

The joy and blessing of knowing the risen Christ

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God is good all the time. We are still in the Easter mood and spirit. What a joy and a blessing to know that our Lord is risen and risen indeed!

Apostle Paul reminds us, "If Christ has not been raised then our preaching is useless and so is our faith. Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. But we know that Christ has been raised and He is the first fruit of those who have fallen asleep. Thanks be to God, we have victory through the risen Christ." (1Corinthians 15:5-8, 13-17)

As I think of Easter, I am reminded of the first missionaries who came to my village in 1913. They told us about God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. They requested the community to give the land where they could live and build a church.

The local leaders agreed but they told the missionaries not to bother talking about God because they already knew God and He had helped them on many occasions especially in time of tribal wars and also time of famine. They also told them not to talk about the Spirit because they already had their ancestral spirits who visited the community from time to time. However they invited them to tell the community about the man called Jesus. That was the one they didn't know.

The missionaries seized that opportunity to introduce Jesus. They told of His birth, ministry, death and resurrection. They told how Jesus continues to live in us through the Holy Spirit and how He will come again to take those who believe in Him to spend eternity with Jesus. It took a few years before the missionaries could win any serious converts to Christianity.

My mother who is still living was among the first generation of converts to Christianity. She tells me that the message of the cross and resurrection was too powerful to turn down. How Jesus would love everybody including His enemies was very touching.

As the community embraced Christianity people started to change and to be transformed. People started sending their children to the missionary church and school. Some tribes that could not get along started to like each other. Tribal wars became less and less. Today, Christianity has really grown but there is still a lot to be done even in relation to community development.

As we celebrate Easter season, the message of resurrection of Jesus makes Christianity very different from all other religions of the world. Some people are able to believe in resurrection as a historical but the real power of resurrection can be seen in the individual or community encounter with the risen Christ.

Once we meet the risen Christ, we become a new creation. This was true of the followers of Jesus, like the women who were the first witnesses after they had seen the empty tomb. It was true of the disciples who were on the road to Emmaus. (Luke 24) It was true of Apostle Paul after meeting the risen Lord on the road to Damascus. (Acts 9:1-22) It was true of the

missionaries who came to my village.

Easter is an assurance that Christ is alive and He walks with us and talks with us. Easter assures us that the risen Christ gives us inner joy, peace and victory in the face of trials and temptations. The risen Christ has forgiven our sins and taken our guilty away. Easter is an assurance that there is life beyond the grave, there is eternity with Jesus.

Christ is risen. He is risen indeed.