

The Catholic Weekly Review.

A JOURNAL DEVOTED TO THE INTERESTS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN CANADA

Reddite quæ sunt Cæsaris, Cæsari; et quæ sunt Dei, Deo.—Matt. 22: 21.

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EASTER.

Surrexit Dominus vere Alleluia!

(Invitatory at the Easter Matins).

Paschal, or Easter-tide, is a term applied to the space of time that elapses between Easter Sunday and the Saturday after Pentecost. The name Paschal comes from *pascha*, the term which the Church herself uses when speaking of Easter in her liturgy. It is of Jewish origin and refers to the Passover. The English name *Easter* is taken from the Saxon goddess, *Eostre, Eastre, Ostara*, as she is differently named, for, in this case, as in so many others, Saxon heathen nomenclature has kept its ground in the English language. Easter Day is also called the *Feast of Feasts*, the *Solemnity of Solemnities*, and to this day may be specially applied the verse of the Psalms (117: 24): "This is the day which the Lord hath made, let us be glad and rejoice therein," for, though He made every day, yet this is the day when we can sing: "Death is swallowed up in victory"; "Thanks be to God who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15: 54, 57).

It was on the first day of the week that the Incarnate Word rose from the dead, thus, a second time, consecrating the day of Sunday on which God had commenced the creation of the world; henceforth, therefore, the Saturday, or Sabbath, ceases to be the day that is to be kept holy.

The Holy Church imposes on all her children the obligation of receiving Holy Communion at Easter. In the early ages the Faithful received Communion frequently, and, in some places, daily. This first fervour was lost, and in A.D. 506, we find that the Faithful were called on to make at least *three* Communions a year, at Christmas, Easter and Pentecost, or be no longer counted as Catholics. Since the General Council of Lateran, however, in A.D. 1215, the Church has only insisted on one Communion yearly, but, if this yearly Easter Communion is neglected without valid excuse, the delinquent is to be denied Christian sepulture after death. The time allowed for this Easter Communion varies in the different dioceses, according to the exigences of the people, and it is decided by the respective Bishops. Formerly, the whole octave of Easter was kept holy, servile work being forbidden, but this lengthened holy rest

became curtailed to three days, then to two days, and now is no longer observed. In many places, however, Easter Monday is a legal holiday.

For forty days after Easter no fast is proscribed by the Church, and in the early days the Faithful at this time did not kneel during the divine offices, but this custom has now disappeared.

Of all the Liturgical year this season is the most fruitful in mysteries. The other seasons, each in turn, prepares us for this culmination, this triumph of life over death, this great day which is symbolical of the true Easter, that blessed eternity when "time shall be no longer" (Apoc. 10: 6). Since the Son of God has risen from the sepulchre and become "the first born from the dead" (Col. 1: 18), the Church would have us also look on ourselves as living again with Him and already in possession of eternal life. The Church commences her Easter rejoicings on Easter Eve, on the afternoon of Holy Saturday. We have already alluded to the anticipation of events which is practised by the Church in her Liturgy, especially in these present days, when the faithful no longer flock to the churches at night to pass the hours of repose in prayer. The joyful Alleluia has already sounded in our ears, and now, on the eve of the great Feast, the *Invitatory, Surrexit Dominus vere, Alleluia!* (the Lord is risen indeed), invites us to take part in the Psalms, lessons and hymns of Matins and Lauds, which all tell of the Resurrection of our Lord. At the end of Matins is sung the glorious Ambrosian hymn, the *Te Deum*, which, since Septuagesima, has so seldom gladdened our hearts.

The Matins are immediately followed by Lauds, at the end of which it is usual to salute her who is inseparably united to our Saviour, His incomparable Mother, with that glorious Anthem, *Regina Cæli, lætare*, (Rejoice, O Queen of Heaven), which, tradition tells us, was first intoned by the angels themselves.

"All Easter joys be yours," is the greeting amongst the faithful as they throng, from the earliest dawn, to the churches to partake of the Bread of Life, for, even in these lukewarm days, on no Feast are the churches so crowded as on Easter Day. Lamps, tapers, flowers, all combine to heighten the festive beauty of the altars, and, placed in state beside the principal altar, burns the Paschal candle, that mysterious symbol of Christ, our Light, who will live and converse with his Apostles for the coming forty days that are to elapse before His Ascension.

The vestments that are worn this day by the priests on the altar are the most splendid to be procured, and in rich churches they are covered with gold embroidery and precious stones. The wealth and beauty of those used in the old Catholic countries are almost inconceivable. White is the colour commanded, but the original material is so thickly overlaid and encrusted with precious stones and metals, that a most dazzling effect is produced. The offices on Easter Sunday and the following days are very short, but they are made festive and splendid by beauty of language, by wealth of decoration, and by all the sweet, entrancing sounds that musical art can command. Allusion has frequently been made to the severity of the Lenten fast. In the earlier ages, the faithful would not resume their wonted nourishment without previously having some of it solemnly blessed in the church, and the prayers are still extant with which the Paschal lamb and eggs were blessed before they were partaken of.

G. M. WARD.