

## April Fool!

Some of you have already celebrated Easter, while others of you still have weeks of the Great Fast standing between you and Pascha. These calendar tricks make it difficult to reconcile the truth conveyed by the Letter to the Hebrews: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). What’s a poor columnist to do? Let’s see...

Speaking of tricks, I hope your April Fools Day went off without too many assaults upon your dignity perpetrated by impish pranksters. Here in France, “April Fool” becomes “April Fish” - from the practice of attaching little paper fish to the clothing of an unwitting victim, who thereby becomes an object of derision and a source of mirth for every observer. I must confess to having myself participated in such a spectacle while I was a student brother in St. Louis: I festooned a friar’s room and mailbox with a myriad of orange paper fish, even inserting one into a copy of Moby Dick - the quintessential fish story. (Yes, I know a whale is not a fish; humor me!) I am obviously in great need of the opportunity for conversion provided for me by my second Lent this year – Julian calendar piled upon Gregorian calendar!

Have you ever thought of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ as a prankster? By all means, do! Picture this: Jesus is at a wedding feast in Cana of Galilee when the wine runs out. Perturbed by His mother’s insistence that He do something, followed by her putting him in a bind by telling the servants “Do whatever He tells you,” Jesus just shrugs His shoulders and says “Fine. Get a load of this, will you?” He then tells the servants to give the wine steward a drink of the water they have just put into jugs. Can’t you see Jesus squeal with delight as the *sommelier* tastes the wonderful wine – better than any Château Rothschild – and then asks them where they got it? (John 2: 1-11) April Fool!

Then there’s the whole Easter thing: earthly powers conspired against Him, sinful men put Him to death, and paranoid enemies sealed His tomb and posted a guard lest there be any “funny stuff”. So what does He do? He rises anyway. Not only that: angels scare the living daylights out of the myrrh-bearing women who had come to anoint His now-gone body (Mark 16: 1-8), He Himself startles Mary who had been weeping in the Garden (John 20: 11-18), and then He comes through the wall to take the apostles’ minds off their own fear for their own lives (John 20: 19-23). On the other hand, when His companions on the road to Emmaus recognize Him in the breaking of the bread, He up and vanishes into thin air (Luke 24: 13-35)! April Fool ... or perhaps March or May, depending on when your parish celebrates Easter. As Paul says in his first letter to the Corinthians, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? (1 Corinthians 15:55)”

Fast forward two thousand years. There I was at a Notre Dame Glee Club reunion when I saw Frank Barrett. Now Frank was a wonderful guy who had, for reasons unknown to me, very publicly broken with the Church. After we greeted one another enthusiastically, Frank pulled me into a corner. Taken aback by the sudden summons, I nonetheless listened intently as Frank told me how, despite all his problems with the Church, he now found himself studying theology at a Catholic graduate school and loving it. He pleaded, “What’s going on, Jim?” I told him that I could only speak of my own experience: “When God is up on a cloud and getting bored with harp music, He gathers everybody around Him and says ‘Watch this!’ Then He points down to earth, wiggles a divine finger ... and my whole life goes kablooeey! And all of heaven explodes in uproarious mirth.” Frank’s eyes got as big as saucers and said, “That’s exactly it!” April Fool: eternal wisdom which passes for foolishness. “Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. (1 Corinthians 1: 22-4)”

So what is the Divine Prankster doing in your life? Is He trying to change the insipid drivel of your life into rich wine giving joy to your heart? Is He trying to bring life to those areas of your life where death has you in its clutches? Perhaps more important: Will you let Him do His thing? Are you willing, with St. Paul, to be a “fool for Christ” (1 Corinthians 4: 10)?