

Why I Am Catholic

Easter.

Yes, Christian denominations celebrate Easter, but they must take their traditions from the originals: the Catholic Church and the Orthodox. The connection between Christ's Resurrection and the start of the "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church" through Peter and the Apostles is very clear. In John's gospel, Christ's first resurrection words are: "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." (Jn 20:21)

Since the beginning, Easter has been a source of controversy. Matthew tells us of the action of the chief priests on Easter Sunday: ". . . then they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, telling them, 'You are to say, 'His disciples came by night and stole him while we were asleep'". . . And this story has circulated among the Jews to the present [day]." (Mt 28:12-13, 15)

A present day being some 35-40 years after Christ's death and resurrection!

St. Paul also speaks of the challenge the cross creates. "The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are saved it is the power of God. . . we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles. . . you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, as well as righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. . ." (I Cor 1:18, 23, 30)

The English word Easter, according to historian St. Venerable Bede, emerged sometime before the 10th century from *Estre* or *Eastre*, the German pagan goddess of "the rising light of day and spring." (*Catholic Encyclopedia*) Since the earliest of days, the word *Pascha* (Greek) or *Pesach* (Hebrew) has been used meaning Passover. (*Wikipedia*) The Easter candle is also known as the Paschal Candle.

Pope Leo I (440-461) calls Easter "the greatest feast and says that Christmas is celebrated only in preparation for Easter." (*Catholic Encyclopedia*) Without Christ's birth, there is no Easter; but without Easter, Christmas loses its meaning. We believe that all of human history points towards Easter. And that Easter celebrates Christ's triumph over sin and death, His forgiveness of our sins, and the promise of eternal life.

He is risen!