

The Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults

Easter

by Fr. Antony

EASTER Modern-day Easter is derived from two ancient traditions: one Judeo-Christian and the other Pagan. The name, Easter, is believed to come from the pagan mythology. The Scandinavian "Ostra" and the Teutonic "Ostern" or "Eastre," both Goddesses of mythology, signifies spring and fertility, whose festival was celebrated on the day of the vernal equinox. When the second-century Christian missionaries encountered the tribes with their pagan celebrations, they converted them to Christianity and allowed them to continue to celebrate pagan feasts, but in a Christian manner.

It happened that the pagan festival of Eastre occurred at the same time of year as the Christian observance of the Resurrection of Christ. The Christian missionaries converted the festival itself, and made it a Christian celebration. The early name, Eastre, was eventually changed to its modern spelling, Easter. The Judeo-Christian understanding is always connected with Jewish Passover. The followers of Christ celebrated the Passover with a new conception added to it, that is, of Christ as the true Paschal Lamb.

Whatever is the history of the origin of Easter, for us Christians today, Easter means Resurrection Sunday, "the spring time of Christian faith". For the last forty days, we were preparing ourselves to celebrate Easter in prayer and fasting. He died for our sins and rose from the dead to give us life. It is not an event that took place two thousand years ago, it is being re-enacted in our everyday life. It is proclaimed and celebrated every day. Jesus is alive; this is a truth, and this truth gives meaning to our life and death. He died and resurrected not for his glory but to give us life. *"I have come in order that you might have life- life in all its fullness" (Jn.10:10).*

He not only defeated death, but he enables us to participate in the life-giving resurrection. Since we participate in his resurrection, our death is no more - an end in itself, but it is only the door to eternal life. Christ's resurrection changes the meaning of our life because it gives us hope. Hereafter, we live to participate in the life of Christ's resurrection. How can we achieve this? For this we have to die in our sins with Jesus and resurrect with Jesus. We should be able to make changes in our life. Positive changes in life are the sign of growth. Remember the words of Jesus, *"unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." (Jn 12:24)*

Jesus gives the message of love, forgiveness and self emptying in this Easter season. "each time we love again after having our love rejected, we share the in the power of the resurrection. Each time we trust again after our trust betrayed, we share in the resurrection. Each time we fall and try again, we share in the resurrection".

The message of Easter is that Christ has conquered all, and that we too can conquer all, if we put our faith in him. To experience the joy of Easter, we need not wait for our death; what we have to do is to open our hearts to the grace that Jesus won for us on the first Easter Sunday.

HAPPY EASTER! THE RISEN LORD BLESS YOU ALL