

“Being Eastered”

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Let him easter in us.

Gerard Manley Hopkins

What is Easter to you? It is the day we celebrate Christ’s resurrection, of course, the crescendo of the church year. It is the first Sunday after Passover, a moveable feast that always follows the full moon after the spring equinox. It is arguably the most important day of the year for those who call themselves followers of Christ!

It just might not feel that way for you.

It may feel more cultural. Nostalgically, Easter is a day of family: egg hunts, new clothes and chocolate as well as church. No reason to be cynical about these things - a family Sunday is beautiful. Yet, we know that Easter is more than a family holiday and even more than a holy day. It is something that happens to us and within us. ***Easter is a verb.***

Gerard Manley Hopkins coined the verbal form of “easter” in his poem, *The Wreck of the Deutschland*. Opinions vary on what he meant, but some understand it as a nautical term meaning to steer your craft toward the east and, therefore, into the light. In this sense, to *let him easter in us* is to be guided by the light of Christ.

Over the centuries people have been drawn to the light of Easter for different reasons. Beginning early in the church’s history, Easter Sunday was *the* day of baptism. Those seeking to join the community of Christ did not simply make a profession of faith. Instead, they made their intentions known and were guided on a long path to receive the light of Christ. Lent - from a word meaning “lengthen” as the days get longer with light - was the preparation time for their baptism. This included instruction, counsel, and examination (even interviewing with their neighbors to see how they really lived). For these catechumens, ***to be eastered*** was not like honoring a day or making a statement of belief. ***For them, being eastered was like preparing to get married or getting ready to permanently move to a foreign country. It was about their entrance into a whole new kind of life.***

Others had a different draw toward the light. They were already part of the community of faith through their baptism but had acted in some way that damaged the community. Known as “penitents,” their Lent was for counsel, prayer and for acts of reparation as they got ready for re-entry into the community. ***For them, being eastered was like returning home after leaving on bad terms. It was about relational redemption.*** As their deeds had come into the light, they confessed and found forgiveness as they moved back into community. The light of Christ exposed them and then invited them home, a beautiful picture of redemption.

These two images of being eastered - entering a new life or returning home - both connect us with the eastering of Christ Himself. Though He did not need to be converted to a new life, He needed to die in order to create the path for us. Though He did not need to repent, He took on our sins as His own - and suffered for them - to provide us the forgiveness we need so that we can be welcomed home.

To be eastered is to continually respond to the light of Christ.

To be eastered is to say “yes” to His invitation into a new kind of life.

To be eastered is to let Him see your sins and heal your broken relationships.

To be eastered is to see your suffering in solidarity with Christ. Ultimately,

To be eastered is to enjoy the resurrected life He offers.

While you enjoy the rich cultural aspects of Easter Sunday, be reminded that you don’t simply celebrate Easter, you *are eastered*. And may Christ Himself continue to *easter in you* all year long.