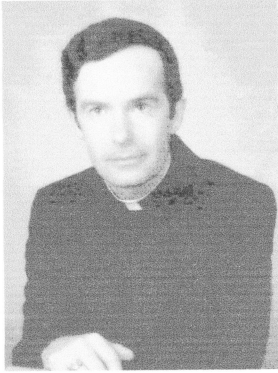


## Chaplain's Corner, Hughes Camp Chaplain Richard W Rudd



A traveler from other parts of the US will readily notice that during Holy Week only in the South do people, even clerks in stores, greet each other with blessings and best wishes for the celebration of Easter. At a time when many have become

too timid to wish each other a merry Christmas, this traditional southern greeting at Easter exemplifies the firm foundation upon which southern culture is based.

Although the observance of Christ's resurrection is commonly referred to as Easter, the proper name, taken from the Hebrew and Greek, is Pasch. The Venerable Bede, a scholarly English monk who lived in the late 7<sup>th</sup> and early 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, noted that the term Easter is derived from Eastre, a pagan goddess of spring honored in April. Most pagan religions, from early Anglo-Saxon and Teutonic Europe, to ancient Rome, Greece, Syria, Egypt, Phoenicia, and Assyria all trace their roots to Babel, later called Babylon. It was here that Nimrod, the great grandson of Noah, and his subjects cultivated a demonically inspired religious system learned from the Nephilim. Ishtar, the Babylonian source of Eastre, was Nimrod's wife. When he died, she contrived his deification as a sun god and elevated herself as a fertility goddess of the moon. Ishtar later had an illegitimate son called Tammuz. According to Ishtar's story, he was supernaturally conceived and identified as Nimrod reborn from the dead. Ultimately, Tammuz was killed by a wild boar, but his spirit was said to revive each spring in nature and the animal fertility rites of Babel's occultic religion. Rabbits, notorious for propagating themselves, were chosen as symbols of fertility. Eggs were associated with the myth surrounding Ishtar, who claimed as her origin emerging from an egg that descended from the heavens over the Euphrates River. This myth of

Ishtar and Tammuz spread through the ages and across different civilizations. Only their names were changed. This explains why well-meaning Christians today naively call Pasch Easter and associate it with Easter bunnies, Easter eggs, and the consumption of ham relating to the wild boar that killed Tammuz.

The true faith and meaning of the Pasch is found in a summary of the four Gospel accounts of Christ's Passion and resurrection. After Christ's sacrificial death on the Cross to make forgiveness of sin and salvation available to all mankind, Joseph of Arimathea placed His body in the tomb. The following morning, Mary Magdalene and other women visited the tomb where they met two angels who informed them that Christ had risen and would be seen by His disciples in Galilee. As they turned away to report their experience to the apostles, Christ appeared to them. During the next forty days, the risen Christ appeared to His disciples twice in the room where they had locked themselves, to two disciples on the Emmaus Road, at the Sea of Tiberias, to 500 at once, and later to Paul on the Damascus Road.

Perspective is crucial; it is the appearance of the parts of a whole, be they objects, events, or scenes, as determined from a point of view regarding their relationship with reference to distance, depth, or time. Although the Pasch was celebrated only a few days ago, how near are we to it? Only a few days? No, this last Pasch has receded into the past, never to be experienced again. The only Pasch we can hope to experience again waits in the future. But, with each passing day, we move closer to it. It is to the future, not the past, that we must look. It is important to note that subsequent to Christ's death and burial, neither Mary Magdalene nor the apostles sought Christ at Golgotha, Gethsemane, Nazareth, Bethlehem, or other previous locations. They encountered and experienced Christ in a new way, starting at the

tomb and at other sites following His resurrection, ultimately witnessing His ascension into Heaven from the Mount of Olives.

After a beloved relative or dear friend, who placed their trust in Christ, dies, we remember with fondness our previous association with them in this life. However, with each passing day those cherished experiences we recall recede farther and farther into the past. This is when a proper perspective becomes vital. A Christian perspective sees this world, this life, and those events that transpire in it from the vantage point of the Cross with an extended view toward the dimension of eternity. When Peter and John heard that Christ had risen, "...they went toward the tomb. They both ran, but (John) outran Peter and reached the tomb first..." (Jn. 20:3) Those who have preceded us into eternity have outrun us as John did Peter. They have gone on ahead of us as fellow travelers to that "...undiscovered country from whose shore no traveler returns..." (Shakespeare, Hamlet, Act 3) And, like Peter who followed John, we are also racing, not farther away, but closer to those with whom we hope to be reunited and to Christ. During those last few years of his life after the war, Gen. Lee once commented that when death came calling on him, he would not offer much resistance, because he now had more souls waiting for him on the other side than he had left in this world. "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, ... let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the Pioneer and Perfecter of our faith..." (Heb. 12:1) "We have this... sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain (the temple veil that separates this world from the Holy of Holies in eternity), where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf..." (Heb. 6:19) This is the true message and hope of the Pasch.

***Fr. Richard Rudd, Hughes Camp Chaplain***