

An Easter Reflection

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"Christ is risen! The Lord is risen indeed!"

- an historical event, a liturgical statement, a theological teaching, a focus on reality, a victory over death, a belief affirmation? This and many other reflections, of course, come from the Easter story which we hear annually.

I began my confrontation with death and dying as a child since I was raised in a funeral home where my father was a mortician, and, for a while, Coroner of Daviess Co., KY. My first personal death experience was my little cat, Daisy, followed by my grandfather in Tennessee. With good parents who took me to church regularly, I began the Easter pilgrimage early in life.

This quest of the Easter story evolved into my seminary days and first pastorate as I came face to face with the dying, bereavement counseling and officiating at funeral services. This ministry has been continuous for the past fifty-three years, and now as a bishop of the Church.

For twenty-five years I confronted the subject of life and death as a Naval Reserve Chaplain, from the Viet Nam era and past Desert Storm with all Sea Services (U.S. Navy, Marines and Coast Guard). I have been beside dying servicemen, made Casualty Assistance Calls informing families of their loved one's death, conducted funerals, and had burials at Arlington National Cemetery, Washington, D.C.

The teachings about the Resurrection of the Master Christ touched closer to home with the personal loss of my father, mother, mother and father in-law, son, Bobby, and friends. Such beliefs become more refined and definitely tested with such close encounters of reality.

Where did all of this Easter story begin? The Gospels identify Jerusalem as the place where Jesus suffered, died and arose some 2,000 years ago. Having lived in Jerusalem, and returned on several occasions, I have visited the Holy Sepulcher a number of times. This of course is the traditional site of the Easter story. Some of the feelings one has in this immediate area of those past events can reach deeply into one's soul.

Moreover, I have had the privilege of preaching at St. Andrew's Church of Scotland in Jerusalem (with a terrorist alert at the nearby British Consulate) as well as at the Jerusalem Baptist Church. I also said Mass according to our LCC Rite at the Roman Catholic Terra Sancta Chapel in the Holy City. Such liturgical involvement provided an inner light in giving the Easter affirmation a new meaning and a new life.

Easter is not just a story in a book, a Gospel lesson, or an annual Spring event, but something with implications for each individual which must be considered. It is a story of victory for each of us, and even the Easter eggs represent such affirmation of life. The great World-Teacher has passed through this experience, as Bishop Leadbeater affirmed, and it will lead us to the higher

glory and final triumph as it did for Him. (The Inner Side of Christian Festivals, p. 158)

The Holy Season of Easter is an affirmation of victory for our knowledge of life as we pass through these manifestations of the Divine plan. It is not just a story but an actuality that touches each of us as we embody such teachings. Physical lives terminate, but there is more to this as Easter affirms. As we look at our loved ones and friends, and even ourselves, we know that we live and die, but with the knowledge of rising in truth. Easter is a time of joy, triumph, victory, hope and new meaning.

*“The Lord is risen!
The Lord is risen indeed!”
and “Alleluia!”*

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