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Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Warm greetings, and Happy Easter to each and all of you! There are some advantages to having a late Easter this year. Over the years I remember many Easter Vigils when we had to put our winter coats on to go outside to light the Easter fire, or couldn't in fact light the fire outside because there was a blizzard out there. If the forecast holds, that shouldn't be the case this year! The huge banks of snow that had drifted into my yard and garden have melted, and the signs of Spring are everywhere, from the sound of meadowlarks and robins to the sight of crocuses blooming and tulips popping out from the crusty soil. The waking up of nature brings much needed joy.

It has been a difficult winter on the Canadian prairies, with long stretches of cold windy weather. And it has been a rough few months here and the world over in other ways. We live in the midst of great turbulence and instability politically and economically, in a world which is increasingly polarized, where violence breaks out easily, and where many have deep fears about the future. That is the context in which we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, which grounds us in a hope which is, to borrow phrases from the poet e.e. cummings, "deeper than the sea" and "higher than the sky."

Holy Week takes us on a journey into the heart of darkness: denial, betrayal, mob violence, brutality, the suppression of the truth, the crucifixion of the author of life. It can't get much darker than that. But God does not leave us there. From the empty tomb, new life rises. The truth cannot ultimately be silenced. Death does not win in the end. Life and love prevail. God does not allow human failure and sin to have the last word.

Easter is not simply a proclamation of good news that makes us cheerful for a day or a week, then sets us back into the mire of discouragement and despair. Easter is about the big picture of what ultimately is going forward in history. Not that we're encouraged to believe that things are getting better and better, when clearly they are not on many fronts. But rather, Easter reminds us that God can and does bring forth life even at the most deathly of times, God can and does bring forth light even from the places of deepest darkness. History is ultimately in God's hands.

Faith invites us to hold on to that big picture of what God is doing, to place our trust there. And then to see the world through the lens of the death and resurrection of Jesus, and to live

out of the hope that has its foundations there. That's what we might call paschal thinking, and paschal living. When we see the world that way, we can see hope arising even from the smallest places and most everyday things: the first glimpse of the sun bending over the horizon with each new day; every new birth; each life-giving encounter with another; the experience of forgiveness; resilience in the face of adversity; the song of the meadowlark the first time you hear it in the spring; the smell of Easter lilies; the life that is given us at each moment.

The hymn in the background celebrates that deep connection between the coming of Spring and the rising of Jesus from the dead. The hymn opens by speaking about the springing up of a grain of wheat:

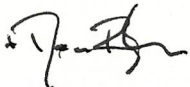
"Now the green blade riseth, from the buried grain,
Wheat that in dark earth many days has lain..."

Then the hymn proceeds to speak of the death and resurrection of Jesus:

"In the grave they laid Him, Love who had been slain,
Thinking that He never would awake again,
Laid in the earth like grain that sleeps unseen:
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.

Forth He came at Easter, like the risen grain,
Jesus who for three days in the grave had lain;
Quick from the dead the risen One is seen:
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green."

Dear friends in the Lord, may each of you know the joy of the Risen Lord this Easter, and may the joy and hope arising with Jesus from the tomb spill over into the way you see the world and into every corner of your lives. Happy Easter!



✠ Donald Bolen
Archbishop of Regina