

Texas Grand Prelate's Message

Page updated April 22, 2004

Grand Prelate's Message - April 2004

Taken from the Texas Insert for the Knight Templar Magazine
Volume L, Number 4, April 2004

Easter is universally celebrated in one form or another by Christians throughout the world. It is a time when we recognize the Resurrection of Christ, and in our part of the world, we put on our new spring wardrobe and attend special church services designated for that purpose. Many attend special outdoor sunrise services. They may later attend regular services at the church of their choice. As Templars, we prefer to meet for regular service as a Commandery at a specified church somewhere in our area. Sometime during the day, our younger children hunt colorful eggs that we have told them the Easter bunny has hidden for them. However done, it is a holy celebration, and should be a time of reflection on just how much our Savior did for us. The celebration has not always been that way. Easter was originally a pagan festival, and even in our present day, some of those pagan symbols still persist.

The ancient Saxons celebrated the return of spring by shedding their winter clothes for new spring togs and held an uproarious festival commemorating their goddess of offsprings and springtime. Her name was Eastre, and the celebration came to be known by her name. Eastre was worshiped by Anglo-Saxons through her earthly symbol, the rabbit, and eggs were exchanged as a way of celebrating spring rebirth.

When the second-century Christians encountered the tribes of the north, they, in keeping with Jesus' "Great Commission," attempted to convert them to Christianity; however, they had to do so in a clandestine manner. It would have been suicide for them to celebrate their holy days with observances that did not coincide with celebrations that already existed. They decided to spread their religious message slowly by allowing their converts to continue to celebrate pagan feasts, but in a Christian manner. Since the pagan festival of Eastre occurred at the same time of the year as the Christian observance of the Resurrection of Christ, it made sense to alter the festival itself to make it a Christian celebration as converts were slowly won over. The early name, Eastre, was eventually changed to its modern spelling, Easter.

How fortunate for us that our early Christians used the pagan device as a means of commemorating and celebrating the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior. How fitting that this pagan holiday celebrating the renewal of Spring has become one celebrating the new birth of Christians made possible through our Savior's sacrifice. This doesn't seem so strange though when we think of it in the same light as the Apostle Paul writing to the Church of Rome. He wrote, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

God works in wonderful ways. Enjoy his blessings.

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