

EASTER (ABC)

Eostre, the word from which Easter is derived, was a pagan Anglo-Saxon Goddess of the dawn or sunrise. The point of sunrise, the East, is derived from it. Centuries ago the Church invested this pagan festival with new meaning. When the sun rises it disperses the darkness of the night. When Christ, the Son of God rose from the dead he dispersed the darkness of sin and death and Satan. When adults were baptised in the early church, to emphasise the above point, they literally faced the west, the above of darkness where the sun goes down and then renounced the Prince of Darkness and all his works. Immediately afterwards they turned around in the opposite direction and faced the East where the Sun rises, to proclaim their faith in Jesus, their Lord and Saviour. Ah, they did things in style then.

Resurrection is the central teaching of our Faith for without it our believing in God would be in vain and our lives bereft of meaning. Saint Augustine said: "we are Easter people and Alleluia is our song". Alleluia, a Hebrew word, silent during Lent, now comes into its own and is meant to be proclaimed with great gusto as an unparalleled acclamation of praise to the Risen Christ.

Even from a rational point of view the Resurrection makes sense. Science 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. It's more noticeable at this time of the year when we see the natural world bursting forth with new life. But since we humans are the cream of God's creation, it wouldn't make sense if death were to signal the end of our existence or for us to be consigned to an Eternity of nothingness. We shudder at the thought.

However, Eternal life must begin in the here and now if we are ever going to possess it eternally. It's not an abstract truth. For instance, whenever we have our love rejected and we love again - that's resurrection. Whenever we repent of serious sin

and with God's grace turn our lives around, that's resurrection. Whenever we forgive or are forgiven that's nothing short of Resurrection. These moments, however, point to a deeper longing which God has planted in the human heart. It is an eternal seed, a yearning for that fullness of life and love which only He can satisfy both here and in Eternity. St Augustine puts it succinctly: *"you have created us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee"*.

But since we're Easter people we should be bringing Resurrection into the lives of others who need it as well. Here's statistics than might astonish you. Drug deaths in England and Wales are at their highest level ever with roughly 4,500 people dying last year – The Home Office said crimes associated with drugs cost society nearly £20bn a year in England alone. It's part of the culture of death. Resurrection is badly needed here. What can I do to help bring it about? Prayer is most opportune.

May Christ, rising in glory, dispel the darkness from our minds and hearts and from the minds and hearts of all people who long to be set free from the shackles of the culture of death and experience new life in Christ? Happy Easter to you all.