

## An Easter meditation

The last word is life, not death. The last word is forgiveness, not guilt. The last word is hope, not despair. The last word, in one word, is Easter. The really good news? Easter is God's word, not ours. The Easter story is full of details. But the point of the story is amazingly simple and straightforward: through Jesus the Christ's resurrection and our baptismal participation in it, we have a future with God on the other side of death. This is not something that we make ourselves believe; it is something that we discover we believe. Trust in God is a gift, not an achievement.

Faith often makes itself known to us at times of great loss. For instance, each time that I stood at the open grave of one of my parents, I rediscovered my faith. I became freshly aware that I trusted that this was not the end, that they each had a future with God. And then I wept. I did not grieve for them and their loss of life: their futures were in good and capable hands. I grieved instead for me and my loss of relationship.

However, no grief on this first day after Easter; only joy. No condemnation; only joy. No emptiness; only joy. Joy to the world: the Lord is risen! Such joy cannot be willed into our lives; we cannot decide to be joyful. Joy, like faith, can only be discovered and then welcomed, savored, expressed, and shared. I recall, for example, the irrepressible joy expressed and shared with me by a congregation in El Salvador at a worship gathering on the morning after their church building had been bombed. I had neither witnessed nor experienced joy like that before: joy in the midst of destruction and intimidating threats by a roving death squad. It has encouraged me to anticipate that there will be joy to welcome and savor in all of life's circumstances – even in the face of death. And that love, joy's deep taproot, comes again . . . and again and again and again.

Let us pray:

*Lord,*

*When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain,  
your touch can call us back to life again;  
fields of our hearts that bare and dead have been;  
love is come again like wheat arising green.*

*Amen.*

(Hymn #379, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, verse 4)