

CHURCH STUFF

(A newsletter for Catholic cadets)

Week of 12 April, 2009

To my Catholic brothers and sisters in the Corps:

The first order of business is to wish you all a **HAPPY EASTER!**

May your prayer on this coming **EASTER WEEKEND** be something like this:

Lord of such amazing surprises!

I praise You for this great joy, too great for words,
for this great mercy of **RESURRECTION**,
which blots out my betrayals
and bids me to begin again,
to limp on,
to hop-skip-and-jump on,
and to mend what was broken around me.

I praise You for this **YES**

to life and laughter,
to love and lovers,
and to my unwinding self.

I praise You for this **Kingdom**

unleashed in me
that has no dead-ends to growth,
to chances,
to choices,
to calls to be just.

I praise You for this **RESURRECTION-madness**

which is wiser than I,
and in which I see how great You are,
how full of **GRACE**.

May your **EASTER SEASON** this year be one of unqualified joy and happiness in the Risen Lord! After all, it's not just a case of "feeling good" because Spring is finally here; it's a question of knowing that because Jesus rose from death, there's hope for all of us.

THINGS CATHOLICS CAN DO:

HOLY THURSDAY (9 April)

No morning or noon Masses.

EVENING MASS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

will be at 1900 at the Chapel

GOOD FRIDAY (10 April)

No morning or noon Masses.

GOOD FRIDAY LITURGY

will be at 1700 at the Chapel.

HOLY SATURDAY (11 April)

No Mass during the day.

No Confessions at 1630 or Mass at 1715.

EASTER VIGIL

will be at 2200 at the Chapel.

EASTER SUNDAY (12 April)

EASTER MASSES at the Chapel will be at 0900 and
1100.

There will be NO 1715 Mass in WH5300.

A THOUGHT FOR EASTER:

Here, this morning, a silent explosion with a blinding light.

Perhaps.

Or maybe a deafening silence, and the stone rolls back from the entrance to the tomb,
the sandy soil crunching quietly under the weight of the stone.

Within, nothing.

Within, nobody.

Empty.

Only the shroud the women left him in is left.

Empty, but the air crackles with a kind of electricity.

Perhaps.

Something happened here.

Something happened.

We will always know what, but we will never know precisely what.

Something.

RESURRECTION!

No room to be simpleminded.

Not talking about resuscitated corpses here.

Talking about RESURRECTION,

A word we use to talk about SOMETHING

that the human mind cannot begin to understand.

Something happened.

Something.

RESURRECTION!

It happened to Jesus after he died.
Dead as can be, and it happened to him.
Dead as can be, and it happens –
 IS happening –
 WILL happen –
 HAS happened to us as well.
To us !!

RESURRECTION has happened to Jesus, whatever it is.
A new and completely better life.
RESURRECTION is not merely a 2000-year old happening, however.
It happens now.
We know the RESURRECTION because it happens –
 is BEGINNING to happen – to us!
Right here.
Right now.

JESUS IS RISEN!

Alleluia!
We are being raised,
and we are on our way to RESURRECTION.
Alleluia!
Dead as can be,
and it happens.
To us!!
ALLELUIA!

DID YOU KNOW?

Thought you might like to know about some EASTER customs and legends:

DANCING SUN: According to an old legend, the sun dances on Easter morning or makes three short jumps at the hour of rising in honor of Christ's RESURRECTION. The rays of light penetrating the clouds were said to be angels dancing for joy. In Ireland and England, people used to put a pan of water in an east window, and they watched the "dancing sun" mirrored in it.

EASTER CLOTHES: The newly-baptized Christians wore garments of new linen, so a tradition arose of every believer getting new EASTER clothes. If you could buy new clothes but didn't, then you would definitely experience bad luck. There was an old Irish saying: "For Christmas, food and drink; for EASTER, new clothes".

EASTER WALK: People in Europe used to walk through the fields and open spaces in their new clothes, following EASTER Mass. There would often be a parade through the towns and into the open country.

A decorated crucifix or a large EASTER candle would be carried at the head of the procession.

EASTER LAUGHTER: On EASTER Sunday, people in towns and villages would come back to church in the evening for EASTER Vespers. In the Sermon preceding the Service, the priest would often tell jokes or humorous fables with a moral, signifying that the serious season of Lent had ended, and lightheartedness would be the order of the day.

EASTER EGGS: This symbolism is pretty obvious: just as new life bursts from the egg, so Christ burst from the tomb. Thus, the egg assumed a primary place in the history of Christian customs, and history produced an unbroken penchant for elaborate egg-decoration, especially among the Christians of eastern Europe.

EASTER BUNNIES: However cute they might be, the association of rabbits with EASTER has never had any religious significance. The animals were more a fertility symbol associated with reproduction and the arrival of Spring.

GOT A QUESTION?

Q: Father, with Good Friday coming up, I remembered that it's one of the days when the Church asks Catholics to abstain from meat...and I know that years ago, this was true of every Friday. Could you tell me how this custom developed...and what its underlying purpose is? Thanks.

A: The practice of not eating meat on certain days is part of a larger tradition of fasting that has been part of Catholic religious tradition from the beginning...and part of many other religious traditions as well.

As a matter of fact, Christian "fasting" has its roots in the Old Testament, and it wasn't just limited to meat but included other foods as well. It's origins aren't known for sure among the Jewish people, but in the different books of the Old Testament, you can find fasting performed for a variety of religious reasons (like in times of calamity and for reasons of mourning).

For instance, in the prophet Joel (1:14), he tells the Jewish people:

"...proclaim a fast..."

And in Judges 20:26, you read the following:

"So the entire Israelite army...
wept and remained fasting
before the Lord..."

The Law of Moses prescribed fasting for the annual Day of Atonement (see the Book of Leviticus 16:29-34, where "fasting" is called "mortifying yourself").

The early Christians fasted on Wednesdays and Fridays, according to one of the most ancient Christian texts ("Didache", dated AD 100 or so), and they abstained from certain foods, especially flesh meat.

As the Church developed, days of fasting became a normal part of the Church Year, and Catholics would abstain from all food until the evening meal on such days.

During Lent, it became common to abstain from flesh meat and meat products, including milk, eggs, butter and cheese.

The early monks abstained from meat simply because they considered meat to be the most satisfying and nourishing food available for the body. Omitting meat from the diet simplified their efforts to establish a tranquil equilibrium between body and spirit. They felt that feeding one's appetite led to heaviness of mind and the stirring of sexual passions.

In some contemporary monastic communities, meat is always abstained from; others abstain only on certain days of the week.

Until 1966, Catholics were obliged to abstain from meat on every Friday of the year as a gesture of solidarity with the suffering and death of Jesus. At present, the practice is to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday, the Fridays of Lent and Good Friday.

But contemporary awareness can attach other meanings to the idea of abstaining from meat at certain times...and these are important too. They might be as different as cultivating an awareness of the economic conditions under which the Third World countries produce food for the West...or concern for animal rights...or a reaction against "junk foods".

However, the central motivation is still as central as it was centuries ago: to join oneself together with the suffering and death of Jesus.

THEOLOGY EVERY CATHOLIC SHOULD KNOW:

WHAT "RESURRECTION" IS NOT:

"If Christ has not been raised,
then our preaching is groundless,
and your faith, too, is groundless."

I Corinthians 15:14

Many people have seen the Resurrection of Jesus as "just one more" in a chain of legends about gods and goddesses..."a god who dies and rises again"...

Classic mythology is full of such stories.

There was Osiris in Egypt. He was a benevolent god, lord of justice, protector of cities and the family. His evil brother Set murdered and dismembered him, but Isis brought him back to life, and he became "judge of the dead".

There was Adonis in Greece. He was a perfect human specimen, so much so that goddesses fell in love with him. Zeus finally ordered him to spend half the year (autumn and winter) with the Goddess Persephone in the Underworld and the other half of the year (spring and summer) with the goddess Aphrodite. One year, in the summer, Adonis went hunting and was mortally wounded by a wild boar. He died, bathed in Aphrodite's tears, and the red-blood anemone (the windflower) blooms each year where his blood fell.

In Greek mystery-religion (the Orphic Rites), there was Dionysius. He was torn to pieces and restored to life. His festival was kept every year, and he was thought of as the god who freed men and women from death. He was also the god of wine.

But the Resurrection of Jesus isn't like any of these.

None of these myths involve "passion" (suffering) and "resurrection", as Christians have understood the terms. None involves the idea of "self-renunciation", so central to

the Christian message. None involves a person, fully human (as well as divine), who voluntarily suffers for the redemption of others. None involves the continuation of a human personality beyond the grave into a new life.

This is a brand-new reality.

The Resurrection-event of Jesus of Nazareth did not produce a “cult of fertility” nor a “nature analogy” nor a “ritual ceremonial”. Instead, the Resurrection-event of Jesus of Nazareth transformed the conception of life itself, linking the soul with the body and affirming the “whole” human being.

Not only that.

It gave specific form to those formless instincts that originally produced those myths from antiquity that I mentioned above. It provided the answer to those nameless desires that enliven the hearts of people of every age.

It was – and is – a totally NEW reality. It was – and is – the communication of God. It was – and is – the REVELATION that makes sense of life itself.

UNSOLICITED SPIRITUAL THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

“This is our destiny in heaven –

TO BE LIKE CHRIST:

not Christ limited,

as he was on earth,

to the confines of time and flesh...

But CHRIST RISEN,

the great, free, timeless Christ,

the Christ of Easter MORNING.”

David Winter

“Hereafter”

And that’s the way it is, a day like all days, filled with those events that alter and illuminate our time...

and YOU ARE THERE!

All good wishes as we prepare to celebrate
the RESURRECTION of Jesus.

May there be peace and joy in your life
because of the hope
that comes from him.

Woodie