

Easter

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tilators, dryers and vast trolleys packed with coloured blocks of dyestuff of a powdery texture. My guide warned me not to handle them since this material would also dye my clothes! The noise in a modern chemical plant appeared to me to be very much smaller than that of a metal-working workshop. It was possible to speak without shouting. There were very few workers present and a chemical shopfloor seemed less densely populated than most other manufacturing floors. We walked through some of the less modern and amenable parts of the factory and thus had an idea of the progress of working conditions. Walking towards the mechanical workshop, we passed an incredibly high chimney. Dr. Eberhardt said that all the factory's fumes were forced up the chimneys by blowers and that its double shaft had a special slating from Germany which protected it from chemical attack. I pointed out that the view from up there must be beautiful.

"Dr. Bolliger has climbed up the chimney 15 years ago, when it was just built".

Dr. Eberhardt added that it wasn't possible to climb on to it any more, and I supposed that such a lofty structure was beyond the efforts of any steeple-jack.

(In the next issue, I shall be looking at the Geigy premises under the guidance of Mr. B. Simon, and report on the Manchester Swiss Club's AGM).
(PMB)

EASTER

A message by Father Paul Bossard, chaplain of the Swiss Catholic Mission in Westminster

Asked about the Feast most valued by Christians, the majority of us would undoubtedly point out *Christmas*. The idea of God having entered into our world as a little helpless baby, cared for with tender love by a young couple living in poverty and with no more comfort to offer but their affection has always had a strong appeal on people of goodwill and certainly has a deep religious and human value. It has inspired artists all over the world and they have tried to reproduce the atmosphere of peace and tenderness which it conveys in countless works of art. Even the most materialistic civilisation would think twice before abolishing Christmas. It would not pay to do that, especially in our Western world.

Easter is different. It is not conveyed upon us with the same emotional impact and the pagan myths woven around this feast still dominate it considerably. Indeed, many Christians will first think of an Easter egg or a chocolate rabbit when the name of Easter is mentioned. This is not surprising, because the sweet and holy child of

Christmas has grown into a man, and a dangerous and troublesome man at that. People have often tried to cover him with a thick coating of sugar—but without lasting success. His provocative personality frustrates every attempt at softening him down and places us before the decision of being either for or against him. He stands for God, he is the truth and the cornerstone on which one can build a house or be dashed. He brings the sword that reveals and divides good from evil. And this is not very pleasant.

His public life was short. But by every action and every word he revealed the true situation of man in this world, his misery, his hypocrisy and his deep desire of redemption and forgiveness. He showed how God is and how he thinks about man: "Who sees me, sees the Father, who listens to me, listens to Him!" (John 14:7). Loved by few people, mostly by the poor, the despised and the sick, he was hated by the priests and theologians for spoiling their business at the temple (Jesus in the souvenir shop) and even more so for having questioned the relevance of their established religious teaching and their accepted standards of justice, order and morals. He was despised by politicians and men of finance because he not only refused to comply but openly opposed their interests and aspirations. Moreover, his influence went against their control over the masses. Wherever he talked he was spied upon, denounced, abused and slandered. He was finally imprisoned and tortured, stripped of everything he had and nailed to a cross, naked and debased, until he was dead, all in the name of God and the interest of religion. This is *Good Friday*, a day when the final victory of evil and wickedness seemed accomplished. God thrown out of human history by his own people!

For those who can identify themselves in any way with these people, there is really nothing to be proud about. And who can't? Let no one say: "Am I a Jew? What responsibility have I got for things that happened 2000 years ago?" It is the same Christ who replies: "Whatever you have done to your neighbour you have done to me!" (Mt. 25:41). So *Good Friday* is not past history. It should be read in the present tense because it concerns you and me. You will find it in the newspaper and in your own life. And the same applies to *Easter Sunday*.

It is God's answer to what happened on that fateful Friday. He never changes his mind and his love never turns into hatred or revenge. He gives us the resurrection of Christ, the final victory over evil and death, redemption and the new life. True, human goodness and whatever we consider positive in man have no merit in this gift. Neither can we even prove that the resurrection happened. There was an empty grave but this can, and has been, explained

away. The resurrection of Christ is entirely and absolutely a free act of God's love and we only have his Word for it. We can accept it in faith or reject it: it won't alter the facts, but it will change our lives.

Christ has risen and he continues to live in our midst. He invites us to take part in his Love, a love greater than any human love, and in his Life, a life richer and deeper than any life in this world. This is the new hope we have received. It cannot be wishful thinking because man neither wished it nor ever will. What he wishes is to redeem himself by his own means, but that he can't! This is certainly difficult to understand. It certainly doesn't appeal to our pride, nor does it satisfy our enquiring minds. It simply asks for a completely new appraisal of our most cherished values so that we may accept from HIM as a free gift, on pure faith, hope, life and love.

And this is the joy and peace of Easter. Perhaps we have not grasped this fully and that is why they are not widespread. "You men of little faith!" was a word Christ used several times in addressing his disciples. It is still valid for us.

At present our world is in a mess. In spite of our much-praised civilisation and achievements (we have even reached the moon) two thirds of the world's population live in misery and privation. A frightful demographic explosion threatens the balance of our resources and supply, and this at a time when the pollution of atmosphere, water and earth is becoming a real problem. There is a fast rising rate of violence and crime, a youth fascinated by drugs and rebellion and, above all, the well-founded fear of an impending world conflict bringing with it total destruction. We really live in a tempting situation for any prophet of doom!

And the Message of Easter is victory, joy and peace: "Do not fear, I am with you until the end of time!" A true Christian is not a dreamer believing in some kind of God or supreme being created by his imagination and philosophical conjecture. He is a realist who accepts the cross, evil, sin and death caused by evil and fights them as something bad, as a threat to human happiness. But he does not see the cross alone. God, as Christ risen from the dead is present for him as a living reality. He can therefore fight with hope and courage against crime, violence, hunger, sickness and even death. He can help to improve the human condition in research, technical development and social work because his faith in Christ gives him the conviction that God is on his side and that he is fighting to win a better world.

Do you wish to accept this message of joy? Be careful, it has consequences. Truth has its obligations and the disciple does not stand above his master!