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The Easter procession at Grimisuat in the Valais. For three hours after Mass the group makes a tour of the community.

GRIMISUAT, a small village perched on the slopes above Sion, watches over the Rhone Valley from its charming houses.

Their number increases every year, and modern homes mingle with granaries made of black wood.

In the same way the village's ancient customs blend with modern ideas. But the respect and pride in its traditions remain with the new inhabitants as with the old established families.

One of the most remarkable customs is the procession on Easter Monday, followed by the distribution of bread. On that morning the bells ring and invite everyone to church.

After Mass, groups form on the village square, and the procession gets under way. For three hours it marches through the region thus making a tour around the community.

Singing psalms under the leadership of precentors or reciting the rosary, the faithful parishioners, including many children, surround their community with a ribbon of prayers in which thanksgiving for the past year mingles with prayers for the year to come.

Back at the village, the people gather around baskets in which the traditional golden coloured bread is distributed. The bread is passed over the people's heads until it reaches the representative

of a family which has just nominated a Council member.

The origin of this distribution goes back to the dim past. During great famines people who passed through the region used to receive a loaf of bread.

This comforted them, and in paying this modest tribute the population gave thanks to heaven for being spared the pangs of hunger throughout the entire region.

It is the symbol of prosperity and harmony. The beauty of this

tradition lies in its simplicity.

The parishioners are surprised and even shocked to see that their "Grand Procession" attracts the curious and even photographers.

They well know that times and needs change but God's blessing and the hope for peace are still of paramount concern to man.

This is the eternal Easter wish expressed in many old customs, religious and heathen, in many parts of the world.

A village with the right blend

Mariann Meier