

THE EASTER CHALLENGE

Easter of my youth revolved around the home and church, our family and the Lord's family. The table was set in a festive manner with its traditional cloth table covering, the centerpiece of which was a crystal bowl filled with fruit and nuts. The devotions in church were a part of the season, and we would not think to miss any of them. Mother's Easter eggs were a rich brown from the onionskins that she put in the water when they were boiled. Following prayer and the house blessing administered by my father, each one of us divided our egg and shared a portion of it with the others.

Everything seemed fresh and new. It was the Resurrection! We had been to Confession and the Easter liturgical celebrations heralded in a sense of being able to start anew. The Lord had done this for us. We came to realize once more (in one way or another) that we were a people of the resurrection. It was a happy and innocent time. And, of course, it still is like that.

Much of today's society does not appear to be able to handle that, however. At the time that Christians commemorate their high holy days, the mass media and the entertainment world pull out their stock of articles, surveys, programs, investigations, pseudo-historical portrayals, and reports of archeological digs to get you to think. While we Christians celebrate the reason for being a better people and, thereby, a better society, certain sectors want you to know that you could be wrong.

And, of course, so could they. Such questions as whether or not Jesus was born actually on December 25 and in the year zero or whether the Shroud of Turin is authentic do not form the basis of our Faith. We all know that the calendar we use was devised only after Jesus' birth. As for the Shroud, - if it is not authentic, it is so perfect an imitation of the one in which the Lord might have been buried that it baffles scientists to this day. It would be a perfect forgery.

I saw part of a "documentary" on Jesus the other evening (part because I could not stand any more). It appeared to me that it was attempting to explain Jesus' actions and teachings too much by his social setting and the conditions of the time, rather than crediting his divine message. According to the narrators, Jesus did what He did and said what He said because of the situation in which He and the people found themselves.

Dah! That is the whole reason for Good Friday and Easter Sunday! These days are about rising above where we find ourselves, but in terms of a relationship with our God. It is about fundamental change.

Change they can see; but change of a different kind. There is the recent Newsweek article entitled "The End of Christian America." The title alone waves a red flag in front of Christians. As with any piece of writing (including this column), that particular commentary makes both good and bad points in the mind of the reader. One of the quotes in the article that I like is the one attributed to the columnist Cal Thomas, "No country can be truly Christian. Only people can."

The memory of what Jesus did has survived two thousand years of cynics. It will survive many more. Jesus did die for you and me, - and not for the nation. That responsibility He left to us.