

Easter Day, A, 2008
The Rev. Ronald N. Johnson

Today is the Sunday of the Resurrection, Easter: the Day of Eternal Hope. Today, we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is Christianity's greatest day, its greatest feast. The events of Holy Week find their conclusion in Easter Day. That which began as triumph, with our Lord's entry into Jerusalem, ended in the triumph of an empty tomb, but Easter is not an end, it is a beginning.

Our Lord's resurrection occurred in springtime, and the church has long looked at spring for many of its Easter symbols, the liturgical white as reflection of new blossoms, followed by green during the season of growth and learning. Easter lilies, so beautiful in their own white finery, point to life and hope after their bulbs have rested in the tomb of the cold earth. These bulbs, now warmed by the sun, bring forth new growth and new life, even as God's only Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, warms the darkness of human souls and brings forth spiritual growth and new life. Even the Easter eggs, so cute in the Easter baskets of children, so beautiful as an art form in the Eastern Orthodox churches, speak of new life and new hope. Easter is not an end, but a beginning.

But to come into Easter, to bring this hope and newness into our lives, we have to take the Easter journey, and we must remember that the journey takes us through death to resurrection. We cannot separate Easter from Good Friday. Easter makes no sense without Good Friday, just as Good Friday makes no sense without Easter Day. For us to be an Easter people, we must die to the old, to the broken, if we are to be born again with Jesus Christ.

To be born again with Jesus is to live with Jesus, and to live as Jesus. It is to be Christ in this world, to be Christ to neighbor. To live as Jesus is to love as Jesus did. It is to love without pre-conditions, recognizing that there is a commonality in humanity, and that commonality is that we are all God's children; we are all God's creation. It is not for us to decide that God did not do well-enough with others, and try to fix them, or condemn them for being what God created. All of us are created in God's image and are symbols of his glory. God's love is unconditional; ours must be so, too.

To be born again and live in Easter is to set aside despair and to walk with courage into the new day, because Easter is a new day, the beginning of new life. If we would be an Easter people, we must walk with Jesus, into the new dawn, into the new light; we must walk with him into new life and profound hope. We must dare to listen to the Spirit of God which is the Spirit of Love. If we would be triumphant, we must hear the cry of God, expressed by the ancient prophet, Micah, "to love justice, to do mercy and to walk humbly with God." But to do this, to live in justice, love and mercy, is to live fully in Jesus Christ, to embrace the Easter faith. It is in this way that we are raised into the new life in Jesus our Lord. *Amen.*

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