moreover, we are made to experience the Lord’s victory through the Mysteries (Sacraments) of redemption we celebrate.

- In Baptism, we profoundly share in the death and resurrection of Christ. (Rom 6:3-4)
- In the Holy Eucharist, we are given the pledge of eternal life. (Jn 6:25-65)
- Through Confirmation, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit Who raised Jesus from the dead.
- Through Penance, we experience a new life risen up from the death of sin.
- The Sacraments of Christian Initiation introduce us into the life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Though we were physically missing when the Original Sin entered our world, and when the New Adam, the Lord Jesus restored all that was lost and ruined by it, we still re-live the act of our Lord’s redemptive sacrifice and victory that took place some two thousand years ago, through the Sacraments of our redemption. Through them, we experience the sufferings, death, burial and resurrection of the Lord.

Therefore, we are not looking for Christ in the tomb as if He is dead. He is risen from the dead and He is no more there. But we find Him in our midst, alive and active through the Sacraments of our redemption which we celebrate in remembrance of Him Who has given us life taking our death.

“As all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ.” (1Cor 15:22)

❖ **CHRIST IS RISEN. ALLELUIA!**

❖ **INDEED, HE IS RISEN! ALLELUIA! ALLELUIA!**

Abba Ephrem Andom