



CNI

In his Easter Message, Presbyterian Moderator, Rt. Rev. Dr. Frank Sellar, writes about the revolutionary message of hope, forgiveness and new life that Jesus brings.

Mention Easter and what is the first thing you think of? The loving sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, dying for our sins on the cross of Calvary and His glorious resurrection on the third day?

A recent survey showed that 30% of children thought Easter celebrated the birthday of the Easter Bunny – which is hardly surprising given the ongoing commercialisation of Easter and how the traditional symbolism that has been associated with this greatest of Christian festivals has been subsumed by the world around us.

There are many in Irish society today, young and old, who are searching for meaning and a realistic spirituality that will bring inner peace and forgiveness from guilt, as well as a fresh way of relating to God and to the world. The Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us; in Christ there is a 'new creation' – a whole new way of living.

One of the symbols that has been used to communicate the story of Easter down the years is the giving of chocolate eggs on Easter Sunday. A purely symbolic gesture that reminds us that Easter is a time of celebration. But why chocolate in the shape of an egg?

Some people have suggested that eggs are exchanged as a symbol of hope and new life. Others say that when the egg cracks open it reminds us of the stone that was rolled away from Jesus' tomb when He rose from the grave. It seems that this symbolism has gradually been forgotten by

society – so it's only right that we should reclaim this imagery of hope and joy for today as we proclaim the wonderful news 'He is risen!' and all that this entails.

Two thousand years ago a baby named Jesus came to earth. He was God's Son. He brought a message of love and forgiveness and taught people to serve others in all they do. This transformational message undermined the authorities and religious leaders of the time, so He was arrested and executed in the most painful way imaginable, crucifixion - an atonement for our sin – on the day we call 'Good Friday'.

His body was removed from the cross and put in a burial chamber. Three days later, on Easter Sunday, the stone of the tomb rolled away and Jesus was raised from the dead – the seminal moment in human history when God invites everyone to participate in the freedom that Jesus' death and resurrection brings to all who believe.

Christ did for us what we could never ever do for ourselves.

Easter is a story of hope. Because Jesus died for all the un-God-like wrong things that we have done, so that we can be forgiven. We can start anew, start afresh and hope is offered for all! Hallelujah!

We can live our lives free from guilt and shame, secure in the knowledge that Jesus, who died and rose again, is with us still. Filled with the same Holy Spirit who raised Christ, we can make Him visible within our land south and north, by loving God and loving our neighbours - those like us, and those different from us. This is a message to proclaim from the rooftops!

Enjoy your Easter eggs, but remember why we eat them – and it's nothing to do with bunnies! Jesus Christ, who was cruelly put to death for our sins, is now alive and invites us also to share His astonishing resurrection life!

Tuesday in Holy Week