

Every Sunday of the year is a "little Easter" to all Christians. But last Sunday was Easter Day Anno Domini 1976 and for our Scripture Lesson today I shall read the Easter Canticle:

"Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, Not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. I Corin. 5:7.

"Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him.

For in that He died, He died unto sin once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God.

Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Rom. 6:9

"Christ is risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." I Cor. 15:20.

We have gathered today somewhat under a shadow which we brought here with us, because we are missing the presence of one of the faithful and beloved prime movers of our Reunion, a granddaughter of John Francis Folk, our progenitor. It is perfectly honest and right that we should acknowledge our loss and pay tribute to Edith Esther Folk, born 27 Aug. 1896, departed this life 3 Aug. 1975, eldest daughter of John Jacob Folk & his wife Hampton Dorinda (Daisy) Watts. She was from 26 May 1918 the faithful wife of J. Herbert Jenny and the mother of our cousins Lorine, Francis, Edith & Elizabeth.

May the souls of the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace & may light perpetual shine upon them
When I was a schoolboy we gathered every morning for chapel exercises:

Bible reading, prayer and good hearty singing from the old yellow-backed Golden Book of Songs, one of which was entitled, "The Vacant Chair", with this

lyric: "We shall meet, but we shall miss her,

There will be one vacant chair;

We shall linger to caress her

As we breathe our evening prayer."

yes, prayer. And the first purpose of prayer is always the glory of God. of course I know there are five kinds of prayer: confession, adoration, petition, intercession & thanksgiving. But the first is adoration, the

Praise of Almighty God. This is a simple lesson to put into words, but downright hard to keep in mind. We are all Americans and as products of our culture we are long & strong on the functional, whatever produces results, whatever works. How many times we hear folks say they have stopped praying or stopped going to Church because they "don't get anything out of it." Yet prayer continues to remain right at the center of our religion. Prayer is our communication with God our Creator, Redeemer & Sanctifier. We Christians know that God asks us to live and praise Him, not because God needs our praise, but because all God's creation sings His praise, and as created beings, we are going to find our happiness and true worth in doing ^{exactly} what we are created to do. God is love. Praise is a way of expressing our love for Him.

In creating this planet earth to be our home for this life, God graciously set us in a world so unspeakably beautiful that one can barely learn to know a little of earth's glories in a lifetime of "three score and ten" years. Just imagine, then, the infinite glories of the world God has created for us who love Him to enjoy throughout eternity, a world we call by the name of Heaven.

Heaven is not just a fluffy cloud mass or ethereal fog where we shall roam around or drift about as disembodied spirits or ghosts in shapeless long white dresses. Far from being such shadowy unreality, Heaven is far more real than this life. There our consciousness of reality will be infinitely heightened because we can always see God, perfect Reality. Our vision will be infinite, without illusion or distraction.

We'll be physical as Jesus was physical after His Resurrection on Easter Day - not just dissolved as a grain of salt or a drop of water in the sea. We'll be ourselves - perfected! We'll finally be what God had in mind in creating us fully human, wholly individual beings, complete, happy and unafraid.

Because Christ Jesus rose triumphant over death on Easter, all of

is who have been grafted into His Body in Holy Baptism, have received His gift of newness of life unto resurrection and unending life as citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. Therefore we are right in trying to live the kind of life here on earth that will prepare us for Heaven. Of course we are going to fight against war & waste, against disease & destruction, to concern ourselves with the preservation of our environment and with the problems of ignorance, crime, hunger & over population.

If Heaven is living in a community of happy people who live together in perfect love & understanding under the Kingship of God, then we pattern our lives in this world after Christ Jesus, recognizing Him as Lord of this life as well as Lord of the life to come.

We Christians know that Jesus has indeed risen, even though the present state of the world doesn't make that truth evident. I shudder to think how nasty & brutish life could be if our Risen Lord were not in fact holding all His creation together. It is chiefly in prayer & worship that we catch encouraging glimpses of His sustaining power. We can thank God for that.

The Bible says "not yet are all things put under Him, but we shall see Jesus... crowned with glory & honor." (Heb. 2:9)

The old Gospel hymn "Amazing Grace" has a verse that ~~says~~ ^{says} in reference to Heaven:
"When we've been there ten thousand years,

Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise, than when we first begun."
Let us pray.

Lord Jesus, we give Thee our praise & adoration, and we rejoice to gather here as a family of those still on our earthly pilgrimage, in the sure and certain hope that we shall be reunited for all eternity with those dear ones who have gone on before into the joys of perfect life in Thy heavenly Kingdom, where, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, Thou reignest ever One God, world without end. Amen.