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## Greetings to the Sir Knights of Texas:

### Versicles for Eastertide

*This is the day which the Lord hath made: Let us rejoice and be glad in it. The stone which the builders refused is become the capstone. O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is gracious: and his mercy endureth for ever. (from Psalm 118) Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (1 Corinthians 5:7). Where is Death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory? Through cloud and sunshine, Lord, abide with me. (H.F. Lyte, 1847)*

The earliest recorded celebration of our Lord's resurrection comes from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century. The English word **Easter**, which parallels the Germanic word **Ostern**, is of debatable origin. A common view, expounded in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century by the Venerable Bede—foremost Anglo-Saxon theologian and historian—is that the word came from **Eostre**, the Germanic goddess of spring and fertility, and for whom the Anglo-Saxons named the month of April (*Eostre-monadh*). Even such a nominal connection with pre-Christian belief and practice has received much sardonic comment over the years, from non-Christians and those who may not realize that as early as the 6<sup>th</sup> Century, missionaries of the organized church deliberately set out to absorb many pre-Christian festivals and symbols, where possible.

For instance, some have avoided Easter Eggs as pagan symbols—as certainly they once were, like the Christmas tree. Decorating eggs for Easter became Christian practice as early as the 13<sup>th</sup> Century. At that time, the church forbade eating chicken eggs the week before Easter. In response, observant Christians began to paint their “Holy Week Eggs;” the egg itself became a joyous and fitting symbol of Christ's resurrection. New life emerging from the eggshell symbolized the emergence of our Lord from the sepulchre. In 1878, Lucy Hayes--wife of the president—sponsored the first annual Easter Egg roll on the White House lawn

The association of a rabbit with Easter arose in Protestant areas in Europe in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century.

After the Resurrection, on the Road to Damascus, Saul the hateful Pharisee became St. Paul, who zealously preached our Lord's New Covenant: *“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it; thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”* Sir Knight Albert Pike wrote that Jesus was not the first in history to advocate balancing concern for others with concern for self, but he was the first to insist that his Golden Rule transcended **ALL** the Old Testament laws, regulations, and interpretations.

In 2 Corinthians 3:6, Paul writes of our Lord: *“Who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.”* Often called the “Second Founder of Christianity,” Paul emphasized figurative rather than literal interpretation of Scripture. His less exclusive faith made room for gentiles and women. For Paul, with the Resurrection dawned a new age that was to divide history into B. C. (before Christ) and A. D. (*anno domini*, in the year of our Lord). The Passover meal became *The Last Supper*, or *Holy Communion*. Sunday supplanted the Jewish Sabbath.

Most importantly, Easter signifies for the faithful what has been called **“the radiance of Christianity,”** reflected in the verses of *Victory*, an anonymous Latin hymn written *circa* 1695:

*The strife is o'er, the battle done, The victory of life is won; The song of triumph has begun. Alleluia!*

*The powers of death have done their worst, But Christ their legions hath dispersed: Let shouts of holy joy outburst. Alleluia!*

*He closed the yawning gates of hell, The bars from heaven's high portals fell; Let hymns of praise his triumphs tell. Alleluia!”*

### **Christ is risen! In his name may Easter Eggs roll!**

*The foregoing message was prepared by the Eminent Grand Prelate, Sir Knight and Rev. J. Knox Duncan, at the request of our Right Eminent Grand Commander, Dock F. Dixon Jr.*

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