

THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

RISE, HEART, THY LORD IS RISEN!

“Sing his praise, without delay!” The ecstatic words of George Herbert were set to lovely music by Vaughan Williams, and express, in that form, something of Easter joy. It truly is Lent, the fast itself, that feeds this joy. Because we have gone with him through the desert, we have had a small experience of his lordship over our lives, and we can rejoice at the words: *Thy Lord is risen.*

Go up to a high mountain

Isaiah’s call to Sion is that her message - the Gospel - should be proclaimed from a peak. God gives us experiences that deserve to be called “exalted”, just as sometimes he leads us “through the bitter valley, the shadow of death”. There are moments when we feel we can see for a long way on every side, when we sense the freedom and light of being raised up in a lofty place. No-one reaches such a height without an exercise of power; either we have toiled up a steep hill, or some other has carried us there; you don’t achieve the summits at a stroll. The prophet calls for us to go up ourselves: when we have taken our stand on high, we shall see the dawn of our salvation, in spiritual terms, we shall experience the power of God. *There is effort in Easter as well as in Lent.* Peter and the Beloved Disciple set out to go to the tomb: *they ran together...* I note that the Beloved Disciple ran faster - obviously Peter must have been older, and tubbier, I should suppose. Here is an early image of the Easter gospel which has in it something strenuous; it is not different in Luke, where the two disciples had entered their inn for the night, before the truth of Easter burst upon them, and their response is to *set out at once, returning to Jerusalem.* They are literally turning night into day, and making a joyous return which has all the splendour of the song of ascents about it: *I was glad when they said unto me: Come, let us go up to the house of the Lord!* Back to Jerusalem, City of our Festivals...this song of the Passover pilgrim was never more fervently sung than now, and the unleavened bread never tasted so clearly of freedom than after that evening supper

which so suddenly became the Paschal Eucharist.

Christ Our Passover

So we have to summon up some *energy* after the rigours of Lent. Celebrating may take more out of us than penance did! Did not Moses find that *liberated* people were heavier to carry than slaves had been? Someone said: *they were let out of slavery in a night; but it was forty years before they accepted their freedom.* The liturgy keeps using the words *Christ our Passover*: he is the Paschal Lamb, he is the setting out in faith, he is the parting of the Red Sea, he is the journey to the Promised Land. I find that people are a bit flat after Easter. They have, I admit it, worked hard, and if we are good Catholics, we ought to be well and truly conkered by midday on Easter Sunday. Many students, having walked throughout Holy Week on their pilgrimage, physically lugging the Cross across the country to Walsingham, will feel like this today. But *keep the festival!* The Church keeps the octave of Easter, celebrating each day of this week as another Easter: we are being invited to make as great a celebration of the Resurrection, as we did a fast of Lent. *Christ our Passover has been sacrificed*, says the full text: *let us celebrate the feast then, in the Lord!*

Does Jesus Like Parties?

The answer is *not half*, and we must undergo a conversion from our Lenten penance in order to inherit Paschal joy. It’s time for parties, and we should show that we know how to have them. Let the whole personality taste the joy of God, and share in its fullness. *A Happy Easter!* Fr Philip