

THE RECTOR'S MESSAGE-APRIL 2007

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THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE FEAST OF THE RESURRECTION(EASTER)

The Feast of the Resurrection of Christ, is the greatest and the oldest feast of the Christian Church. If you do not believe in the Resurrection of Jesus, you cannot claim to be a Christian. The Feast of the Resurrection, did not originate from a pagan Festival. The derivation of the name Easter is uncertain. According to the Venerable Bede, it is connected with an Anglo-Saxon spring goddess, 'Eostre' The popular custom of exchanging Easter eggs is a very ancient custom. Christianity did not originate in Europe but in the East, so we must be careful how we genuflect to European ancient cultural practices. Many of the funeral rituals which we do in Jamaica, did, not originate in Western Europe, but from the Ashanti tribe in Ghana. e.g; the ringing of bells, leaving food for the dead, incense, holy water, white rum, nine night, the wearing of black and red vestments are all from the Ashanti in Ghana. The military has a 21 gun salute if a soldier dies while the Ashanti released spears in the air. Every religion has to adjust to some of the indigenous cultural practices, that are compatible with the teachings of that particular faith, so is the case with Christianity. The most effective form of evangelism is when the Church understands the cultural practices of the local people and then interprets the Gospel of Jesus within that context. That is why the Church in Africa is growing, because, there are more Anglicans in Africa and not in England or the USA.

THE DATE OF EASTER.

The date of the Easter Feast is determined by the Paschal Full moon, its extreme limits being the 21st March and the 25th April. In the early Church the two principal methods of computation were those of the Alexandria(owing to its astronomical resources) and Rome. There was a long controversy, but, it was not only the Council of Whitby 664AD,that the Anglican Bishops decided to accept the practise of Rome. It was the black African Pope Victor(189-198.AD) who ordered that Easter should be celebrated not on the 14th of Nisan ,but, on the following Sunday.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESURRECTION(Biblical and theological)

Christianity is a faith of the Resurrection, because the Epistles and the Gospels were written after the Resurrection. The Epistle to the Galatians is the first to be written and Mark is the first Gospel. You could not be deemed an Apostle unless you saw the risen Christ. Let us begin with the Gospel of John which has a very powerful statement. John 11:21-27. Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whosoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" Jesus is saying that he is the fulfilment of future expectations. The promise of the resurrection and life is not to be seen as a distant event, but it is available now in the person of Jesus. Jesus is also affirming that he is the resurrection and the life and is very clear about his sovereignty over the present and future lives of believers..

The Resurrection is connected to two verbs. I "believe"(pisteuo) and 'live'(zao).Jesus is telling us that to believe that Jesus is the resurrection, means that physical death has no power over believers; their future is determined by their faith in Jesus, and not

by their death .Jesus is also reiterating that for Him to be the life means that the believer's present is also determined by the power of Jesus for life, experienced in his gift for eternal life.

Luke is very clear that the New Testament does not represent the fact that the death of Jesus would have been adequate for salvation apart from the resurrection. The two are fused so that neither can be considered apart from the other. It is not that someone has been raised but, it is God who has raised Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus is God's response to the death of Jesus, God's vindication of Jesus of Jesus, and God's validation of Jesus' preaching of the kingdom of the poor, the outcast, and the homeless. Luke is very clear that "He is not here; he is risen"

Luke seems to be telling us that we are looking for Jesus in the wrong place, and so he said "why are we looking for the living among the dead"(Luke.24:5) The grave is not the final reality for human experience, because Jesus was raised from the dead. Some of us are still searching for Jesus among negative vibrations, forgetting that we are called to be resurrected people instead of people who seem to be spending valuable moments to get ourselves involved in events that picture death rather than life. The resurrected people are those who constantly encounter the transforming presence and power of God.

Luke is also very clear about the role of women in the resurrection and we must not reject the gender issues as we look at the stewardship of women in our nation. The report of the women was credible, because(i)they were relating events of which they had first hand experience;(ii) there were several witnesses and(iii) their character has been established by the reports of selfless service to Jesus and his disciples.(iv)Their report would also include that the Angel announced our Lord's resurrection. The resurrection is not about the stone that was rolled away, but, it is about the following:(i)The presence of the risen Lord in human experiences.(ii) It is about the personal encounter with the risen Lord that leads to faith(iii) It is about the persistence of the women who were convinced that Jesus was alive.

Our Resurrection has been guaranteed, because Jesus' resurrection has secured our future." And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive"

The Resurrected Jesus expects Jamaicans to desist from looking for the living among the dead, by helping to create a society that is seriously committed to one that is built upon the respect for others. A resurrected people have no time to be constantly generating a Cult of death, where funerals depict consumerism, and materialistic views as relatives compete for media presence. So, according to Christine Ledger,(1989)we are losing the spirit of community, and so we are no longer learning to grieve or celebrate, because of the demise of anything that is sacred and permanent.. The cult of relativity has removed the transcendence, of God, so there is no hope in the future, but, only to genuflect to the wishes of the market. The incarnate Christ is always alive in history, in our lives and our relationship with Him.