

April 17, 2020-Friday, First Week of Easter

Easter Island

On April 5, 1722 Dutch explorer Jacob Roggeveen came upon an isolated island west of Chile in the south Pacific Ocean. Because it was Easter Sunday, he named his discovery Easter Island.

French missionaries arrived at Easter Island in the 1860s. On January 2, 1864, Brother Eugène Eyraud (1820-August 23, 1868), a member of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, was the first foreign missionary to live on the island. He had used his own money to sail from Tahiti to Easter Island. The bishop of Tahiti, Florentin-Etienne Jaussen (April 12, 1815-September 9, 1891) is credited with introducing the island's language to the world. He also ended slave raids on Easter Island, and ordained the first Eastern Polynesian priest in 1874.

Today, about 2,500 people live on the island, which is noted for its large rock carvings along the coastline. The only Catholic church on the island is Holy Cross Church, which was founded in 1937 by a German Capuchin friar, Fr. Sebastian Englert.

Fr. Englert served as a missionary on the island for more than 30 years, and often incorporated the native language of Rapa Nui into the liturgy.

Norwegian explorer Thor Heyerdahl visited the island in the 1950s and in the 1980s, and purchased thousands of artifacts which he took back to Norway. In 2019, the Norwegian government agreed to return his collection to Easter Island.

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***Then they went away quickly from the tomb, fearful yet overjoyed, and ran to announce this to his disciples.***  
(Mt. 28:8)

Jesus had risen, and what he promised has come true.

Even in the face of the power of the Roman governor, even in the face of the ugly, senseless death on the cross—Jesus has promised I can overcome evil by responding with love.

Even in the face of all the sad and terrible things that can go on in life—broken relationships, lost jobs, addictions, sickness—Jesus has promised that I can overcome evil by responding with goodness.

Sometimes it's awfully hard to believe in that promise. Maybe it would be easier to accept if I could see the promise work out on a large scale. If the factions in Iraq or Afghanistan came together and made peace, it would make headlines and we'd say the world is now a better place. I might believe in the promise if responding to violence and hatred with love led to peace in a large-scale situation like that. Maybe.

But with the small-scale stuff—responding with love to the family jealousies and petty problems that go on every day in my life, responding with patience and prayer just doesn't seem like it can have much effect.

But at the time, the crucifixion of Jesus was small-scale stuff. It was nothing on the world scale. It was nothing on the scale of Israel. It wasn't even a big event in Jerusalem. One person getting killed in that city didn't bring anything to a stop. But look what Jesus did, what he said. He responded with goodness and love, and it made this world something that it had never been before.

Perhaps I need to try responding to my problems with goodness and love—the way he did.

*Spend some quiet time with the Lord.*