

Easter's Hope and Challenge

One of my favorite gospel narratives has always been St. Luke's version of the two disciples trudging to Emmaus that first Easter afternoon. There is something ironic about their complaint to their unrecognized Companion that Jesus was no longer with them. One can well imagine St. Luke smiling as he prepared his narrative for the needs and edification of the Church of his day — hoping to make people better understand what the Resurrection was all about and how to recognize the Risen Christ.

The important questions to meditate at Easter concern how we, personally, experience the Risen Christ, how the Resurrection has manifested itself in our lives. It is of consequence whether or not we truly live as resurrected Christians, whether our life-style proclaims to all that we are living that newness of life brought by Christ and recalled so many times in the Scriptures this season.

Today the Church sings out the Easter antiphon, "This is the day which the Lord has made; let us be glad and rejoice in it." This is the season when we celebrate the fact that Jesus Christ rose from the dead and still lives in our midst. That is the real point of Easter — not merely that Jesus came forth from the tomb two thousand years ago, but that He lives with us here, today, forever. "Behold, I am with you all days even to the end of the world."

Not only does He live but He makes His life available to us. He has defeated death and the same power which defeated death can be ours not only at journey's end and to make the hour of death the prelude to eternal life, but available here and now to help us be more alive. We rejoice because we have found a new hope — of something more in life, of something better.

Gone are the shadows of our own

nothingness, our disillusionment, our sad query, "Is that all there is?" A bright new springtime sun, the Son of God, calls us to wake up and live with Him to celebrate life because now it can be freed from binding passions and deadly defeats. Now it can find meaning and real dignity and enthusiasm and purpose. Life doesn't have to be smothered by "what's the use" or drowned in boredom and defeat.

The glory of Easter is this. Jesus lives and therefore I can find a new and better life, be more alive to everything and everybody, including myself. I can rise too — above circumstances, above pettiness, above my heavy selfishness which weighs me down. Like the two disciples who walked the road to Emmaus, sad, disillusioned, let down because the Jesus they had hoped in, had died on Friday. But now He walks with them and they are filled with joy and new hope when He reveals Himself to them "in the breaking of the bread." For those who, even today, discover the living Jesus in the breaking of bread at the Eucharistic table there is no need for the proof of the Resurrection. Jesus is there and joy is there.

The celebration of Easter is sometimes called the Paschal mystery because Jesus has become our Passover. Just as the Jews of old passed over from the slavery of Egypt to the freedom of the Promised Land, so Jesus by His Resurrection has given us the power to be free from death and its absurdity. Through Him we can be free of the day-by-day dying which men are enslaved to. He offers us the power and the will and the love to rise above our seemingly helpless sad condition; to deliver human beings from the death of hunger and poverty; to free men from the fetid death of war; to raise human beings from the death of degradation and meaninglessness; to free people from the suffocating and destructive slavery of passion. In short, Jesus can lead us all to a new and better life.

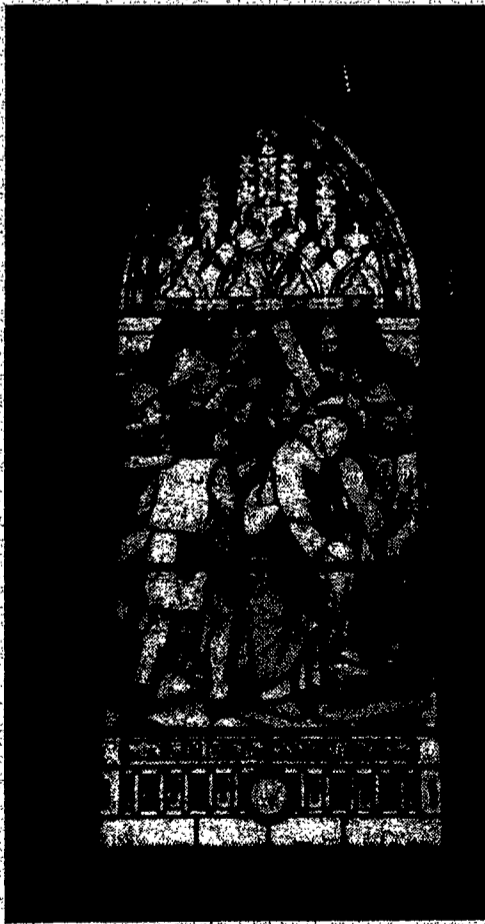
For many of us life is difficult and painful. Even for these, a new day is available. Back in the days of the Korean War there was a chaplain by the name of Emil Kapaum, who with a large group of his men was captured by the Chinese.

On the long march north of the Yalu River he helped carry a stretcher. He washed and replaced fetid bandages. At the risk of his life he foraged for corn by night to feed his starving men. His captors realized that as long as he was there they could never break the spirit of his soldiers. One of them said later, "By his very presence he could turn a stinking Korean mud hut into a cathedral." Was it his life or the life of Christ in him which was able to raise the whole sordid mess to a level of hope and brightness?

The same could be done for our own private world and human society itself — if we but will it. Indeed, there must be death just as there was Good Friday, but the trade we make is the trade of the puny death of our selfishness for the warm Easter sun of love with all its hope and promise. Someone once said, "If we walk away from the light which is Christ (the light of Easter morn) the shadows of the evils of life lengthen before us and we become victims of fear and anxiety. As we walk toward the light which is Christ the shadow falls behind us. When we are directly under the light, the shadow disappears."

Easter has happened and is happening. But has it happened to us? The choice is entirely ours. "Did not the Christ have to suffer these things before entering into His glory?" We give so little to gain so much. We live half a life instead of embracing a full life. It is the only real tragedy of the human state. As Francis Thompson put it, "All which thy child's mistake fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home; Rise, clasp my hand, and come."

In John Masefield's drama, *The Trial of Jesus*, there is a striking passage in which Longinus, the Roman centurion in command of the soldiers at the Cross, comes back to Pilate to hand in a report of his day's work. The report is given: then Procula, Pilate's wife, beckons to the centurion and begs him to tell her how the Prisoner died. And when the story has been told, "Do you think He is dead?" she suddenly asks. "No," answers Longinus. "I don't." "Then where is he?" "Let loose in the world my lady, where no one can stop his Truth."



Chapel Sees 100 Years

Art and architecture students from the world over yearly visit one of the most beautiful [yet least used] churches in the Diocese of Rochester.

For the past 100 years the Chapel of the Holy Souls has stood on the sward of Holy Sepulchre Cemetery. The stone Early English Gothic building was designed by A.J.

Warner and was built and dedicated in 1876. The tower, added nine years later, is the resting place of four of Rochester's bishops. The sandstone of which

the structures are made was quarried on the cemetery grounds. The Cock and the Cross atop the tower are made of solid copper. To

replace the bird alone would today cost \$1,200.

The stained glass windows depict the Way of the Cross and were executed in Ruremond, Holland.



Photos by Ben Susso