

Easter

03-18-2013 by Harry Zirkelbach



Do you know what day/date this is? That on every day, somewhere, this day is celebrated as name/event unknown to others?

With seven billion or so calling Earth home, there are twenty million celebrating their birth today. You are never alone. That's a lot of birthday cakes. In our family we celebrate thirty birthdays a year, never fail to call, sing, congratulate.

In our earlier families we had parents, uncles, Aunts, cousins, in-laws galore, and if they were older, we never celebrated their birthday (it was secret), nor their death later, thought in instances where that relative was more, we now celebrate their contributions, lament their passing in solitude.

To end March in 2013, the world celebrates Easter, the sole date on the Gregorian and Julian calendar which is a moveable feast of more than a day. Easter is, all know, always on Sunday. This day generally corresponding to the Jewish Passover.

And all those already mentioned, owe the setting of this date to one mortal.

Easter Sunday was initially set by and for the Catholic world by a Council of Bishops in 325 A.D. of the Julian (Roman) calendar. These men met at the suggestion of Eastern Rome Emperor, Constantine. They gathered at Nicaea, Turkey, set standards for the Church. (The Nicene Creed, said today unchanged, was adopted here). As the Church then had celebrated Easter on different Sundays, that Council set Easter as the first Sunday after the Full Moon following March Equinox. A mouthful. The range of Easter, then between 22 March and 25 April.

Thirteen Centuries later these dates were reaffirmed with the adoption of the Gregorian Calendar in 1582.

But more. In 325 mathematicians had determined there were 365.25 days in a year, added Feb 29 every four years. Later estimates put this at 365.2424. Small difference. Yet by 1582 the Julian calendar different from the lunar year by ten days. Why care? The Equinox had drifted earlier, also affecting the determination of Easter Sunday.

The then Pope gathered the Papal minds to consider a correction. The Pope chose this solution. In a decree signed 24 Feb 1582, the Easter date chosen by the Nicene Council in 325 was reaffirmed. To account for the drift, Oct 4 1582 was followed by 15 October 1582. Viola, in Roman Catholic world, nothing happened between the non existing days Oct 5 thru 14 Oct 1582. A further adjustment, the Year 1900 would not be a Leap Year, nor would each 400th year later.

By Papal edict, the Catholic Church made this change immediately.

Each nation decided on their own to accept or reject this new calendar. It would be called the Gregorian Calendar after that Pope, Gregory XIII. He would be remembered by the Catholic Church, as Gregory the Great.

Today there remain some 26 other calendars.

Yet for the world most inhabit all celebrate today's Gregorian Calendar date. (There is still a Julian calendar, now off the solar year by 13 days.)

So if you call a relative whose birthday is today, in Norway, South Poll, India, Russia, Aurora, sing them Happy Birthday, they will not dispute that fact.

And this and every Easter, our family will dress well, attend Mass, then gather at one home for the traditional Easter meal, with egg hunt, gift sharing, affection and thanks, little consideration for the March Equinox.

Different topic. Has the world reasonable expectations from Pope Francis?