

EASTER IN THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE



The coming of Spring and all that it promises, like warmer winds, longer days, and an abundance of green among the brown trees in our woods and colorful flowers in bloom in our gardens again, is an important representation of the celebration of Easter for many of us. Spring is a vivid symbol of the Resurrection, and encourages our faith as Nature reassures us year after year that from the dead of Winter and the long, dark shadows of Lent, comes new life and the promise of a better day. Spring and Easter become so intertwined that for many of us, and perhaps for many Christians, the two celebrations cannot always be clearly distinguished, as the dull Lenten arrays are replaced on our altars with an excess of lilies and greenery and new

life! At this time of year, all the world seems to reaffirm the Christian hope of rebirth.

Now most of you don't know much about me, which is good for you, and perhaps better for me! But one of the things you should know about me is that my mother was Australian, a war bride from the Second World War. Moreover, my mother's father was one of ten brothers, so that I have cousins all over Australia, most of whom I have never met. But one of my cousins and I have connected, back when I was a canon at the Episcopal Cathedral in Minneapolis. For that cousin of mine is an Anglican priest, with a small congregation in the Outback scrub lands of interior Australia. And he has reminded me at times that the convergence of Spring and Easter is only an accident of the Northern Hemisphere. In the lands down under, Easter must be celebrated as the warm winds and long days of Summer are coming to an end. The Christian hope of the Resurrection must be proclaimed at the very time that the trees begin to lose their leaves and the world its color. While preaching to my congregation once, my cousin held up a dead branch of a tree, like this, and said that in his country, this is a symbol for Easter. For their celebrations of new life from death must take place as the shadows grow longer and the days colder. Nature is not so reassuring to Christians in that part of the world as it is for

us, and yet Christians down under still celebrate today with us the wonder of the Resurrection.

Perhaps the convergence in those southern climates of Easter and the coming of Autumn is for the better, my cousin suggests. For Christians must be able to proclaim the Good News in a world that is often full of sorrow and pain and disappointment. We must have the courage to often declare the Resurrection in the midst of death and decay, as easily as we do in the midst of Spring. We must promise hope to a world that at times is full of despair. If we can do that, my cousin said, if we can preach the Good News of Jesus' Resurrection, without the crutch of Nature supporting us, then perhaps our message will be more authentic, and more readily accepted, not only in the Springtimes of our lives, but also in the midst of the Winters of our lives as well, when that message is more urgently needed, and that reassurance more gratefully received. So perhaps those Christians of the Southern Hemisphere have something to teach us, have something we need to remember, as we stand here this morning and so boldly declare now that Alleluia, Christ is Risen! The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!