

**SRI SATHYA SAI CENTRAL COUNCIL OF SOUTH AFRICA**  
**National Spiritual Wing**

**Easter**

**1. Name of religious event / Observance / Celebration:**

Good Friday and Easter Sunday

**2. Picture:**

2.1 Picture or symbol pertaining to the particular observance/celebration



**2.2 The date/period of the religious event**

In the early days of the Christian church, Easter was celebrated on the Sunday immediately following the first astronomical full moon after the vernal (spring) equinox. Over the course of history, beginning in 325 AD with the Council of Nicea, the Western Church decided to establish a more standardized system for determining the date of Easter. Astronomers were able to approximate the dates of all the full moons in future years for the Western Christian churches, thus establishing a table of Ecclesiastical Full Moon dates. These dates would determine the Holy Days on the Ecclesiastical Calendar. The Paschal Full Moon can vary as much as two days from the date of the actual full moon, with dates ranging from March 21 to April 18. As a result, Easter dates can range from March 22 through April 25 in Western Christianity

<http://christianity.about.com/od/easter/qt/paschalfullmoon.htm>

**3. About the festival:**

Easter is the most important festival in the Christian calendar. It celebrates the resurrection from the dead of Jesus, three days after he was executed. The Easter story is at the heart of Christianity.

**Easter Sunday**

Easter Sunday marks Jesus' resurrection. After Jesus was crucified on the Friday (now known as Good Friday), his body was taken down from the cross, and buried in a cave tomb. The tomb was guarded by Roman Soldiers and an enormous stone was put over the entrance, so that no-one could steal the body.

On the Sunday, Mary Magdalene, followed later by some of Jesus' disciples visited the tomb and found that the stone had been moved, and that Jesus' body had gone.

Jesus himself was seen that day by Mary and the disciples and for forty days afterwards by many people. His followers realised that God had raised Jesus from the dead. Christians call this the Resurrection.

The week leading up to Easter is called Holy Week.

### **Holy Week**

#### ***Palm Sunday***

This is the Sunday before Easter Day. It is the first day of Holy Week and celebrates Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem riding on a donkey. Crowds of people came out of the city to greet him, throwing down palm branches on the road.

Anglican and Roman Catholic churches give out small crosses made from palm leaves, as a reminder of Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem and his death on the cross. Some Christians keep these in their homes all year as a symbol of their faith.

#### ***Maundy Thursday***

This is the Thursday before Easter Day

**Last Supper**: On Maundy Thursday Christians remember when Jesus ate the Passover meal with his disciples, breaking bread and drinking wine, which is now known as the Last Supper.

Many Christians remember this by sharing bread and wine together in a service called Holy Communion, Eucharist or Mass. It is a reminder that Jesus sacrificed his life for mankind. At this meal Jesus told his followers that they should love and serve one another. He demonstrated this by washing the feet of the disciples - something a servant would normally do. You can read this story in the Bible in John Ch.13v1-15

The word *maundy* comes from the command (mandate) given by Jesus at the Last Supper, that we should love one another.

Roman Catholic church services include a ceremony in which the priest washes the feet of 12 people to commemorate Jesus' washing the feet of his disciples.

#### ***Good Friday***

Good Friday is the Friday before Easter Sunday. It commemorates the execution of Jesus by crucifixion. Good Friday is a day of mourning in church. During special Good Friday services Christians remember Jesus' suffering and death on the cross, and what this means for their faith.

In some countries, there are special Good Friday processions, or re-enactments of the Crucifixion.

The main service on Good Friday takes place between midday and 3pm. In many churches it takes the form of a meditation based on the seven last words of Jesus on the cross, with hymns, prayers, and short sermons.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/religion/christianity/easter.shtml>

**4. Suggested programme or method of observing the event:**

Suggestion/Guide for South Africa at centre level (a programme):

- Conduct bhajans (3 Oms, Christian Easter hymns & bhajans, Aarathi)
- Talk PREFERABLY by an Christian Pastor on Easter
- Our Bal Vikas children could present a short cultural item on the “crucifixion or resurrection”
- Total duration 90 minute.

**5. Verbal dedication / prayer / chant / other:**

**6. Any personal offering / sacrifice / practice**

**7. Other material for preparation / discussion:**

Any other recommended material that could be used for additional information / preparation, such as VCDs, DVDS, books, charts, etc

**8. Bibliography / Reference Section for all references used**

- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/religion/christianity/easter.shtml>
- <http://christianity.about.com/od/easter/qt/paschalfullmoon.htm>
- Christmas Message, 26-12-2007, Prasanthi Nilayam

**9. Divine Discourses: “Anything In Life Can Be Achieved With Faith In God”**

*A man with anger cannot achieve anything  
He commits mistakes and indulges in sinful deeds  
He is despised by everyone  
Love is God and God is love  
Devoid of love, humans cannot exist.*

(Telugu poem)

IT is lack of love that is responsible for all the differences, arguments and conflicts in the world, especially in the present times. Many people say that the world is afflicted today with sorrow, losses and difficulties. I do not subscribe to this view. I tell you, they are all our illusion only. In fact, there is no unrest or sorrow in this world. I just see peace, peace and peace only everywhere. When there is peace in our heart, we will be able to witness peace all round. Unrest, sorrow, anger, etc., are the reaction, reflection and resound of the state of our inner being. Sorrows and difficulties, anger and unrest are of our own making and creation. They are not natural phenomena in the world.

*Brahman Is Our Real Name*

When someone enquires your name, you give some name. (Swami at this point enquired the name of one student sitting in front of Him. The boy replied “Vikas”). In fact, that is not his real name. Similarly, you enquire from each one and they give different names. However, if God were to mention His name, He will say *Aham Brahmasmi* (I am *Brahman*). In fact, all of us should repeat the same name since we are all embodiments of Divine Self. All our names are given to us by our parents. We are not born with any particular name. Those who cannot realise this truth cannot lead a happy life.

*Embodiments of Love!*

Actually love is another name of *Brahman*. In fact, love, *atma*, *prema*, *aham* or *brahman* — all these names carry the same meaning. There is nothing in this world except love. But, unfortunately we are not able to understand what love is. We consider Love as relating to the world. We consider it to be physical. In fact, it does not at all relate to the physical realm. It is truth, verily. “You are not one person, but three - the one you think you are; the one others think you are and the one you really are. “What others think is all imagination. The Self within you is the only truth. Who is this Self? That is “I”. This “I” is the same in all. The Christians worship the Cross (†). The cross is a symbol exhorting people to get rid of ego. No one is different from you. Hence, you must always bear the truth that all are one (I). Those that are born out of *karma*, grow and perish ultimately (namely the physical bodies) are unreal. Hence, you are always *Brahman* in accordance with the *Vedic* declaration *Aham Brahmasmi* (I am *Brahma*). It is only when you consider yourself to be *Brahman* that you can realise this truth. Till then, you will be confined to the different names like Ramanna, Krishnananna, etc., that have been given to you by your parents for the purpose of identification. Surely, you did not come into this world with any name. When someone enquires from the parents about the name of their newly born child, they may reply that no name has been given to the child yet. It is thus clear that all the names given to us are by someone only and not innate. They are for the purpose of identification of the concerned individuals. There are millions and millions of people inhabiting this world, but none seems to have realised the truth that they are God. Unfortunately, today we are leading our lives with names given to us by someone.

What is *Brahman*? “I”. *Brahman* is neither born nor has it ‘death’. That is the only truth, other events come and go. For example, I have Willed to create this chain (*Swami* with His Divine hand created a gold chain).

This has been created by My Divine will. It was not there earlier. Thus, all things and beings in this world are born out of *sankalpa* (will). Hence Divine *sankalpa* is the cause for all creation. In addition, the *maya* also plays its role. When *Maya* and Truth come together, creation takes place. Without *maya*, there can be no creation. The *maya* is like a shadow to a human being. But, this shadow deludes us. At sunrise, our shadow is long. As the sun gradually rises, the shadow falls under our feet at mid-day. Thus, the shadow grows and shrinks. We should not therefore mistake the shadow as our basis.

*Embodiments of Love!*

Love is the foremost quality of a human being. And faith is the basis for that love. The spelling of the world love is LOVE. Here ‘L’ stands for ‘Lord’. Thus, Love is born out of the Lord (God). The entire creation is a manifestation of God’s love, be it a tiny ant or a mighty elephant. Everything is the creation of God.

*Not even a blade of grass will move without divine Will,  
People who do not realise this truth, get carried away by their pride of intelligence and  
discrimination.*

*But no one, however great may be, knows what lies ahead for them in future.*

(Telugu poem)

### **God Is The Source And Cause For Everything**

How did this blade of grass come into existence? It is nothing but God’s will! Similarly, every human being is born out of Divine will only. There can be no creation without God. When you look at the earth during summer it looks parched. But, with the onset of rainy season, the earth looks green with various plants. From where did they come? From the rain. The rain came from the clouds. The clouds are caused by the sun. And, the sun itself originated from God. Thus, the entire creation has its origin in God. There can be no air, sun, rain or plants without God. Knowing this truth, we still tend to forget God. On the other hand, we remember everything else. This is not correct. You should never forget God. If you forget God, it amounts to forgetting everything. For, God is the source and cause for everything. Unfortunately today, we are forgetting the fundamentals or root cause for the entire Universe. If there is no foundation, there can be no walls. If there are no walls, there can be no roof. You cannot live in a house that has no roof. Hence, first and foremost the foundation is very important. Based on the foundation, the pillars are raised and finally the roof is laid. Based on this analogy, self-confidence is the foundation, self-satisfaction is the wall, self-sacrifice is the roof and finally self-realisation is life. Thus, there should be a foundation for everything. That is fundamental truth. We are forgetting this fundamental truth.

Jesus was the son of Joseph and Mary. When Mary was carrying him in her womb, Joseph and Mary were required to travel to Bethlehem to take part in a census ordered by the Roman Emperor. They had to travel all the way riding on a donkey. It was an arduous journey. When they finally reached Bethlehem, it was night. There was no place for them to rest and they were tired. Joseph searched and searched for a resting place, but could not find any. Finally, he went to a cattle shed and knocked at the door. He explained to the inn keeper that Mary was about to give birth to a child. The inn keeper reluctantly gave them a

place in a corner to spend the night. The same night, Mary gave birth to a baby boy. A makeshift bed was arranged for the newly born child with some old clothes and dry leaves.

The boy was named Jesus. He was happily growing under the loving care of mother Mary. When he grew up as a boy, Joseph and Mary had to travel to Jerusalem to participate in a festival. Jesus got lost in the crowd and could not be traced in spite of an intensive search. The parents were very worried. At last, Jesus returned to his parents. When enquired where he had gone, he replied that he went to hear the discourse of a priest in a nearby temple. The priest had taught him "You alone are the truth; remember this." Constantly contemplating on this teaching, Jesus thereafter wandered and wandered alone for a long time and later came near a river, where some boatmen were sitting.

The first among them seen by Jesus was Peter. Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Peter. He is my father" (pointing to an old man sitting nearby). The old man was making fishing nets. Jesus made friendship with Peter. Peter complained to Jesus, "We went in search of fish for the whole of yesterday, but could not find even one." Jesus then told him, "You go to such and such place. You will find fish in plenty." Jesus also accompanied the boatmen in this exercise. As foretold by Jesus, they could catch plenty of fish. The boatmen wondered, "How great Jesus is! He knows everything." From then on, they treated Jesus as their preceptor.

Though he was young in age and form, he was old enough in wisdom. Hence, all of them were meticulously following his words. The entire community of fishermen there treated Jesus as their Master, with great reverence. Even great Masters appear to be ordinary human beings in the first instance. As they gradually reveal themselves, people will realise their true nature and flock round them in large numbers. Same was the case with Jesus. The fishermen could become rich with a bounty of fish, with the help and guidance of Jesus. As they became rich, jealousy grew among the others. They vied with each other in seeking his help and guidance. Some people, however, became jealous of Jesus' popularity and considered him as their enemy. They reported to the chief priest that Jesus had no miraculous powers and that he was deceiving people. Jesus was summoned and questioned, "How did you acquire these powers?" Jesus replied, "All this is Divine Will". Jesus was moving about with his disciples preaching his doctrine of love and moral principles. Jesus was questioned, "Who are you?" He replied, "I am Jesus."

Vexed with the attitude and teachings of Jesus, a death sentence was passed against him. He was to be crucified. The Governor, a kind-hearted person, however, did not want Jesus to be awarded a death sentence. He lamented that Jesus was a great and noble man and he was being crucified for no fault of his. He told Jesus, "You are a great man. These stone-hearted people are trying to kill you without any reason." Jesus replied "I am happy that at least you have realised that I am a good person."

Finally, at the time of his crucifixion, his mother Mary came near him and started shedding tears. Jesus consoled her saying, "Why do you cry, mother? The body is like a water bubble. Let them do whatever they wish with this body. You think these people are trying to kill me. I have no death. None can kill me." Mary then told him, "Are you not the son of this body?" Jesus replied, "Of course! I am related to you at the physical level, as a son. But, 'I am I' only. You are all like children to me. You are all embodiments of Divinity."

Thus, Jesus attained the highest level of spirituality, having gone through all tests. Jesus was not merely a human form. He was the Embodiment of Divine Self, verily. But, some people

could not realise his Divinity, as at present. Even now some people only have faith in Divinity while others do not have. Some extol Divinity, whereas some others criticise Divinity. All depends upon their faith. If you consider a stone as God, it becomes God automatically. Jesus underwent several trials and tribulations during his time. He became the Saviour and Messiah of the poor and forlorn. He helped them in many ways. Once while he was crossing the desert, a poor woman approached him begging for food. He gave her bread saying, "Take this." When someone enquired where bread came from, Jesus replied that it was Divine will. There is nothing greater than Divine Will. Everything is God's will. The foremost duty of a human being is to realise the will of God and submit himself to that Divine will. Those who developed faith in the will of God were protected, while others were not. Hence, faith is the basis for everything. People today are blind, having lost their both eyes of faith. Faith is the basis for all creation. Where there is faith and love, everything else will be added unto such a person. Hence, first and foremost, one has to develop faith. Many people have faith, but they lack love. Faith devoid of love has no use. Love and faith must be together like mutually attractive magnetic poles.

### **Preserve Your Faith**

#### *Embodiments of Love!*

First and foremost, develop faith. There can be no life without faith. Sometimes faith is also termed 'Self'. Without Self, you cannot help others. Only when there is faith can you achieve anything in life. Even now, there are several people who have progressed in life with firm faith in Jesus. Some people develop faith when their desires are fulfilled. If their desires are not fulfilled, they lose faith. This type of attitude is not good. Keep your faith firm, irrespective of whether your desires are fulfilled. Preserve your faith carefully. Faith can work wonders. It can make a blind person see; a dumb speak. Do not at all doubt the power of faith. Some incidents happening in this world may shake your faith in God. But, if you hold on to your faith firmly you can boldly face any situation. Even now some people consider this body (referring to Himself) as an ordinary man. If that were to be so, how could all these superhuman tasks be achieved? No, no; it is a mistake to think so. 'This' body may appear to be a mere physical entity to you. It is the fault of your own vision; not Mine. There is something wrong in your perception. It is a mistake of your vision, not Mine. Hence, correct your vision, develop right perception. If you are alright, I will be alright (loud applause). You are all in Me. This is the fundamental truth.

I am getting some things done, making you as My instruments. For, I require some instruments to carry on My mission. Hence, I am moulding you as those instruments (loud applause). By imparting education, knowledge and wisdom, I am developing you all as My instruments. Hence, may you all lead purposeful lives with firm faith in God! You think that education and academic degrees have helped you to come up in life. This view is not at all correct. How many educated people are there in this world? Of what use are they to the world? In fact, the world is not benefited by the educated class. More harm is done to the world than good, by such people. More than education, the spiritual life will protect a person in every way. Devoid of spiritual outlook, all your education and academic degrees are a mere waste. Their value is zero. Hence, fill your lives with devotion to God and develop the outlook "I am not this body. This is a vesture taken upon by Me. There is God inside who is conducting my life." God is "in you, with you, around you, above you, below you" (loud applause). Develop full faith in Divinity. Then you can achieve anything in life.

#### *Dear students!*

You are like fully ripened fruits. But, the fruits must contain sweet juice. Without that sweet juice, it cannot be a fruit. You must all have the sweet juice of love. If there is no sweet

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juice, people will just bite the fruit and throw it away. Hence, fill your hearts with the sweet juice of love. Whatever be the name and form, develop faith in God. God has many names; but God is only one. The ornaments may be many, but gold is one. Do not lose sight of the gold. Without gold, you cannot make ornaments. Develop faith as your foremost quality, irrespective of whether it brings you the desired results. Add love to that faith. "I am you and you are Me; I and you are one" (loud applause). *Ekoham bahusyam* (the One willed to become many). Whoever realises that oneness, achieves total bliss. Every student should develop faith in God. I am sure that students have joined this Institution not merely for acquiring education and academic degrees. They came here to learn *Swami's* teachings. If you follow the teachings with firm faith in *Swami*, you will achieve success in all your endeavours. You should have faith in *Swami's* teachings; love them, adore them and follow them. (*Bhagawan* sang the *bhajan* "*Hari bhajan bina sukha santhi nahi ...*" and continued His discourse.)

When you do *bhajan*, you experience peace and happiness. Hence constantly do *namasmarana* in your heart. You may not be able to do *japa*, *dhyana* or *yoga*; but do *namasmarana*. There is no easier path than *namasmarana* to be in communion with God. Children, adults or elderly people - all can do it. Hence, continue to do *namasmarana* throughout your life. You may study and acquire degrees; but do *bhajan* also. Do not consider Jesus as an ordinary mortal. See God in Him. You often refer to someone and say "He is a man" or "she is a lady". No, no. This is not the correct way of identification. Gents or ladies - "all are one; be alike to everyone." Lord Krishna in the *Bhagawad Gita* declared, *Mamaivamso jeevaloke jeevabhuta sanathanah* (the eternal *atma* in all beings is a part of My Being). You are all parts of Me. I and you are one. You are not different from Me. I am in you, with you, above you, below you and around you. Develop that spirit of oneness and lead your life. I hope I have made Myself clear. The moment you go to your places, do not think that *Swami* is there, while I am here. Always develop the feeling "He is with me, in me, around me, above me and below me." All are one (loud applause).

*Christmas Message, 26-12-2007, Prasanthi Nilayam*