

Dear Parishioners,

“Father, what does “Easter” mean?” The young woman, probably a freshman in high school, asked me.

“It’s the celebration of the Lord’s res...” I started to say, but she already knew that.

“No, Father,” she interrupted, “I want to know what the word “Easter” means.”

“I don’t know,” I said, “Let’s look it up.”

So I went online to a website I have used several times called the Online Etymology Dictionary. An etymology dictionary does more than define words, it also tells about their origin. The young woman was looking for the reason we use the word “Easter” to celebrate the Lord’s resurrection. Here is a summary of what we found out.

The word “Easter” is an Old English word (Eastre) that was taken from the name of a pagan goddess called *Austron*. She was a goddess of fertility and sunrise and her feast was celebrated at the Spring Equinox. According to St. Bede, “Anglo Saxon Christians adopted her name and many of the practices for their Mass of Christ’s resurrection.”

In other words, the word “Easter” means new life: it means the rising of the sun at dawn; it is a celebration of spring. When we hear the word “Easter” our thoughts often turn to the resurrection of Jesus, the rising of the Son, if you will; the new dawn of eternal glory.

Let me give you an example of an experience of Easter I saw at the end of the news about ten days ago. The

camera showed a small boy who was maybe six or seven years old who was in his class room with all of the other students and their teacher. All of a sudden the boy's eyes grew so big and excited it looked like they were going to pop right out of his head. As he ran to the doorway he started crying out loud while he ran into his father's arms who picked him up and held him so close they two almost melded into one. The little boy's father was still wearing his soldier's fatigues. His father had just returned from Iraq and decided to surprise his son while he was still in school. The boy had no idea his father would be there that day.

This is what Easter is for us. We take so much in our lives for granted. We move along day to day experiencing all that life has to offer throughout each year. Then, all of a sudden we are given this eye-popping, jaw dropping moment of joy as we celebrate the love of our Father who gave his only Son so that we might have the gift of eternal life. Jesus Christ, the risen Lord, opens his arms to receive us, children of God (no matter what our ages might be) and he holds us with divine compassion that causes our souls to cry out, alleluia.

Happy Easter everyone.

In joyful hope,
Fr. Tim Seigel