

Independent Evangelist

LE it's happening



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Vol. 2 Issue 2 Mary Conybear – Editor



*Beneath these fruit-tree
boughs that shed
Their snow-white
blossoms on my head,
With brightest sunshine
round me spread
Of spring's unclouded
weather,
In this sequestered nook
how sweet
To sit upon my orchard-
seat!
And birds and flowers
once more to greet,
My last year's friends
together.*

- William Wordsworth

Welcome to the April issue. **No doctor or scientist has ever found quite as effective tranquilizing agent as a sunny spring day.** It sure works for me.

I think William Shakespeare said it best;
April hath put a spirit of youth in everything.

Easter

During Christmas, I dug up odd facts about the old traditions surrounding the season. I received a lot of kind and humorous remarks about them. Since I am not a religious scholar and we all know the true meaning of Easter, I thought I would try a similar page of things I used to wonder about.

As Christians, we celebrate **Easter** to commemorate the resurrection of **Jesus Christ**. Still, there are some traditions that always puzzled me until I quit being lazy and looked them up on the web.

I used to always wonder what **eggs** had to do with Easter. In **Medieval Europe**, eggs were forbidden during Lent. Eggs laid during that time were often boiled or otherwise preserved. Eggs were thus a mainstay of Easter meals, and a prized Easter gift for children and servants.

In addition, eggs have been viewed as symbols of new life and fertility through the ages. It is believed that for this reason many ancient cultures, including the **Ancient Egyptians**,

Persians and **Romans** used eggs during their spring festivals.

Many traditions and practices have formed around Easter eggs. The coloring of eggs is a established art, and eggs are often dyed, painted, and otherwise decorated. Eggs were also used in various holiday games: parents would hide eggs for children to find, and children would roll eggs down hills. These practices live on in Easter egg hunts and egg rolls. The most famous egg roll takes place on the White House lawn every year.

And what on Earth could a rabbit have to do with Easter? **Hares and rabbits** have long been symbols of fertility. The inclusion of the hare into Easter customs appears to have originated in Germany, where tales were told of an "Easter hare" who laid eggs for children to find.

German immigrants to America, particularly Pennsylvania brought the tradition with them and spread it to a wider public. They also baked cakes for Easter in the shape of hares, and may have pioneered the practice of making chocolate bunnies and eggs.

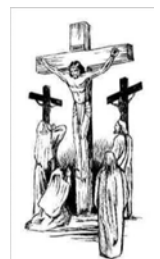
I always thought **Easter Cards** were just a Hallmark gimmick. Easter cards arrived in **Victorian England**, when a stationer added a greeting to a drawing of a rabbit. According to **American Greetings**, Easter is now the fourth most popular holiday for sending cards, behind Christmas, Valentine's Day, and Mother's Day.

Of course I had to ask about **Easter Parades**.

After their baptisms, early Christians wore white robes all through Easter week to indicate their new lives. Those had already been baptized wore new clothes instead to symbolize their sharing a new life with Christ.

In **Medieval Europe**, churchgoers would **take a walk after Easter Mass**, led by a crucifix or the Easter candle. Today these walks endure as Easter Parades. People show off their spring finery, including lovely bonnets decorated for spring.

I'm glad we have these traditions. I don't believe they make light of His sacrifice. Instead they promote **fellowship and bring families together in remembrance of Christ**. I'm glad I looked it all up. I hope you have a fine Easter.



Easter in Australia

In my research for traditions of Easter, I found this article that was just too much fun to pass up.

In Australia, Easter is celebrated from Good Friday to Easter Monday, with Good Friday and Easter Monday being holidays. On Good Friday, everything is closed and you can't even buy a newspaper on this day, the only day of the year when you can't.

Many people go to church on Good Friday and Easter Sunday to remember the death and rebirth of Jesus. On Easter Sunday, the Easter Bunny brings eggs which are hidden and then we have the fun of finding them. We always go outside to see if he has dropped any.



Many shops are selling the Easter **Bilby** instead of the Easter Bunny this year.

It is an endangered species which is a type of small bandicoot. A Bilby weighs about 2500g and is about 550mm in length. The Bilby has long ears and silky fur and is an Australian mammal. It lives in grasslands and shrubland. It forages at night for subterranean insects, bulbs and fungi. It also eats some fruits and seeds.

The Bilby obtains sufficient water from its food, making drinking unnecessary. By day it sleeps in a deep burrow with an entrance which is usually hidden by some grass or a shrub or else beside a termite mound.

Males are much larger than females. Breeding carries on through the year but depends on a good food supply. A pair of Bilbys normally rear two young.

So buy an Easter Bilby this year and help save this unusual little creature.

I wonder if I can find a chocolate Bilby!

Marshmallow Peeps

Yes, and now the true symbol of Easter. Peeps are produced by the Just Born, Inc candy company in Bethlehem, PA.

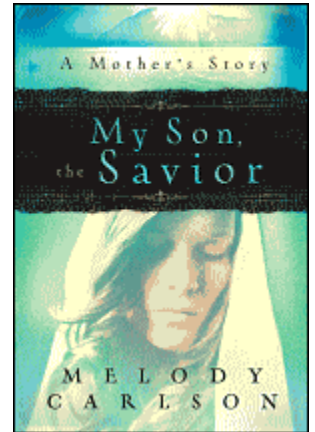
The short version of this story is Russian inventor, Sam Born comes to the U.S. in 1910. He starts a manufacturing company in 1923. He's pretty good at this corporate thing and acquires Rodda Candy Company of Lancaster, Pennsylvania in 1953. Now these guys invented the three-dimensional marshmallow Easter "Peep" but their manufacturing process was not quite up to snuff for Mr. Born so he finds a way to mechanize the process, and the rest, is as they say "history". Definitely a nice treat for Easter Sunday. Only in America! What can I say?



The Book Corner

I came across a book that I highly recommend for any time during Lent or Easter. **My Son, the Savior** by Melody Carlson gives the reader a mother's point of view and she makes you feel as though Mary is speaking to you herself.

"Oh, how I miss him! My heart aches with missing him, not only because he's my son, but more so because he's my Lord and Savior. I'm not sure I understand the purpose in all of this. But still, I trust Jehovah and have faith."



Have you ever wondered what it was like for Mary? How did she feel about being the mother of Christ? What was she thinking as she fixed his childhood wounds, listened to him address hundreds on a hillside, and watched him turn water to wine? And what was she feeling as she witnessed her beloved son's crucifixion?

A fictionalized story of Mary's life, **My Son, the Savior** is filled with motherly love, deepening faith, worry and despair, and ultimately, eternal hope. If you've ever marveled at Mary's faith, wondered how she endured, or wished to know more about her, you'll love this imagined look into Mary's deepest emotions and richest experiences as the mother of God's own Son.

Most of the book is told looking back on the life of Jesus and how it must have been for Mary raising the son of God. It faithfully follows the stories we've been taught since Sunday school but with concerns of a mother that we all ignore because of the bigger picture. After all, this is the son of God and we rarely think about Him scraping his knees while playing or wonder if there were sibling rivalries.

It also explores thing feeling of separation she must have felt when her son finally sets out on his chosen journey through life, teaching and performing miracles. It also explores the interaction of Mary and the apostles and Mary Magdeline. Her life really was quite an adventure and she had to be a woman who was tough as nails but she came through it with the faith of a child and full of love beyond what we can imagine.

It's a great book for reflecting on your own faith. Could any of us endured those days and still have so much faith?

.....
When I read a book I seem to read it with my eyes only, but now and then I come across a passage, perhaps only a phrase, which has a meaning for me, and it becomes part of me.
W. Somerset Maugham

Curiosity Corner

I want to thank those that had comments about ghosts. I was afraid that nobody would respond. Nobody commented about the TV show, **Ghost Whisperer** but here are a few of the best.

“I never saw one but I believe our last house was haunted. I was glad to move because we never got a good night’s sleep.”

“I can’t go near cemeteries since I was a kid. At my grandma’s funeral, at Mt. Olivet Cemetery, I saw the ghost of an old lady and I was just a kid when it happened”

“I always wondered about ghosts too. If they are real, I want to see one. Then I’ll know for sure”.

On the flip side of the coin;

“Where are you going with this curiosity corner? Ghosts? Give me a break”

“If you find one, ask him if he’s seen Elvis”

“Did you drive around Resurrection Cemetery and look for Resurrection Mary? Let me know if you find her”

The last one I know grew up in Chicago. It’s a favorite Halloween thing to do; drive around Resurrection Cemetery picking up hitchhikers.

Now I want to hear comments about **angels**. Do they exist, or are they just a product of our wishful thinking? Do we have guardian angels?

Wikipedia, an online encyclopedia defines them in a neutral manner:

“**An angel** is a **supernatural** being found in many **religions**. In **Christianity**, **Judaism**, **Zoroastrianism** and **Islam**, they typically act as messengers from **God**.”

Maybe they are around us often and we don’t know it, as in the movie, **Michael**, starring John Travolta. He played the part of the archangel, Michael and helped some people on Earth. It’s a very good family movie but no movie can answer our questions about angels.



Even though they are mentioned in the Bible, I have heard people say they don’t believe in them, mainly because they never saw one.

I’ll say more about the purpose of the Curiosity Corner next month. I really like any response; positive or negative. Contact me at conybear2@comcast.net with your reply. Tell me your thoughts on angels or guardian angels and **don’t hold back**.

Afraid of Death?

From the moment we are old enough to grasp the difference between life and death we fear death. That moment, for me, came at my grandmother’s funeral, although I’m not sure I feared death at that age; I just didn’t understand it.

I remember the adults crying and hugging. I guess seeing adults cry made can make a child associate death with something bad. However I can remember how she talked about dying during her last days. She seemed relieved that the end was near, so the reactions of the adults at the funeral understandably were confusing to me as a child.

She was dying of cancer and the pain she was experiencing was just as hard to grasp until many years later when I would have cancer. The last time I saw her alive, she was happy and the pain no longer mattered. It was confusing to this child.

When this child grew up and found himself in Nam as a combat medic, it became hard to disassociate himself from the death all around. In combat, you could be talking to a friend one moment and be stuffing him in a body bag the next. Death became surreal and friends became scarce.

Often, I felt that living was harder than dying. To borrow a line from **Jesus Christ Superstar**, “to conquer death, you only have to die.” The survivors have to deal with grief and a sense of loss. Survivors live to grieve the death of more loved ones while wondering secretly how one’s own last days will go. I guess that’s the real source of the fear of death; a fear of pain sometimes associated with it.

The key to losing a fear of death is to live well. Death is more universal than life; **everyone dies but not everyone lives**.

The unexamined life is not worth living.
Socrates

Ask yourself if the things you do in life are for your own glory or the glory of God. The compilation of things is just a way to pass time but the compilation of knowledge and passing what you have learned is a way to pass God’s tests of life.

So teach [us] to number our days, that we may apply [our] hearts unto wisdom.
Psalms 90:12

For we brought nothing into [this] world, [and it is] certain we can carry nothing out.
1 Timothy 6:7

We know that **when we give our lives to Christ the rest is easy**.

We are confident, [I say], and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.
2 Corinthians 5:8

I found these two stories rather disturbing. When 9-11 happened, Islam proclaimed Jihad and Bin Laden claimed it to be the start of WWIII. They will win without lifting a finger simply by relying on liberal indifference and “political correctness” that has run amuck in the United States.

I may be worrying too much, but since I’ve started writing my newsletters I’ve been scoffed at and called a bible thumpin’ SOB by people I thought I could trust with my life. People raised as Catholics and Lutherans.

U.S. News

Study: U.S. Unchurched Population Nears 100 Million

By
Audrey Barrick
Christian Post Reporter

Over the past decade, the unchurched population has remained stable at one third of the American population, the latest Barna Group survey showed.



The Barna study found that 33 percent of adults are classified as unchurched – people who have not attended a religious service of any type during the past six months. The statistic has remained relatively the same since 1994 when 36 percent were reported to be unchurched.

Still, the unchurched population in numbers is staggering. An estimated 73 million adults are presently unchurched. **The number nears 100 million when teens and children are added to the population segment.** That also includes an estimated 13 to 15 million born-again adults and children. On its own, the unchurched population of the United States would be the eleventh most-populated nation on earth, the Barna Group noted.

Some people groups are notorious church avoiders, the study found.

Political liberals were more than twice as likely to be unchurched (47 percent) than political conservatives (19 percent). Single adults were also more likely to avoid religious services (37 percent) than married adults (29 percent).

Those least likely to be unchurched are residents in the South (26 percent) while residents in the West (42 percent) and Northeast (39 percent) remain the most church resistant.

The study also found **sexual orientation** is closely related to church status with 31 percent of heterosexuals classified as unchurched compared to 49 percent of homosexuals.

Ethnically, African Americans were less likely to be unchurched (25 percent) than were whites (32 percent); 34 percent of Hispanics are unchurched and 63 percent of Asians.

While Christians are the most likely faith group to consistently attend church services, the Barna study revealed that 61 percent of adults who are associated with a faith other than Christianity had not attended any type of religious service over the past half-year. The unchurched Christian population was measured at 24 percent.

Among Christians, only 1 percent of evangelical Christians, 16 percent of non-evangelical born-again Christians, and 32 percent of self-claimed Christians who are not born again were found to be unchurched.

Catholics were more likely to be unchurched (25 percent) than Protestants (20 percent). People who attend a mainline church were more likely to avoid services (26 percent) than those who attend non-mainline Protestant congregations.

Correlation was also made with church size. According to the study, 24 percent of people who attend small churches were unchurched compared to 15 percent who attend mid-sized churches and 5 percent of those who affiliate with a large church of 500 or more adults on average.

The Barna report is based on a nationwide survey of 2,006 adults, age 18 and older, conducted in January 2007.

World

Pope: Europe Losing Faith in Its Future

CBN News
March 26, 2007

CBNNews.com - Pope Benedict says that **Europe seems to have forgotten its Christian roots.**



Speaking to a gathering of the continent's bishops, he said that Europe was essentially a Christian continent, and that was "an essential element of European identity."

The Pope also said that Europe seems to be "losing faith in its future."

The majority of Europeans are deciding to have fewer children, something the Pope calls a "**dangerous individualism**" that threatens to cause serious problems throughout the continent.

Benedict didn't elaborate on the population trends, but demographers have been warning about low European birth rates for some time.

The bishops were in Rome to attend ceremonies marking the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome. The Treaty, which led into the growth of the Common Market, was a forerunner of today's European Union.

Here's a weird fact; more people attend mosques in England than the Catholic Church and the Church of England combined. That alone should make all Christians speak out.

*But grow in grace, and [in] the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him [be] glory both now and for ever. Amen.
2 Peter 3:18*

*And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.
Mark 16:15-16*

This could happen here next.

A U S T R A L I A

Culture Clash 'Down Under'

By Gary Lane
CBN News

CWNNews.com—

Imagine discussing your Christian faith with a friend at a coffee shop.



The person at the table next to you is offended and files a lawsuit against you. You face heavy fines and possible jail time as a result. Sound far-fetched?

It's the law in Melbourne, Australia, and two pastors there will soon begin a new trial on charges of vilifying Islam.

In October 2002, 88 Australians were among those killed in a terrorist bombing in Bali, Indonesia. Since that time, Australia, like other Western nations, has struggled to protect its citizenry from Islamic extremism.

Prime Minister John Howard wants better assimilation of Muslim immigrants into Australian culture. He believes some Islamic immigrants don't want to be part of the Australian mainstream. "Fully integrating means accepting Australian values -- it means learning as rapidly as you can the English language if you don't already speak it," Howard told a radio interviewer.

Pastor Danny Nalliah of Catch the Fire Ministries immigrated to Australia from Sri Lanka nearly a decade ago. He's seen evidence of Muslim immigrants creating Islamic enclaves and attempting to impose their values and way of life on the dominant culture.

Western societies cherish free speech, honest criticism and open dialogue. But Islamic ones are intolerant of those who challenge or question their beliefs.

Nalliah said, "The problem is, when you take it easy, people come into your backyard and tell you what to do. It's time that lines be drawn and we take a stand for what we believe."

Nalliah -- and Pastor Daniel Scott -- have risked jail and have paid thousands of dollars in legal fees defending their beliefs.

In 2004, a civilian tribunal convicted Nalliah and Scott of violating Victoria's Racial and Religious Tolerance Act. The two pastors had held a seminar in 2003 comparing Islam and the Koran, with Christianity and the Bible.

Muslims filed a complaint against them, and the pastors were found guilty of vilifying Islam. They were ordered to apologize. Both pastors refused, saying they had the right to freely express their views about Islam. That decision has now been set aside and the pastors will get a new trial.

Nalliah cited this religious vilification case against him as just one example of how the Muslim immigrants are attempting to impose their culture on Australia.

Former spokesman for the Australian Family Association, Bill Muehlenberg, is calling the religious tolerance act a bad law. He said, "When governments get in the business of telling you which beliefs we can believe and which we cannot, when they get in the

business of being judges of religious questions than opinion. We're all going to be in trouble for it."

As for Pastor Scott, he will continue to conduct seminars on Islam, the Koran and Hadith.

"Some Muslims have got the idea they have to hide the truth, and that's very sad," he said.

To know what you prefer instead of humbly saying Amen to what the world tells you you ought to prefer, is to have kept your soul alive.

Robert Louis Stevenson

For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Ephesians 6:20

This next story was just too cool to pass up.

World

Compass Designed to Point to Jerusalem

By Chris Mitchell
CBN News, Jerusalem
March 20, 2007

CBNNews.com -- Moshe Ashin is an Orthodox Jew who believes he received divine inspiration to develop what he calls the Jerusalem Compass.



"I started thinking to myself, wouldn't it be wonderful if the compass could point in a direction that had more meaning to all of us? A direction that was more important. Where would that be? So here we are, the holiest city in the world, the center of the universe and all roads lead to Jerusalem, let the compass point here," Ashin said.

The Jerusalem Compass, unlike a typical compass that points north, is designed to point to Jerusalem.

"I developed a patented recalibration system and this keeps the needle of the compass constantly pointing in the direction of Jerusalem from anywhere in the world. Just open the cover and it's pointing there," Ashin said.

Ashin hopes the Jerusalem Compass will be a visual reminder of what the Bible says about Jerusalem.

"For instance, to remember Jerusalem; **O Jerusalem if I forget you, let my right hand forget its cunning. To remember to elevate Jerusalem above all of my highest joys,**" Ashin said, referring to **Psalm 137:5-6**.

"Perhaps even more importantly, in our time we're reminded to pray for the peace of Jerusalem every single day and it my hope that the Jerusalem Compass would serve to be a blessing for all of us wherever we may be."

Can you Give Yourself to Christ?



Christ Died For Our Sins



When I read the story or see a movie about Christ dying for our sins, I am overwhelmed and there is no way I feel worthy of such a sacrifice.

After all He went through for all of us, it amazes me how we have drifted away from Him. Still, God has a purpose for us. God loves you and wants you to know Him so He can fill you with peace and give you real life forever.

Because of our Lord Jesus Christ, we live at peace with God (Romans 5:1).

God loved the people of this world so much that He gave His only son, so that everyone who has faith in Him will have eternal life and never die (John 3:16).

Since God planned for us to have peace and real life right now, why are so many people hurting or angry inside? Our Problem is that we have separated ourselves from God.

God created us in His own image so we can know Him personally and have a joy-filled life. He did not make us as robots to automatically love and obey Him, but gave us a will and a freedom of choice.

Since the beginning of time, we have chosen to disobey God and go our own willful way. We still make this choice today. This results in separation from God and ends in misery

All of us have sinned and fallen short of God's holiness (Romans 3:23).

Through the ages, people have tried many ways to bridge this gap and reach God, without success.

Adam sinned, and that sin brought death into the world. Now everyone has sinned, and so everyone must die (Romans 5:12).

There is only one way to reach God. Jesus Christ is the only answer to this problem. He is the only one who can bring us back to God. He died on the Cross and rose from the grave, paying the penalty for our sin and bridging the gap between God and people.

But God showed how much he loved us by having Christ die for us, even though we were sinful (Romans 5:8).

God has provided the only way; we must make the choice. Our Response is to give ourselves to Christ. We must trust Jesus Christ to forgive our sins and determine to obey Him for the rest of our lives. That way we can know God and find peace again.

So you will be saved, if you honestly say, Jesus is Lord, and if you believe with all your heart that God raised Him from death. God will accept you and save you, if you truly believe this. (Romans 10:9-10)

How to give your life to Christ:

1. Admit you are a sinner and need forgiveness.
2. Believe that Jesus Christ died for you on the Cross and rose from the grave.
3. Through prayer, confess that Jesus Christ is the only way to God and commit to live for Him for the rest of your life.

What to Pray:

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins and rose from the grave to give me life. I know You are the only way to God so now I want to quit disobeying You and start living for You. Please forgive me, change my life and show me how to know You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

How you can know you are forgiven:

The Bible, God's Word says:

You were saved by faith in God, who treats us much better than we deserve. This is God's gift to you, and you have done nothing on your own (Ephesians 2:8).

For those who put their faith in Jesus:

He gave them the right to be the children of God... God Himself was the one who made them His children (John 1:12-13).

What do I do Now?

As you draw close to the Lord, He will teach you His ways and give you His strength. There are some practical steps you can take to come closer to God and to allow Him to guide you.

Prayer: It is important to spend time in prayer every day. Just as you can not grow without eating food each day, so your spirit must be fed in order for growth to occur in our walk with the Lord.

Learning about God: The **Bible** is the main way God has chosen to tell us about Himself.

Fellowship: When you gave your life to Jesus Christ, you became a vital part of God's family, the Church. As you get involved in a local church you will receive strength and encouragement from other believers. But you will also give something vital of yourself back to others.

As you learn about Him through prayer, Bible reading and fellowship with other Christians, God will guide you and give you the wisdom you need for every challenge in life. May God richly bless you as you continue to follow Him.

Have a joyous Easter.

The Lighter Side



April Fool's Day: Although the origin of playing practical jokes and pranks on this day is hazy, many folklorists believe that it may go back to 16th-century France. At that time, New Year's Day was March 25, with a full week of partying and exchanging gifts lasting until April 1. In 1582, the Gregorian calendar moved New Year's Day back to January 1. Those who forgot or refused to honor the new calendar were the butts of jokes and ridicule.

Weather folklore states, If it thunders on All Fools' Day, it brings good crops of corn and hay.

April 2nd, this year, the Pink Moon is also known as the Sprouting Grass Moon, the Egg Moon, and the Fish Moon. Pink refers to the wild ground phlox, usually in bloom around this time.



Historically, Native Americans living in what is now the northern and eastern United States kept track of the seasons by giving a distinctive name to each full Moon. With some variations, the same Moon names were used throughout the area.

THE ATHEIST AND THE BELIEVER

Author Unknown

There's a little old Christian lady living next door to an atheist. Every morning the lady comes out onto her front porch and shouts "Praise the Lord!"

The atheist yells back, "There is no God".

She does this every morning with the same result. As time goes on the lady runs into financial difficulties and has trouble buying food. She goes out onto the porch and asks God for help with groceries, then says "Praise the Lord"!

The next morning she goes out onto the porch and there's the groceries she's asked for, of course she says "Praise the Lord"!

The atheist jumps out from behind a bush and says, "Ha, I bought those groceries - there is no God".

The lady looks at him and smiles, she shouts "Praise the Lord --- not only did you provide for me Lord, you made Satan pay for the groceries!"

"The best vitamin for a Christian is B1."

"A clear conscience makes a soft pillow."

"Never give the devil a ride. He will always want to drive."



This is how the birds treat me after migration.



We must get ready to look our best for Easter.



Or we could just sleep in!

