

Easter Reflection

Read

[Matthew 28:1–10](#)

Text and Land

Western Christians call this holiest of all holy sites, the 'Church of the Holy Sepulchre' (the Holy Grave). The Eastern Christians know it as the 'Church of the Resurrection'. Irrespective of its name, this scrambled remnant of Byzantine and Crusader architecture draws hundreds and thousands of pilgrims every day.

This was once the grandest of Christian churches. It sat on the main street, the *Cardo*, of Byzantine Jerusalem. Its grandeur can be glimpsed in the sixth century [Madaba map](#), but its power as imperial theology was immense. Almost exactly 300 years after Jesus was crucified as an enemy of the Empire, the first Christian emperor publishes the Nicene Creed and commissions the Church of the Resurrection. Who won: the Empire, or Christ?

This confusing, dilapidated and glorious church is both a monument and a warning. It is a monument to the marriage of convenience between Empire and Church. It is a warning that the new wine of resurrection cannot be poured into the old wine of Empire. As a broken and damaged edifice, it represents the present condition of the church, and calls us to walk a 'road less travelled,' to embrace a form of Christianity that does not seek privilege. This is what Pope Francis calls "a church that is poor and is for the poor."

Today – and during the Great Fifty Days of Easter – we celebrate something much bigger than one individual overcoming death. To be true for everyone it had to be true for someone. But more is at stake. In this resurrection we all find new hope and new life. In this resurrection God says YES to human flourishing.

Jesus was raised as God's eternal NO to each and every Empire, as God's eternal victory over "... the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." (Eph 6:12)

No physical edifice can ever capture this truth, but in its brokenness as a relic of a long-gone era, the Church of the Resurrection points us beyond alliances with Empire to a renewed and resurrected church in solidarity with the poor.

Questions for Discussion

- What is our gospel (good news), and what are some effective ways of sharing it with others?
- What difference does the resurrection of Jesus make in your life? Would a visitor from outer space be able to discern that your belief in the resurrection makes your life different from those of your neighbours or work colleagues?
- What needs to change for your local church to be "a church that is poor and is for the poor"? Would you welcome those changes? Would you work to make those changes happen in your own local church? Why?

Prayer

But the angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised... So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. (Matthew 28. 5,8)

"Don't give in to your fears. If you do, you won't be able to talk to your heart."

Paulo Coelho (The Alchemist)

Reflect on how fear holds you captive. Invite the risen Christ to set you free.

