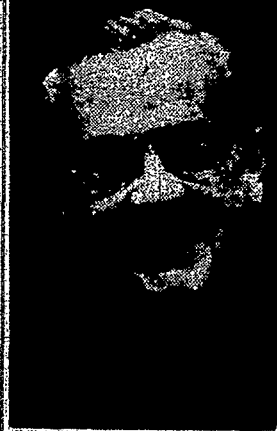


Pastoral Perspective

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

The Greening of Our Winterland

Two months ago, walled up in a world banked high with snow — more snow than many of us have ever seen — we could only creep watchfully down our streets and driveways, peering cautiously out at each mounded intersection, and wind precariously in and out among the stalled and abandoned cars. Traffic, whether driving, skiing, or walking — the whole pace of life — was gripped by the frozen clutch of winter, and we wondered wearily if Spring's greens would ever burst through. Would any dauntless birds survive the daily desperate struggle for food? Would the tender buds of snow-laden bushes ever be warmed into blossoms? Would the tiny crocus bulbs smothered in soil heavy with snow ever push through to see the sunlight? Would there ever be any more sunlight?



All that was yesterday.

Today our world resounds with a triumphant "Yes!" "Yes, we have seen the green!" Yes. The same cosmic powers that sweep heavy snow clouds into our sky to bury us in endless billows of white; the same energies that freeze our technology to a grinding halt; these same cosmic powers blow the snow clouds away and send driving gusts of wind to thaw the earth. These same energies, operating in the heat of the sun's rays, warm and soften the barren, rigid limbs of winter.

Yes. Spring has come, and Eastering!

Wintertime — for waiting and enduring, for patience and tedious plodding; wintertime — for watching at the gates of death; for awesome wonder in the face of its terrible beauty; for the driving challenge of working, sporting, overcoming and winning over snow's forces; wintertime is passing.

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will breathe again and spring back, firm and green. Know that frozen streams are running, breaking up their clumps of ice, and fish will play again with tempting bait. Birds' ecstatic songs signal the dawn once again. And we will put away our heavy winter clothes.

Yes! Spring is here, and Easter's message rings out loud and clear! Even one more snowfall would not dampen the sound of its promise — life will triumph over death!

"All creation waits with eager longing . . ." says St. Paul . . . "for the revelation of the children of God." We are straining forward, standing on tiptoe, reaching out beyond ourselves, stepping into the future — with hope. We can create, with Spring, a new world. Our hearts can breathe in fresh air and our spirits can imagine new ways of undoing death.

Life need not be today what it was yesterday. Each new moment brings new life. Hardened hearts can change; painful memories can be healed; broken relationships can be reconciled. The cold and gray of winter can become green. And yet I am reminded of the story from ZORBA THE GREEK that points up the inviolable timing of nature and reminds us we cannot make life "happen" out of due time. The story is about a butterfly and someone watching it.

The butterfly was making its way out of its cocoon, but its progress was slow, and the watcher became impatient for its beauty to appear. So he breathed on the tiny body and warmed it, and the butterfly did break through. Slowly crawling, the little creature tried to unfold its wings, all crumpled back against its body. But in vain. It needed more time and the warmth of the sun's rays, to unfold the wings gradually and naturally. The breath of the impatient watcher had come too soon. The tiny butterfly struggled desperately for awhile, and then it died.

As we wait in the promise of new life, let us honor its times and its seasons. Spring is here, but winter has taught us to wait for its full unfolding.

We Must Be 'Strong in Faith'

Following are excerpts from Pope Paul's Urbi et Orbi message delivered on Easter Sunday.

We enlist at this moment all the human energy at our disposal and all the superhuman certainty which abounds for us, in order to echo the blessed proclamation that pervades and renews the history of the world: Christ is risen! Yes, our Lord Jesus Christ has risen from the dead and he has begun a new life! A new life for himself and for humanity!



He came to meet those terrified by the great marvel of his new existence with the simplest and most wonderful greeting, the greeting of peace: "Peace be with you," he said as he reappeared in the midst of his followers. We who are the authentic heirs of this inheritance greet him with the wonder of incredible newness, with the exulting awareness of astonishing reality, and with the joy in which a new presence of the divine Master obliges us to note his victory over our fearful incredulity and to repeat with equal vigor the words of the disciple Thomas: "My Lord and my God."

And so, while we celebrate the truth and the glory of your Resurrection, Lord, light fills us and pervades us. Yes, we know; we rejoice in a new certainty that places us in spiritual and living communion with you. Yes. We believe!

'He came to meet those terrified by the great marvel of his new existence with the simplest and most wonderful greeting, the greeting of peace . . .'

And we can offer you the gift that comes to us from you, the Risen One: our faith, the humble but already glorious faith in which we live, for which we live, according to what we have been taught and what we are experiencing to some extent in our hearts: "The just man shall live by faith."

The fruit of faith, brethren and sons and daughters, must be ours at Easter. We must be "strong in faith." We must make it the hinge of our human existence, both in theory and in practice. We who have the good fortune of considering ourselves believers must overcome those mental attitudes produced by questionable opinions, by ideologies constructed out of a naturalistic mentality, or by particular utilitarian interests, in order to attribute to faith the rights of God's Word, even if at present our knowledge of it is like a reflection in a dim mirror.

The immediate revelation will come, but in the meantime we must be faithful with courageous consistency to the norm of thought and action that comes to us from the religion of Christ

through the authentic magisterium of the Church, mother and teacher.

Let us not be afraid! This supernatural wisdom does not stunt the freedom and the development deriving from the knowledge and experience of our natural study; rather this wisdom sustains it and integrates it in the discovery of the silent language of creation. And the new Word of the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit wills to direct to our humble life, in order to associate it with his fullness, becomes a supreme communication of understanding and love. Let us not be afraid to make the "Credo" guaranteed to us by the Resurrection of Christ into the expression of our hope, and let us know how to overcome the depths of doubt, scepticism and negation inherent in the mentality of so many people who call themselves modern only because they are children of this age. Let us rather strive to obtain for our peace and for our very temporal activity the luminous force of Christ: "you will know the truth and the truth will make you free."

Brethren and sons and daughters, this is our Easter wish! So that with the certainty of faith you may be able to experience the joy that belongs to it, so that we may be able to make our own the succinct prayer of the Church: "so that our hearts may be anchored where there is true joy." This is our Easter wish.

(At the close of his address, the Holy Father greeted pilgrims in 11 languages. The English greeting was: "A happy, blessed and peaceful Easter to you all.")