

## **We don't reach Infinity by Adding Numbers (Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae)**

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



In Saint John Chrysostom's homily which we read on the night of the Resurrection, we hear: 'Let no one grieve at their poverty, for the universal kingdom has been revealed. Let no one bewail their trespasses, for forgiveness has risen from the grave. Let no one fear death, for the death of our Saviour has set us free'.

Just as, before the Resurrection, the life of all people was incomplete as regards meaning, so now the Resurrection fills everyone and everything with light and joy, because when one part of the world receives the full message, this message is transmitted in full to all things.



Through the Resurrection of one being- Christ the human person- time, which had flowed in the darkness of the repetition of composition and decomposition without meaning, became time which leads to our resurrection and eternal life. The light which Christ brought to humanity shows the goal towards which time leads everything that lives in time. The whole of time and the whole world no longer seem a relentless and uninterrupted flow between births and deaths, but a reality illumined with meaning, like a path towards the recapitulation of all things through the Resurrection and eternal, full life, like the eve of a great feast without end.

All the days of the year are feasts or stages on an itinerary which gradually brings us to the great feast, the final and eternal one. The light of the eternal feast sheds its rays on all the days. Or, to put it differently, all the days of the year are fore-feasts which gradually prepare us for the final Sunday, for eternal life within the light which was revealed at the Resurrection. In the same way, the days of the week, which are dedicated to saints, are preparatory feasts for the encounter with Christ, which is symbolized and prefigured by Sunday, the Lord's day.

So just as the joy of the Resurrection surpasses every other joy and enfolds all sorrows, its Light is brighter than all other lights generated by human thought and natural imagination, in other words all the philosophical explanations for our

existence and all the beautiful things created by artistic fantasy. It surpasses even the imperfect lights of the Revelation of the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, a pillar of fire led [the Israelites] from earthly slavery to an earthly, external freedom and Moses made known the wishes of God, Who remained hidden in a dark cloud. At the Resurrection, the Sun of our existence Himself appeared, effulgent, and cast abundant light on the whole of creation, leading us, in this present life, towards transcendence of it, towards the fulness of life. 'Instead of a pillar of fire, the Sun of righteous rose; instead of Moses, Christ the salvation of our souls (Hymn to the Mother of God, Easter Sunday).

It has rightly been said that the glad tidings, the Gospel of Christianity, is summed up in the announcement of Christ's Resurrection, which is the foundation of our certainty that we, too, will be raised. If Christianity had brought nothing else but this to the world, it would still have offered infinitely more than all human efforts over the ages. This is why the Apostles saw it as their mission to bear witness to Christ's Resurrection (Acts 1, 22). It's beyond doubt that this announcement was the outstanding 'good news'. Not because it concerned the resurrection of an ordinary human being, because the hopes of all of us couldn't be founded on the resurrection of simply another person. Such a resurrection would not have been for all time, in the fulness of divine life, but only a repetition of life in its present state- or a slightly different one, though only relatively so. The announcement of Christ's Resurrection was the most outstandingly good news because it was the Resurrection of Him Who, while a human person, was also God and, as God, can make us sharers in His Resurrection. Because our own resurrection, founded on His, will be a participation in His human life, elevated to the life of God Himself, that is life in its most sublime and absolute degree.



In bearing witness to Christ's Resurrection, the Apostles were testifying to the Resurrection of God Who had been made human, as demonstrated by all the signs and words through which Jesus revealed His divinity during His life on earth- 'all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us' (Acts 1, 21). Only this Resurrection could be resurrection in the fulness of life and only it is the bedrock for or is the same as the joy which fills all things.

The women left the tomb not merely full of joy, but also trembling with fear, because their joy was also imbued with a sense of mystery, with a feeling that into our present state of existence had erupted something entirely different. The joy was no ordinary joy, such as leaves people within the confines of their normal life. Heidegger makes the distinction between the 'fear' (Furcht) of something that belongs to this world, and the terror (Angst) in the face of death, which puts an end to our existence in the world. The joy the women felt at the announcement of the Lord's Resurrection was mingled with a terror at being faced with a state of existence beyond the bounds of this world. But this terror didn't crush them, because it didn't derive from a sense of emptiness, of chaos, but rather it was terror within joy. It gave them the feeling that another existence had emerged, the fulness of which surpassed our normal one. On Great Thursday, the Church sings: 'Christ's Resurrection is the beginning of a new, immortal life'.

But existence in its fulness does not contain only the fulness of joy, but also a

fulness of light. An existence which has limits restricts the knowledge of its meaning. Besides, a restricted manner of existence can't surpass its limits and gradually progress. It therefore can't ever reach even as far as knowledge of its full meaning or the full light. We don't reach infinity by adding numbers. We can't reach the fulness of life and therefore the fulness of joy and light except through a leap, which we are unable to take, but which God effects by enabling us, through Grace, to share in His life.