

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

**Christian Passover**    Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of the Lord    April 16, 2017  
9:00 AM    Acts 10:34a, 37-43;    1 Cor 5:6b-8;    Jn 20:1-9    (Jesus lived different from us, not wanting to let go of the vulnerability that we are all born with, that puts us into direct touch with other people, including God.)

This morning in the weekend edition of the *Wall Street Journal* there is an article that says “Christian Passover.” I haven’t read it yet because I didn’t have enough courage. I may be cynical, but I’m not expecting to be edified. But **what do we mean when we say “Christian Passover”?** What does that actually mean? It’s a very good question.

We know the **first Passover** was a prodigious blow against Egypt that was at that time the evil Empire and it forced them to shake loose the shackles of their indentured servants, the Israelites, from whence Jesus himself comes. This inaugurated **a long journey to the promised land**, but in the long run what did it yield? If you read the Bible, mostly **disappointment, discouragement, resentment, and despair**. That is really what the Bible relates to us, a life sliding downhill with a few exceptions here and there; and not only there, but in all history **every dictatorial overbearing nation, state, or power eventually collapses only to be replaced with another just like it**.

St. Paul observes that: “Our contention is not against flesh and blood but against the powers and the principalities and the dominations.” That means **an inner battle against the desire that human beings form to be in control, to be better than others, and to dominate, in short script: egoism. Jesus fought this battle from within his own human nature**. And he provided us not only with **the pattern for our own personal lives**, but with **the only real hope for world peace**, a message that is still quite unavailable in the world.

**Jesus** lived a full human life, but different from us in **not wanting to let go of the vulnerability that we are all born with, that puts us into direct touch with others, including**

**God. Vulnerability is what makes us open to love, but it also makes us open to attack.** So ordinarily we grow shells around ourselves to protect us. We become defensive and self-centered; then we direct our caring to what is within the shell and withdraw our caring from what is outside of it. Thus **the world becomes isolated little pockets fearing all other little pockets.** And that's the world we know. That's the world reported every day by the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times*.

Recently I saw a show on channel 11 about Christ. It wasn't too bad; it had a lot of good points. But at the end the commentator said: "The death of Christ was the beginning of a whole new religion." Well not exactly! No religion would really begin with the death of anybody. **What began a new religion was the fact that Jesus' disciples experienced him as alive.** Again, back to the *Wall Street Journal* there's a picture of Good Friday in the Philippines, and the caption says: "Christians Celebrate their Most Holy Day." Well, no, **Easter is our most holy day because Easter is a day we acknowledge God's work among us** because, not only did the disciples experience Jesus raised from the dead, **they experienced the Holy Spirit working inside of them** doing the same things that Jesus did. And this undeniable fact eventually launched the Church.

Just as the first Passover led to the journey to the promised land, so **the Passover of the Lord or the so-called Christian Passover is the beginning of a journey through life and death to a new creation, a new heaven and a new earth, sharing in the eternal life of God.** And **Jesus** has established a beachhead in this new land, and **having baptized us into himself, he cares for us as his own** and, indeed, part of himself. This is the mystery we celebrate in Baptism. So now we turn our attention to Baptism, to our promises, and to renew our lives in the Spirit of the risen Lord.