

*Patriarch's Easter 1992 Message***REJUVENATION & ETERNAL JOY**

Once a year, on Easter Sunday, filled with new hopes and expectations, Christians all over the world set about celebrating the Resurrection of the Lord.

It is a great, festive occasion. The weather has turned reinvigoratingly warm, with perhaps a gentle breeze to tantalize us. Flowers are blooming in the fields, now carpeted with rows of multi-hued flowers peeping shyly out of their earthen bosom. The cold, stifling blanket of monotonous white snow has been packed away. Spring is in the air. Winter is over. The world is reborn. We are rejuvenated, and can look forward to another year of struggle and achievement, and perhaps turmoil, with cheer in our hearts.

In many local Christian dialects, Easter is called the "great feast." For it is indeed the greatest in the Christian calendar. Although the birth of Christ, which heralded the promise of salvation for mankind is equally great cause for celebration, it is the further reassurance of being reborn into the Kingdom of Heaven, implied in the Easter message, that gives meaning and added impetus to the quest for salvation.

But the message of Easter should not be confined to that particular occasion only. If we think of rejuvenation and resurrection only

in connection with Easter and spring, then we do not truly understand the full implications of this glorious feast. Christ's message of salvation and rebirth is for all time. Every single day of the year can be transformed into an Easter, bearing that message which can metamorphose our humdrum life from one of unending toil and drudgery, replete with fear and trepidation, to one of eternal sunshine and joy. It is not only on Easter Sunday that Christ is present among us. He is with us every single moment of our life, if we want Him.

If we confine prayer and jubilation to only one particular point in time, then we are depriving ourselves of a great boon, of a heavenly grace: perpetual joy. Christ is with us till the end of time. We can find Him and reach Him any time we want. He will never turn His face away from us. He will be our guide and point out the way for us, and it is up to us to walk in that way.

For though the Lord give us the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet shall not His face be turned away from us anymore, but our eyes shall see His glory and our ears shall hear a word behind us saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it."

To walk in the footsteps of the Lord, what greater ecstasy can there be? To make straight in the wilderness the path to the Lord, to know that we are walking along this

path, and to be aware that we are not alone, but that His spirit is hovering protectively over us to guide us, to prevent us from straying and sinning, yet at the same time fully confident that should we unwittingly stray, He will not only lead us back into righteousness, but teach us repentance and help us reverse our temporary lapses, and forgive us our trespasses - this is living the true Christian way, in the spirit of Easter.

Perhaps, the real import of Easter is best understood by the children who are so much wiser than us, in so many ways. Christ always loved little children, and never tired of reminding us that it is only he, whose heart is as pure and innocent as a child's, who will be worthy of entering the Kingdom of Heaven.

Look at them, dressed in their Sunday best, as they gambol around joyfully, cracking those colorful eggs and munching those sweet Easter pastries. There is something so contagious in their pure joy of living. But this joy is not confined to Easter - it is omnipresent. Of course, children have their own terrors and nightmares, too. But those are incidentals, quickly forgotten, never permanent: their life is suffused with the pure joy of being. Like the lilies of the field which delight in the mere act of blooming, or like the birds on the wing which delight in the mere act of flying, children find immense pleasure in just being alive.

This is exactly the way we

grownups, supposedly more sophisticated than children, should understand Easter. Pure unalloyed joy, which can change the base metal of our lives into priceless, shining gold.

Easter reminds us once more that Christ has risen from the dead that He has triumphed over destruction and evil.

May we all triumph over the little evils that plague our lives, and may we walk in the shadow of the glory and grace of God, now and forever.

AMEN.