



The Bishop of Grantham

March 2023

Dear Friends,

This letter is to wish you a joyful Easter celebration, and a very happy Easter holiday.

Easter begins in a garden. After the sadness of Good Friday, Jesus' friends go to the garden where he has been buried, to think. They have been devastated at his death. Their world has fallen apart. The only thing they can do is go and be sad in the place where he has been buried, to try to be close to him. And when they get there, they are surprised. Mary Magdalene meets a man who she thinks is the gardener. He isn't. When he speaks to her, she realises that this is Jesus. She is overjoyed that her friend is with her again and rushes off to share the news with the others.

If you read the Easter story in St John's Gospel, you will know that at first the disciples don't believe Mary. They remain confused and surprised for quite a while longer. And lots about Easter is surprising and disconcerting. Good things sit alongside bad things, and we have to try to make sense of the whole. Mary's happiness at seeing Jesus again can't take away the horror that she experienced at his death on Good Friday. However, Easter reminds us that despite the very many sad things in the world, there is also love and hope, new beginnings and good things.

Thinking about all this, I plan to go into my garden on Easter morning, open my eyes, and I hope be surprised to see the flowers and the trees springing into life after the cold of winter. I will then say a prayer in my heart, to thank God for good things, and good people, and for Jesus, who brings the good news of God's love to us all. I won't forget the sadnesses faced by those who are hungry, or searching for a safe place to live, or whose lives have been overturned by disaster, and about whom we hear all the time in the news. But I will be strengthened to pray for them, and to try to help them, by my own celebration of Easter hope. And then I'll go to church, and join with others, and share joy and hope together.

The poet Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote of 'the dearest freshness deep down things' and I think these are helpful words. However dark the world can sometimes be, Hopkins had faith that the light would come.

I take strength from him and from the millions of people over the centuries who, year by year, celebrate Easter, and commit themselves to the God of love who raises his son from the dead, whose resurrection changes everything for us all.

Whether you have a garden to enjoy or not, I hope that some time this Easter holiday you are able to go outside, and enjoy looking at God's creation. And perhaps you might join me in wonder, prayer and hope.

With best wishes,

The Rt Revd Dr Nicholas Chamberlain
Bishop of Grantham