

Easter –What Now!

Easter has just passed and for most is easily forgotten in the haste of preparing for summer, burning the last of the wood and thankfully swapping over the snow tires for summer ones. But Easter is just the beginning of things and not the end.

In the lead up to Easter we have Lent, a period to remind ourselves of the sacrificial work of Christ and for Christians this is worked out by giving up something, usually food we delight in eating. The fifth week of Lent heralded the beginning of Passiontide, which lasted from the evening prayer of the 5th Sunday of Lent until the Easter Eve. This passion time typified by the dolorus chorus is full of great sorrow or distress, leading us thoughtfully into the Holy Week of Easter.

For many, crosses and images of Christ are veiled during Passiontide, usually with an undecorated purple cloth, allowing us to focus not upon image but the great work of redemption bought by Jesus Christ for all those who believe in Him. Readings from the Bible at this time often come from John Chapter 8 where we find our Lord in increasingly difficult conversation and tension with the religious leaders who are at odds with His message of love and reconciliation with God.

A friend of mine recently reminded me that Lent is about clarifying our desires. We think we know what we want only to discover so often that we are mistaken. Our desires can be a problem, in the workplace, our churches and in our families, often creating division and opposition. Those embracing Judaism, Christianity & Islam claim to find truth in the desire to fulfill the will of God and yet it is often self- will that is in reality the thing that is fulfilled.

The opposite of fulfilling our own desires is service and sacrifice. The supreme act of service to others was in the redemptive work of Christ upon the cross, paving the way for all those who have trusted in Him to have their sins forgiven and receive eternal life. Second to this, there is perhaps no greater service than to give birth to another, with all of the associated risks, hardships and pain that comes with being a mother.

The Church of England has a service especially for the giving thanks for the great pain and peril of child-birth and recognizes in many ways that the birth of a child is, for parents, the beginning of a life of putting aside ourselves and our own desires for the sake of another with all the associated joys and blessings that come from such personal sacrifice.

Easter is much the same and brings to us an opportunity not to forget the week that has just passed but to consider it a start of reassessing our lives, clarifying our desires and to be reminded of the gift and joy that sacrifice often brings, the greatest of which was Christ's sacrifice upon the cross.

NOTE: This column is contributed by Dr. Christopher Killacky, Acadia Divinity College