

Column – Easter Egg

For many dyeing and hiding Easter eggs was and is a yearly ritual. Some even have baskets handed down from their parents and grandparents that are brought out each year. When I was growing up, not every egg would be found. It might be months later that those missing eggs, by this time faded and with foul contents, would turn up.

In my family, there was no real attempt to link together the yearly egg ritual with what happened at church on Easter morning. There, the resurrection of Jesus was proclaimed. With the women who arrived very early on that first Easter morning, we heard the words: “Why seek ye the living among the dead?” Hymns such as “Jesus Christ is ris’n today” and “Welcome happy morning” were sung . . . and then we went home to a nice meal and back to our colored eggs.

Is there any correlation between the two, between colored eggs and Christ? Many would say the connection is at best tenuous. They would argue that springtime egg rituals go back beyond the Christian era and are a carryover from pagan practices. Only later would the egg come to represent the sealed tomb of Christ cracked open on Easter morning.

A delightfully story from the Eastern Orthodox tradition, however, goes in the opposite direction and gives a positive spin to the egg at Easter. It goes like this:

Mary Magdalene, one of the first witnesses of the empty tomb, would later be brought before the Emperor of Rome, Tiberius Caesar. There, she would proclaim the resurrection of Christ. To make her point, she brought along an egg. Presenting it before the emperor, she explained that the crucified Jesus had come out of the tomb just as a baby chicken comes out of his shell.

Unconvinced, the emperor said: “There is more chance that the egg you are holding will turn red than this man returned to life after He died.” No sooner had he spoken these words than the egg turned red. Thus, the custom of dying eggs at Easter began.

Fanciful as this story may sound, it reminds us of one that is not, one grounded in cold, hard fact. The grave could not hold Jesus. He who was dead is alive and now offers life – eternal life – to all who come to Him. More than that,

the victory achieved that day came through His shed blood . . . no doubt the symbolism of the color red.

Don't rob the children of their fun, dye eggs and hide them, but don't stop there. Connect the dots. Tell them the story of Jesus and the empty tomb. Guide their lips in proclaiming: Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! . . . Alleluia!

O GOD, who for our redemption didst give thine only-begotten Son to the death of the Cross, and by his glorious resurrection hast delivered us from the power of our enemy; Grant us so to die daily from sin, that we may evermore live with him in the joy of his resurrection; through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

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