

SandalPrints

Issue # 153 ... Easter Joy ... 2015AD

Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis of Reconciliation - Palm Springs
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EASTER

The feast of the resurrection of Christ derives its name from Eastre, the goddess of Spring, according to St. Bede the Venerable, but there are other opinions. In any event, this feast is the high point of the Christian year, as it celebrates the central mystery of Christ, His triumph over death and the cross in His resurrection, which in the Synoptic Gospels is associated with the Jewish Passover.

In celebrating the Pasch, the early Christians no longer focused so much on the exodus from Egypt, but on the new exodus from the slavery of sin into new life in the Risen Lord wrought by Christ. This new focus was central to Sunday's celebration of the Eucharist, but the natural tendency was to historicize it by celebrating it yearly on the first Sunday after the fourteenth of Nisan (the date of the Jewish Passover). Not all accepted this way of computing the Easter date, but eventually the Council of Nicaea furthered uniformity by fixing it on the Sunday following the full moon after the vernal equinox. There are still difficulties between those who follow the Gregorian (Western) and Julian (Russian Orthodox) calendars.

The spirit of the feast of Easter begins with the vigil and its festival of lights, symbolizing the Light of the Resurrection seen in the new fire, the Easter Candle, and the Exsultet. The Easter Season lasts until Pentecost, with the

Paschal candle lit at Mass until then.

DOING IT RIGHT

by Richard Brakefield, J.D., SFO, KC*HS

I like Peter. He is my favorite apostle. He exhibits many character traits that I find in myself. He is a hearty, blustery type of man, a doer, one who has something to say about everything and often when he opens his mouth it is merely to change feet. Yeah, I can identify with that. Peter wanted desperately to 'do it right' but so often ended up doing it all wrong. Present at the Transfiguration, he thought it a good idea to erect three tents on the site, one each for Christ, Moses and Elijah! He totally missed the point and had no idea of what he just witnessed. Even having been warned that he would fail his great test by denying Christ on the eve of His arrest, Peter discovered that his image of himself as a strong and fervent follower of his Master was just a sham. The truth of his weakness, his fear, his self interest confronted him in its ugliness as he and the others fled hoping to save their own skins while their Master was led off to be killed. Surely, if God can make a saint out of Peter, there is hope for the rest of us.

Like so many of us, Peter was sincere in his attempt to 'do it right' but his phony self, his perception of what and who he was got in the way. Only after they received the Holy Spirit did Peter and the others begin to shed their false selves and truly become heroes of the faith. Only when they could see clearly the truth about themselves, their weakness, their inability to do anything of significance without the grace of the Holy Spirit were they able to 'do it right.' So we, like the apostles and earliest disciples of Christ, spend much of our time and effort trying to 'do it right' but usually getting it wrong.

As Franciscans, we have certain duties we

promise to perform and we all want to 'do it right.' What is the proper way to say the Liturgy of the Hours? Can I say that prayer alone or must it be said only in community? What is the proper book to use when saying it? Should I wear my tau outside or under the shirt? These questions have been asked of us all and they are asked by serious, sincere brothers and sisters. But in asking such questions and worrying about such formalities are we not missing the point? How can our prayer be beneficial to us if we are so overly scrupulous about whether we should be standing or sitting, whether we should read the Office from one book or another, whether we should pray alone or with others. How can we benefit at all from prayer that is fraught with such silliness and crowded with much talking and little listening. Of course much of our prayer is talking to God but shouldn't as much or more time be spent in prayerful listening to God? Is our side of the conversation more interesting than the other? Every priest and spiritual director I have met has emphasized listening to God speak to us. I think they have something there. I think God might have something interesting to say to us. Perhaps by listening we have a better chance of getting it right.

Yes, God does speak to us if we take the time to listen. No, I haven't seen tongues of fire descend over people at prayer. No, I don't hear voices like Joan of Arc. But we all have heard God speak to us from time to time in our hearts. At some time or other we all have experienced the Holy Spirit in a moving way. But these occasions are few and far between for many of us simply because in our sincere but foolish attempts to 'do it right' we miss what is really going on. Our false self gets in the way. We see our false self as the real self but it isn't. We think that, if we get the rudiments down correctly, we can 'do it right' but we usually end up doing it all wrong. In fact there is no way that we can really 'do it right' absent the help of the Holy Spirit.

Remember the rich young man who asked Christ what he must do to be saved? He was certainly sincere in his quest for salvation but he totally missed the point. He didn't listen to what Christ was telling him. He just couldn't face his real self. He saw only his false self, his own perception of what he was - a rich man. He was actually a spiritually bankrupt man. Unlike Peter, he refused to acknowledge his extreme frailty and accept the guidance of the Spirit. He had spent too much time

acquiring wealth and enjoying its trappings. He truly wanted to 'do it right' but he was unable to face his true self and his own spiritual poverty. There was, in fact, nothing he could do by himself to achieve salvation so he ended up doing it all wrong. He was eager to do and say the right things but all the doing was futile and all the talking prattle without listening to God's call. What a wonderful lesson for us. How come we so often miss the point of it?

Getting in our own way seems to be a human habit so deeply ingrained that it may be the hardest habit to overcome. How many of us even try? We love our false self. We're so strong or rich or famous or lovable. We know that we can 'do it right' if we can just learn the proper rudiments and practice a bit. The early Peter saw himself as strong and totally loyal to Christ - one who would never betray him. The later Peter had learned how false all that was and in facing his weakness and relying on God for his strength became truly powerful indeed. He finally learned how to 'do it right.'

Yes, I really like Peter because he made so many mistakes, was so wrong so often. But he finally learned how to 'do it right' because he listened to the Holy Spirit, he accepted his true self and rejected the false one, and allowed God to work a miracle in his life. Like I said before, if God can make a saint out of Peter, there is hope for every one of us.

THE DECISION

After a few of the usual Sunday evening hymns, the Church's pastor slowly stood up, walked over to the pulpit and before he gave his sermon for the evening, briefly introduced a guest minister who was in the service that evening.

In the introduction, the pastor told the congregation that the guest minister was one of his dearest childhood friends and that he wanted him to have a few moments to greet the congregation and share whatever he felt would be appropriate for the service.

With that, an elderly man stepped up to the pulpit and began to speak.

"A father, his son, and a friend of his son were sailing off the Pacific coast," he began, "when a fast approaching storm blocked any attempt to get back to the shore. The waves were so high that even though the father was an

experienced sailor, he could not keep the boat upright and the three were swept into the ocean as the boat capsized.”

The old man hesitated for a moment, making eyes contact with two teenagers who were, for the first time since the service began, looking somewhat interested in his story.

The aged minister continued with his story, “Grabbing a rescue line, the father had to make the most excruciating decision of his life: to which boy he would throw the other end of the life line. He only had seconds to make the decision. The father knew that his son was a Christian and he also knew that his son’s friend was not. The agony of his decision could not be matched by the torrent of waves.”

“As the father yelled out, ‘I love you , son!’ he threw out the life line to his son’s friend. By the time the father had pulled the friend back to the capsized boat, his son had disappeared beneath the raging swells into the black of night. His body was never recovered.”

By this time, the two teenagers were sitting up straight in the pew, anxiously waiting for the next words to come out of the old minister’s mouth.

“The father,” he continued, “knew his son would step into eternity with Jesus and he could not bear the thought of his son’s friend stepping into an eternity without Jesus ... therefore, he sacrificed his son to save the son’s friend.”

“How great is the love of God that He should do the same for us. Our Heavenly Father sacrificed His only begotten son that we could be saved. I urge you to accept His offer to rescue you and take a hold of the life line He is throwing out to you in this service.”

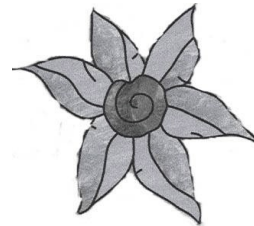
With that the old man turned and sat down in his chair as a silence filled the room. The pastor again walked slowly to the pulpit and delivered a brief sermon with an invitation at the end. However, no one responded to the appeal.

Within minutes after the service ended, the two teenagers were at the old man’s side. “That was a nice story,” politely stated one of the boys,” “But I don’t think it was very realistic for a father to give up his only son’s life in hope that the other boy would become

a Christian.”

“Well, you’ve got a point there,” the old man replied, glancing down at his worn bible. A big smile broadened his narrow face, he once again looked up at the boys and said, “It sure isn’t very realistic, is it? But I’m standing here today to tell you that story gives me a glimpse of what it must have been like for God to give up His son for me.

You see ... I was that father and your pastor is my son’s friend.”



ONE POSSIBLE ANSWER for Edd

**“And now I often wonder
if a flower ever cried
At the death of one he spent
the summer beside ... ”**
-Fr. Edd Anthony

This geranium

the color of heart’s blood

caught just at the edge of dying
one summer
in the yard behind the weathered grey
house

in the garden
where the carp flashed up in the pool’s
shadows,
this geranium

lives no longer anywhere
but in memory’s green light.

But no one cried.
This geranium went down singing
into the dust and ferns,
singing of honey and rain

singing the buds to life.
No flower dies,

and no love either
when the green light of memory
holds all our summers

when days flash up golden from the lonely
shadows

when we are caught
just at the edge of dying
by a friendship the color of heart's blood,
how this geranium
opens

in another summer's wind!

-Joanne McPortland

Let us pray for the intentions of those who
asked us to pray for them.



Amma Syncletica said, "In the beginning, there is struggle and a lot of work for those who come near to God. But after that, there is incredible joy. It is just like building a fire: at first it's smoky and your eyes water, but later you get the desired result. Thus we ought to light the divine fire in ourselves with tears and effort."

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BLESSED
EASTER
TO ALL!!!