

EASTER (C)

'Eostre', from which Easter is derived, was a pagan Anglo-Saxon Goddess of the dawn or sunrise. The point of sunrise, the East, is named after her. The Church invested it with new meaning. As the sunrise disperses the darkness of the night, so, by this Resurrection from the dead, Christ scatters the darkness of sin and death and Satan.

Resurrection is the central teaching of our Faith for without it our believing would be in vain, our lives meaningless.

From a rational point of view, it makes more sense to believe in the Resurrection than to deny it. Scientists tells us that nothing in nature, not even the tiniest particle, can disappear without a trace. Nature does not know extinction - all it knows is transformation. The dead leaves of last Autumn, for instance, are nourishing new growth this year. At this time of the year we also see the natural world awakening to new life. But since we humans are the cream of God's creation, life would be pointless if death were to signal the end of our existence.

Don't we feel uplifted when people remember our birthday? They say that the best way for a husband to remember his wife's birthday is to forget it once. Those who send us cards and presents are lovingly reminding us that our birth was not an accident or a mistake but God's precious gift of life to us. Being resurrection people means that we must always uphold the sacredness of life both born and unborn and never do anything to jeopardise or endanger it. All these atrocities happening in Europe and elsewhere these days spring from the culture of death, a product of the Kingdom of Darkness, which Christ came to conquer.

Our appreciation for human life, however, points in the direction of a deeper longing which God has sown within the human heart. It is an eternal seed, a yearning for that fullness of life and love which only He can ultimately satisfy. We are born, not

just to value this life but to share forever in God's divine life which is our true destiny.

However, Eternal life must begin in the here and now, for us to possess it eternally. It's not an abstract truth. St Augustine coined the phrase, "we are Resurrection People and 'Alleluia' is our song". Whenever we have our love rejected and we love again - that's resurrection. Whenever we pick up the pieces of a fragmented life and begin again - that's a new-dawn moment. Whenever we overcome sin, we are brought back to life. Whenever we forgive, we bring resurrection to our relationships. All these little resurrections along the road of life are preparing us for that final one at the end of time.

Today we celebrate the Lord's 'Passover' from death to life. It is also a special evening for Sharon and Rory who will be baptised, confirmed and received into the church very shortly. All the merits of Christ's Death and rising to new life will be applied to them this evening. After that we will all renew our baptismal promises.