



# ALL EARS!!

*The Litchfield Fund  
Weekly Newsletter*

“We just don’t hear it on the street, we have our ears spread across all the fields!!!!”



**Litchfield**

**Long before Christmas (or the Super Bowl** for that matter) became the media darling of holidays, Easter was the *go-to* Christian holiday! Christmas did not start to get ‘*play*’ until the 19<sup>th</sup> century & the Super Bowl is a more recent phenomenon! Easter, however, was from early on the holiest of Christian celebrations. It was in the 4<sup>th</sup> century that the Council of Nicaea set Easter’s flexible date as the first Sunday after the paschal full moon, which is the first full moon after the vernal equinox. Why? The full moon gave those making a pilgrimage to holy sites light to travel at night & to see the bandits & thieves who laid in wait for them!

**Pagan Pasqua:** In Italian, Easter is *Pasqua*, from the same root word as the Jewish holiday Passover. Of course, the Last Supper was always supposed to be the Seder supper, closely connecting these two holy holidays. But many of Easter’s traditions & observances, including its emphasis on rebirth & renewal, come from ancient pagan holidays & myth.

Most cultures have a legend & holiday about rebirth, renewal & fertility associated with the coming of spring & the vernal equinox. Agrarian societies depended heavily on the seasons & the sun for their entire existence. The vernal equinox, when the sun finally has as much time in the sky as the darkness, was a time to celebrate! Farmers could plant, animals would reproduce, hunters could find quarry & the society had survived another bitter winter. Most ancient societies had a myth of a beautiful goddess taken from the heavens to some eternal hell! While she is kept in hell the world is cold, dark, unforgiving. But she is rescued, returns to the heavens, and the world is reborn with sunshine, flowers & fruit!

One such goddess is the Sumerian Inanna, better known in Babylonian as Ishtar & in Canaan as Astarte, whose Greek & Roman personas were Aphrodite & Venus. In fact, when the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was built in 4<sup>th</sup> century Jerusalem on the site of Jesus’s crucifixion & tomb, it was built upon the temple of Aphrodite. Similarly, Anglo-Saxon & Germanic myth includes goddesses of Spring such as Ostara, Austrá, and Eastre that are associated with renewal & fertility. Ostara was a celebration of the vernal equinox. Ostara was sometimes depicted with a hare, a symbol of fertility, because as our favorite rascally rabbit Bugs Bunny often said “*Everyone knows rabbits are good at multiplication!*” The name Easter itself was perhaps adapted by an English monk, naming it for the goddess *Ēostre* and the month of *Ēostre*, which in olde England was the month of April.

Why are eggs associated with Easter? The egg has often been used as a symbol of fertility & life. Eggs, sometimes brightly colored, were given as gifts to others during spring festivals &

brought to temples in worship. The goddess Ishtar came to Earth from the heavens in an egg and was hatched, long before a poorly educated youth thought that it was a Lady Gaga shtick! The egg is round, seemingly endless & brings forth life & is cracked open, much like Jesus's tomb!

The farthest stretch of Easter practices may be a bunny bringing eggs! Unlike a portly old gentleman with a beard living in the faraway frozen north working one day a year to bring gifts his minions have toiled to build, even the naivest 6-year old may have trouble believing a rabbit is hiding eggs behind the couch & under the bed. But ancient myth accounts for the bunny & egg routine. In a forest, the Germanic goddess Ostara came upon a bird who was hurt. To heal the bird, she changed it into a hare. Still partly a bird, the hare laid eggs as gifts to the goddess.

There does seem to be one element of Easter central to the Christian belief, and that is the *sacrifice*. The giving of oneself to benefit others, indeed in this case, all of mankind. As **The Litchfield Fund** does on every holiday, we think of & thank those who sacrifice so we can enjoy this day as *our sacred freedom* allows us to! We think of the men & women (and their families) who serve our nation, our society, *us*, in the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force & Coast Guard. We think of the men & women who wear *blue*, their brethren in the fire departments & paramedics, who daily are faced with decisions & *sacrifices* that most of us (including this author) pray we never have to make. Happy Easter!

**Of bunnies, rebirth & renewal:** A few weeks back *All Ears!!* mentioned that General Mills (**GIS**) replaced the iconic Trix bunny with a real white bunny to depict that General Mills cereals no longer contained artificial ingredients. Industry sales of cereal, for many reasons, have fallen significantly, but this week General Mills reported a 6% increase in sales since the removal of the artificial ingredients! General Mills reported 3<sup>rd</sup> QTR earnings per share of 65¢, besting analyst estimates by 3¢. Revenue of \$4B was slightly lower than expectations but full year EPS was confirmed. Revenue was 8% lower than a year ago with 4% of that due to negative foreign currency swings & 3% due to the sale of Green Giant. This week Mars, ConAgra & Kellogg's said they would join General Mills & Campbell Soup in labeling the GMO ingredients in their products. Perhaps this spring we are beginning to see the rebirth & renewal of our food system!

**Seeds, Sprouts, Grow, Harvest!**

**The Litchfield Fund**

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