



The Grand Commandery of Knights Templar Minnesota
Right Eminent Grand Commander
Sir Knight Joseph J. Anderson
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Christmas is nice...all sugar and spice

Easter is soon upon us, and yes, you read the unconventional-for-Easter title correctly. We get warm and fuzzy in December, heartily exchanging salutations, displaying pretty lights, and marveling at the wonder of it all. Come the Sunday following the full moon that falls on or after the spring equinox, we often give and receive a mumbled (but earnest!) Easter greeting. But remember this most important thing: no Easter, no Christianity.

For some reason, Easter makes us *uncomfortable*. There, I said it; you don't need to. Are we threatened and defeated by Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection in some way, afraid to talk about it? If so, why?

The cross, the resurrection...they *are* a defeat, but that of an occupying power. Not that of the Roman Empire and "all the fixins," but that of *sin*. This insidious power had a stranglehold on our lives, manifesting itself in (but not limited to) fear, oppression, distrust, despair, hopelessness. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross made sin and oppression in its many forms of no consequence to us; yet, we still struggle. A Mason learns of that struggle in the Fellowcraft Degree by the example and symbolism of the checkered pavement in King Solomon's temple: life is to maintain a balance between white/good/light and black/evil/darkness. The struggle never ends, and we must maintain vigilance of it. For us as Christians, Jesus made an example of the Temporal rulers...the cross was a victory, by no means a defeat!

Anyone who has followed my writings over the years may remember that I often refer to "light". There's Jesus, the Light of the world; John the Baptist, who was the testimony to the Light; the light of understanding and knowledge, to name a few. These examples are visual, if you will. But "light" can also be an aural/audio experience.

We're all familiar with George F. Händel's oratorio *Messiah*, which tells the story of the life of Jesus. Though frequently performed at Christmas, it's actually a composition for Easter. It was first performed on 13 April 1742, in the season of Eastertide. An erstwhile professional singer, I learned the solo bass parts to be ready if and when called upon to perform them. One of the bass' Aires (arias) has this text from Isaiah 9:2: *The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; and they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.* This is an excellent example of "audio light".

Händel uses Charles Jennens' interpretation of the Biblical text to create different tone colors or word painting. This particular Air is written in the key of b minor, which characteristic is that of loneliness, melancholy, resignation to an unpleasant fate. It suits the text "the people walked in darkness". The melody is extremely chromatic; the first exposition of it goes down, down, down by half steps and awkward intervals, producing a sinking feeling of despair and abandonment. When the singer comes to the words "have seen a great light," the music modulates to bright D Major, which exudes a triumphant, rejoicing, cries-of-victory sound. The phase is repeated, fluctuating between minor and Major keys. The next phrase of text, "and they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined" follows the same formula as before, also to good effect. Overall, the listener enjoys an aural journey into a cave, suddenly emerging into the splendiferous **light** of day.

Later in the oratorio the bass sings "The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed". Again in triumphant D Major, those in darkness (the dead) are raised to **light** in the resurrection of Christ.

I urge you to remember the overt joys demonstrated in Advent and Christmas, and carry them through to Easter. We need to read Luke 2, verse 10 at Easter, as well: "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people".

My blessings to you this Resurrection Day, as you walk in the Light! Celebrate the victory of Jesus over sin and death by pronouncing: Hark! The herald-angels sing: "Glory to the RISEN King!"

Mark A. Anderson
Grand Prelate, 2021-2022
Grand Commandery of Knights Templar, Minnesota

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[Pictured with Rite Eminent Grand Commander of Knights Templar of Minnesota, Sir Knight Joseph Jon Anderson.]

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