

CHURCH STUFF

(A newsletter for Catholic cadets)

Week of 20 April, 2003

To my Catholic brothers and sisters in the Corps:

May you have a **HAPPY EASTER!!**

The six weeks of Lent are over now, and hopefully, we've all become different people...in the best way possible.

Now we celebrate the ultimate miracle in life: **RESURRECTION.**

May the new life of Jesus make a difference in your own life.

Lord of such amazing surprises,
I praise you for this joy, too great for words,
for this great mercy of **RESURRECTION,**
which blots out my betrayals
and bids me to begin again
to limp on,
to hop-skip-and-jump on
and to mend what is broken around me.

I praise You for this **YES**
to life and laughter,
to love and lovers,
and to my unwinding self.

I praise You for this Kingdom
unleashed in me
that has no dead-ends to growth,
to chances,
to choices,
to calls to be just.

I praise You for this **RESURRECTION-madness**
which is wiser than I
and in which I see how great You are,
how full of grace.

Amen...and **ALLELUIA!**

And let's not forget our military brothers and sisters:

Praise to you, ever-watchful God,

for You are our refuge and our strength
in every time and place.
Send Your blessing on those
who are serving our country
in the Armed Forces.
By Your powerful Spirit,
shield them from all harm.
Uphold them in good times and bad,
especially when danger threatens.
Let Your peace be the sentry
that stands guard over their lives,
so that they may return home safely.
Look with compassion on all victims of war.
Ease their sufferings, and heal their wounds.
And grant Your eternal rest to all the dead.
Put an end to all wars over the earth,
and hasten the day when the human family
will rejoice in lasting peace.
We ask it through Jesus, the Prince of Peace.
Amen.

May God send us peace...and quickly.

THINGS CATHOLICS CAN DO:

SCHEDULE FOR HOLY WEEK (16-20 April)

HOLY THURSDAY (17 April)

- no morning or noon Masses.
- EVENING MASS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER
at the Chapel at 1900.

GOOD FRIDAY (18 April)

- no morning or noon Masses.
- GOOD FRIDAY LITURGY at the Chapel
at 1900.

HOLY SATURDAY (19 April)

- no morning or noon Masses.
- No 1715 Mass.
- EASTER VIGIL at the Chapel at 2000.

EASTER SUNDAY (20 April)

- Easter Masses at 0900 and 1100.

- Mass in WH5300 at 1715.

AN EASTER THOUGHT!

Here this morning, early, a silent explosion with a blinding light.

Perhaps.

Or maybe a deafening silence, and the stone rolls back from the entrance of the tomb, the sandy soil crunching quietly under the weight of the stone.

Within, nothing.

Within, nobody.

Empty.

Only the shroud the women wrapped him in is left.

Empty, but the air crackles with a kind of electricity.

Perhaps.

Something happened here.

Something happened.

We will always know what, but we will never know precisely what.

Something!

RESURRECTION!

No room to be simple-minded.

Not talking about a resuscitated corpse here.

Talking about RESURRECTION, a word we use to talk about Something that the human mind cannot begin to understand.

Something that happened.

Something.

RESURRECTION!

It happened to Jesus after he died.

Dead as can be, and it happened to him.

Dead as can be, and it happens –

IS happening –

WILL happen –

HAS happened –

to us as well.

To US!

RESURRECTION happened to Jesus, whatever it is.

A new and completely better life.

RESURRECTION is not merely a 2000-year-old happening, however.

It happens now.

We know the RESURRECTION because it happens –
is BEGINNING to happen –
to US.
Right here.
Right now.
It happens to us.

JESUS IS RISEN!!

Alleluia!
We are being raised,
and we are on our way to RESURRECTION.

Alleluia!
Dead as can be,
And it happens –
to US.

Alleluia!

DID YOU KNOW?

EASTER TRIVIA:

DANCING SUN: According to an old legend, the sun dances on Easter morning or makes three cheerful jumps at the hour of rising, in honor of Christ's Resurrection. The rays of light penetrating the clouds were said to be angels dancing for joy. In Ireland and England, people used to put a pan of water in an east window, and they watched the dancing sun mirrored in it.

EASTER CLOTHES: The newly-baptized Christians wore white garments of new linen, so a tradition arose of getting new clothes for EASTER. If you could afford to buy clothes but chose not to, then people believed that you would have bad luck. There was an old Irish saying: "For Christmas, food and drink; for EASTER, new clothes".

EASTER WALK: People in Europe used to walk through the fields and open spaces in their new clothes, following EASTER Mass. There would often be a parade through the towns and into the open country. A decorated crucifix or the large EASTER candle would be carried at the head of the procession.

EASTER LAUGHTER: On EASTER Sunday, people in towns and villages would come back to church in the evening for EASTER Vespers. In the sermon preceding the Service, the priest would often tell jokes or humorous fables with a moral, signifying that the serious season of Lent had ended and that

light-heartedness should be the order of the day.

EASTER EGGS: The symbolism is pretty obvious: just as new life bursts from the egg, so Christ bursts from the tomb. Thus, the egg assumed a primary place in the history of Christian customs, and history produced an unbroken penchant for elaborate egg-decoration, especially among Catholics of Eastern Europe.

EASTER BUNNIES: However cute they might be, the association of rabbits with EASTER has never had any religious significance. The animals were more a fertility-symbol associated with the coming of Spring and with reproduction.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

...all of our graduates and relatives serving in Iraq (and other places, too)...and their families.

...all our military brothers and sisters in harm's way...and their families.

...in thanksgiving for the safe return of the POWs.

...the wounded on both sides...and their families.

...the dead on both sides...and their families.

...the innocent non-combatant victims...and their families.

...the intention of peace and a just settlement...and a brighter future for the Iraqi people.

GOT A QUESTION?

Q: Father, we hear the name of Pontius Pilate during this time of year and in the Sunday Creed. Is there anything known about what happened to him?

A: Not too much...but here's the little that has come down through the ages.

First of all, no one knows his first name. Among the Romans, everyone had three names:

- a) personal ("first name");
- b) the "nomen" (identified the general group you came from);
- c) and the "cognomen" (the family name).

His personal (or "first") name wasn't "Pontius".

"Pontius" was his clan name; he was a Roman equestrian of the Samnite clan of the Pontii; hence, "Pontius".

And "Pilate" was his last (or "family") name. No one knows what that meant.

The Emperor Tiberius appointed him to be the "procurator" (or "administrator") of Judaea, Samaria and Idumaea...subject to the "legate (or "governor") of the Roman Province of Syria.

In 1961, a Latin inscription was found in the ruins of Caesarea (on the coast of Israel). It read "Pontius Pilatus praefectus Iudaeae", which means "Pontius Pilate, prefect of Judaea". So this would be an independent historical corroboration of the

biblical scenario.

From the Bible stories and from ancient historians like Josephus and Philo, it was very clear that Pilate was considered cruel, superstitious and vacillating. He also spent a lot of time offending the religious sensibilities of the Jewish people

For example, he had his Roman troops carry into Jerusalem the military standards which had the Emperor's image on them. This, of course, violated the First Commandment, which forbade the Jews to make images of anything (the outraged Jews forced him to remove the images in five days).

Another example was his financing of a Roman aqueduct in Jerusalem. He paid for it by robbing the Temple Treasury.

He minted coins with pagan symbols on them, slaughtered some Galilean pilgrims, and attacked Samaritans while they worshipped on their holy mountain Gerizim.

Finally, he was ordered back to Rome to stand trial for cruelty and oppression.

In the historian Philo's writings, there is a letter from King Herod Agrippa I to the Emperor Caligula, describing Pilate as inflexible, merciless and corrupt, and accusing him of executing people without a proper trial.

And of course, the picture painted of him in the accounts of the trial of Jesus in the Four Gospels portray him very unfavorably, too.

In a curious development, the Coptic Christians of ancient Abyssinia considered Pilate a "saint" ...because of legends that had grown up about him as being sympathetic to Jesus and of faithfully playing his part in the plan of God for the redemption of humanity.

And Pilate's wife (Matthew 27:19) tried to talk Pilate out of having any part in the execution of Jesus. Legend has given her the name "Claudia Procula", and the Greek Christians used to venerate her as a "saint", too.

According to one source, Pilate was ordered to commit suicide by the Emperor Caligula in AD 39.

According to another source, he was banished to Gaul, where he killed himself by jumping off a mountain (which has been called "Mons Pilatus" or "Mount Pilate" over the centuries.

But these sources are not terribly that reliable, and so the "bottom line" is that we don't really know very much about the man.

THEOLOGY EVERY CATHOLIC SHOULD KNOW:

RESURRECTION OF THE BODY:

EASTER means "resurrection" for Jesus...

a resurrection from death,

a resurrection of both "soul" and "body"

And it means the same thing for us.

For him, it meant

not simply overcoming death in some esoteric "spiritual" way;

It also meant that he did some BODILY things:

He ate fish with his followers (Luke 24);

He invited Thomas to feel the nail-prints in his hands

and to insert his fist into the wound in his side (John 20);

He used his voice to speak to Mary Magdalene (John 20), and

He gave little speeches to his witnesses,

commissioning them to be his disciples (Luke 24; Mark 16; Matthew 28)

That's why a portion of our Creed professes our belief in the

RESURRECTION OF THE BODY.

Some people think that after death, we simply become ANGELS –
disembodied spirits.

Some people think that the human body is a PRISON,
and the sooner we're rid of it, the better.

Some people think that somehow it's better to be a purely
SPIRITUAL BEING.

Some people think that when the body is lowered into the grave,
that's pretty much the end of the whole matter.

None of these are Christianity.

Christianity believes that in the end,

we will all be reunited with our bodies.

that those bodies will be GLORIFIED (like the body of Jesus)

and that until this happens, none of us is COMPLETE.

Thomas Aquinas (a 13th-century Catholic theologian) mentioned that
after his earthly death, his SOUL might be in heaven
but HE HIMSELF wouldn't be.

His point was that HE HIMSELF wouldn't be in heaven

until his SOUL and BODY were reunited on the last day

and he became a COMPLETE human being again.

In 1st Corinthians (chapter 15),

St. Paul devoted some space to his own thoughts

about "What will the new body be like?".

He didn't claim to have all the details,

but he believed that it would be such a wonderful reality

that he would scarcely be able to comprehend it.

He compared it to a kernel and a stalk of wheat.

No one who looks at a majestic stalk of full-grown wheat

could ever imagine that it came

from a single dry-brown kernel (1 Corinthians 15:35ff).

The kernel of wheat had to "die"

before it could become something new and wonderful.
It's something like that with the human body.

So for the Christian,
the body is not an accident
nor a non-essential entity.
It's an essential part of our nature.
It's destined for GLORY.

As St. Paul put it: "Glorify God in your BODY" (I Corinthians 6:20).

UNSOLICITED SPIRITUAL THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

"What people don't realize
is how much religion COSTS.
They think that FAITH is a big electric blanket,
when, of course, it is the CROSS.
It is MUCH harder to believe than not to believe.
Don't expect FAITH to clear things up for you.
It is TRUST, not certainty."

Flannery O'Connor
(d. 1964)

And that's the way it is, a day like all days, filled with those events that alter and illuminate our time...

and YOU ARE THERE!!

My very best to all of you
for a great Easter Day!
Just stop and think about
what it all meant.

Woodie