

## EASTER NIGHT

In our part of the world Easter happily coincides with a revitalisation in the world of nature.

New life abounds on every side, and we are given fresh heart ourselves by seeing all this newness and vigour.

It is like a sign which points reassuringly in the direction we hope to take ourselves - towards a new beginning.

Just to go out and about along the river, across the fields, over the hills at this time of year can encourage faith in the possibility of human resurrection .

So often we regard death as the snuffing out of life, the end of all we know, or love, or dream of.

Therefore we are loathe to look that way, to consider the prospect that awaits us. We prefer to busy ourselves with present interests, or we try to cling on to what is already past.

But in nature we see in autumn and winter a **fertile** extinction - a seed sown, not a lamp quenched.

For humanity too there is to be a re-awakening - surely our heart within longs for this to be so?

At Easter we enjoy the rebirth that takes place in the world of nature, and we refresh that enduring hope in life beyond death which continues to burn strongly in our hearts despite all that might stifle it.

But more than that we rejoice in the new life which Jesus already lives, a life we shall share. *'He is not here - he is risen'*: to this fact his followers have borne witness from the first Easter Sunday to the present time.

The first disciples saw, and heard, and touched him. *'They knew very well...it was the Lord'*. (John 21:12)

Countless generations since have known him present in their lives - addressing them in their secret hearts, guiding and encouraging them with the word of his Gospel, calling them to follow him more bravely and generously in their lives.

In company with those who walked with him in ancient times we too *'have known him in the Breaking of the Bread'*. (Luke 24:35)

Tonight we remember that the Risen Lord comes to us in the Holy Eucharist. We meet him in Holy Communion just as surely as the disciples met him in the upper room and on the road to Emmaus.

The One who is risen from the dead points to our human future more surely than any other sign which we might perceive in the world about us, or discern in our inner self. He is alive *'and where I am you shall be too'*. (John 14:3)

This is a belief with a foundation in nature's own renewal. It is a hope which 'springs eternal' in our human hearts. It is a conviction that has been expressed in the words and deeds of the faithful followers of Jesus for two thousand years. It is the promise, and the joy of Easter for every person on the earth.

*'Christ has in fact been raised from the dead, the first fruits of all who have fallen asleep...the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed...this mortal nature will put on immortality...and the words of scripture will come true: Death is swallowed up in victory...death where is your sting?... Let us thank God for giving us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ'*.  
(1 Cor.15:20, 53, 55-57)