

kind with light; and some philologists assert that this circumstance is suggestive of the word Easter which has the same signification as the Latin word *Resurrectio*.

Others claim that Easter is derived from the German, *ôstra*, which signifies "a rising"; and some, amongst whom is the Venerable Bede, contend that Easter is the Saxon word, "Eostre" (an old Saxon deity); and they tell us, further, that our April was known as "esaternmonadth." The most acceptable derivation is seemingly the German (from "ôstra") as this also is the parent of our word East ("where the sun rises"). At Easter the Sun of Divine Goodness rises to enlighten mankind. The celebration of Easter dates from the earliest days of Christianity; but it is impossible to determine accurately the exact year of its institution. In primitive times two modes of celebrating the Festival were in vogue; and Apostolic precedent was claimed for both. The Western Church (Rome) celebrated Easter on the Sunday after *14th Nisan*, i.e., the Sunday following the first full moon after the vernal equinox; because it was on this day that Christ rose from the dead and completed the work of the Redemption. This, it is claimed, was the practice of Sts. Peter and Paul.

The Eastern Church (Antioch) celebrated Easter on the day of the Jewish Passover—*14th Nisan*—regardless of the day of the week on which it fell, and invoked the authority of St. John, in justification of the observance. Those who observed this custom were known as "Quartodecimani" (Fourteenth Dayers). Out of these differences arose the famous "Paschal Controversies," which were acrimoniously waged until the Council of Nicæa (325) decreed that Easter should be celebrated on the Sunday immediately following the fourteenth day of the so-called Paschal moon, which occurs on or after the vernal equinox. This falls invariably on March 21; so the earliest date on which Easter can occur is March 22, the latest on April 25th.

Easter has ever been celebrated with the greatest possible solemnity; and previous to the XIIth century, every day of Easter week was kept as a holiday of obligation. Eastertide was preceded by a period of fasting (as it still is), and fast ended with the cock-crow on Easter morn. The vigil (Holy Saturday) was set apart as a special season for the baptism of catechumens; and the Feast itself was a day of universal rejoicing. Gregory of Nazianzen terms it "the royal day amongst days," and St. Leo calls it "the feast of feasts."

The early Christian Emperors signalized Eastertide by set-