THE FEAST OF THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD
Rolling Meadows -- 1979

Rev. Carl F. Thrun

IN NOMINE JESU

THE INTROIT FOR EASTER DAY: WHEN I AWAKE, I AM STILL WITH THEE. HALLELUJAH! THOU HAST LAID THINE HAND UPON ME. HALLELUJAH! SUCH KNOWLEDGE IS TOO WONDERFUL FOR ME: IT IS HIGH, I CANNOT ATTAIN UNTO IT. HALLELUJAH! HALLELUJAH! O LORD, THOU HAST SEARCHED ME AND KNOWN ME: THOU KNOWEST MY DOWNSITTING AND MINE UPRISING.

GLORY BE TO THE FATHER AND TO THE SON AND TO THE HOLY GHOST; AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING, IS NOW, AND EVER SHALL BE, WORLD WITHOUT END.

(Psalm 139: 18)

Almost 1600 years ago Easter came to the Holy Land. In the caves of Bethlehem St. Jerome was reading the appointed Psalms. He had come from the city of Trier where he observed most carefully the ancient holy hours. In the year 373 he started for Jerusalem. He had to stop in Antioch of Syria because of a serious illness. In a dream Christ appeared to him and drove him out to the desert for three years. In the year 382 Damasus recalled him to Rome to revise the Latin Bible. By 386 he was back in Bethlehem to begin his work of building for the Church the most solid parts of her present liturgy and lessons. And out of that came the splendor of our present Introit for the Day -- from Psalm 139: "WHEN I AWAKE, I AM STILL WITH THEE. ALLELUIA!" ..... That's the way it is written on Jerome's tomb in the Holy City!

When the chains which have bound us fast to Winter in this year finally begin to loosen up -- when people are actually beginning to smile again and are pointing with pride to their T-shirts and bumper stickers, "I survived the blizzard of '79" -- when nature awakens out of its coldness and death -- when the melting snow pours down from the hills in a thousand tumbling brooks -- when the frozen crust of the earth begins

break up and the little plants break through -- when the birds begin to chirp and sing because the Spring sunshine has warmed them all ---- then we can say that NATURE TOO celebrates the RISEN LORD. Everything in the world outside seems to blend with the sound of the BELLS OF EASTER and brings us JOY after the darkness and cold of the dead Winter days!

NATURE and LITURGY seem to blend together into a mighty smyphony. They seem to play endless variations on the theme which the RESURRECTION INTROIT brings: "When I awake, I am still with Thee. Alleluia!" ..... We have time today to stop and take a look at this EASTER MYSTERY and JOY so that its GOLD AND GLORY may fill our hearts and make it Easter for our LIFE AND HOME.

Goethe said it best:: "So long as you do not have
This dying and reviving,
So long you're but a tired guest
Upon the darkling world."

Dying and reviving -- that is the GREAT LAW under which the whole universe functions. Everywhere we see how NEW LIFE araises from the DEAD EARTH. Jesus called attention to this GREAT LAW when He said: "TRULY, TRULY, I SAY TO YOU, UNLESS A GRAIN OF WHEAT FALLS INTO THE EARTH AND DIES, IT REMAINS ALONE; BUT IF IT DIES IT BEARS MUCH FRUIT." ///..

So the kernel of wheat must die in order that a new sprout might be born and a new life appear.

This LAW applies equally well in the realm of the soul and the spirit. The natural, ambitious person must die if the greater life is to appear. In other words, much of what we call our existence must be overturned in order that we may attain the TRUE LIFE. Even Nietzsche affirms, "Only where there are graves, can there be resurrection.

The GREAT RULE -- "through death to life" -- found it HIGHEST FULFILLMENT in JESUS CHRIST. Even His disciples could not understand at first. And our Lord Himself -- with His human sensitivity -- shudders in the Garden of Gethsemane when He faces this mystery. Still He hangs on to the Father's promise that He would not "LEAVE HIS SOUL IN HELL NOR SUFFER HIS HOLY ONE TO SEE CORRUPTION." And at the end of His bitter suffering, He prays confidently: "FATHER, INTO YOUR HANDS I PLACE MY SPIRIT."

Just look at how this found FULFILLMENT. "Death becomes the gate to life." Jesus' faith and trust is vindicated. Through His death He found that He would die no more -- death had no more dominion over Him -- through death He conquered death. He celebrated a resurrection which stands unique in the history of the whole world..... And His follows in every age have attached themselves to His resurrection. St. Paul speaks for every Christian: "I LIVE, YET NOT I, BUT CHRIST LIVES IN ME" "FOR ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST, AND TO DIE IS GAIN."

CHRIST LIVES! We really no longer need proof of the fact of the Resurrection. We only have to look at the men and women who have followed Him -- and we see that He did not remain in death. HE HAS CONQUERED DEATH! He LIVES and SHOWS US HOW TO LIVE in a constant, new, holy, and godly life.. Over the history of Christianity we can write the great words from the letter to the Hebrews: "JESUS CHRIST IS THE SAME YESTERDAY, AND TODAY, AND FOREVER."

CHRIST LIVES! Does He live in your soul too? That is the GREAT EASTER QUESTION which comes to all on Easter Day. The answer is not dependent on whether Christ did once rise -- but whether HE REALLY HAS ARISEN IN US -- that we are truly RESURRECTED CHRISTIANS..... To be that means simply to SERVE GOD with a NEW AND LIVING HEART. The HEART is, after all, the PLACE OF LOVE. SERVING GOD WITH A NEW HEART means that we serve Him with a NEW LOVE also.

If I could have the answer to one prayer for each one of you today, it would have to be that BECAUSE OF THE RESURRECTION, YOUR WHOLE LIFE HAS CHANGED! -- That SOME DAY, because we were here together this Easter Day, someone might say, "I am no longer what I once was -- I have been changed by the bright glory of the Easter Hope in my soul."

Then the GOSPEL would have it TRIUMPH! We could look at people and things in a NEW

LIGHT -- the LIGHT OF EASTER. "WHEN I AWAKE I AM STILL WITH THEE. ALLELUIA!"

Some day it must come true that we who have "RISEN WITH CHRIST" are really RISEN PEOPLE. ..... It means very definitely that we are a small piece of the LIFE OF GOD -- that a small part of the HEART OF GOD has broken off to live in us..... These are the BELLS OF ETERNITY, the RINGING SOUND OF THE EASTER GLORY: "WHEN I AWAKE, I AM STILL WITH THEE. ALLELUIA." Amen.