

March 30, 1986

It is always an awesome thing to contemplate the condition of the movement started by Jesus of Nazareth as it existed at the time of the first Easter.

Although Jesus apparently attracted large crowds when he preached, his circle of close followers was extremely small --twelve apostles and a few relatives and friends scattered in Jerusalem, Jericho and Galilee. There was no organization, no established doctrines, no set form of worship, no traditional way to conduct business meetings, indeed nothing to hold these people together but their experience of Jesus himself. All this took place at the very fringe of the world as it was then organized, a completely out-of-the-way place at the margin of the Roman Empire. It is absolutely miraculous that the Christian movement did not simply disappear without a trace.

What this small band of people discovered was that the impact of Jesus upon them continued after his death and burial. They were still guided, inspired and led by his spirit. Indeed, since Jesus had been the essential force holding them together, and since the movement continued after his crucifixion, it followed that Jesus was still among them. Some even claimed to have seen him.

Every person has some sort of god in her or his life. We have seen many of these gods--money, power, prestige, some aspect of one's passions or emotions. Whatever god one picks gives form and shape to one's life, for better or for worse. To place Jesus and what he stood for at the center of one's life and to live according to the principles he embodied is to acknowledge his divinity for you.

Jesus never claimed to be a Messiah or a god. He often called himself the Son of Humanity. Yet he felt himself to be so close and intimate with the love and energy which guides the universe, so imbued with its spirit, that he could address it as Mother or Father. And the God he preached was a new God. This God was not given to jealous rages, to lauding it over humankind, to preferring some people over others. The God with whom Jesus felt kinship was a servant God, seeking to uplift and to liberate, a God who cared not about a particular tribe but about every last human being. The Godliness which Jesus embodied was concerned not with orthodoxy, with right belief or right doctrine, but with orthopraxis, right practice or right living. It was a Godliness which was humane and compassionate. Indeed, in an odd and mysterious way the Godliness of Jesus was realized by his living in a fully human way, by his being the ultimate human, the perfect human.

*God/man dichotomy.*

We cannot blindly mimic Jesus. These are different times. The kingdom of Satan which is everywhere has a new form and shape; the impending catastrophe is unlike anything that has

come before. As Jesus read the signs of his time we must read the signs of ours. What we celebrate on Easter is the fact that the Truth cannot be stamped out. No matter how marginated, scattered or disorganized are the forces of those beginning to read the signs of the times correctly, we know that they will prevail. Jesus can show us the way, but it is we who must choose; it is we who must live and act in a fully human way.