

Interfaith Voices GT Column: Easter is All About Peace and Hope

By Alice Henderson Rampton

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Easter Sunday 2021 will be celebrated on April 4, by over 2 billion Christians throughout the world. As a celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the tomb on the third day after his crucifixion, Easter represents a triumph of immortal life over temporal death. This year, the timing of this unique Christian holiday comes when we need a reminder of rebirth. Last fall and winter were marked with wildfires scourging our state, COVID bringing death to some and concern to all, and ice storms causing power outages and destruction to trees and homes. Gratefully, in the last few weeks, I watched as daffodils pushed through the hard soil, arched their stems upward, and bequeathed beautiful yellow cloaks at a time when we needed that renewing gift.

Reflecting on what Easter means to me, I remember a personal experience many years ago. My father was a plant geneticist who looked at death very pragmatically. He always told me that his body would simply nourish the earth at the time of his death and that would be the end of life. I pondered this philosophy but wondered if there was something more. In 1985, my husband, Mark, and I learned our young daughter, Lora, was diagnosed with an oft-fatal cancer, neuroblastoma. My parents came often to offer support. My dad would try to brighten the situation by dancing to music with Lora in his arms, bringing a smile to her face. In the early morning of January 9, 1986, our daughter's earthly fight against this disease came to an end and she died in my arms. Mark and I invited our parents to come to our home and share final goodbyes before Lora's body was taken to the mortuary. When my parents arrived, I took my dad aside and shared that though her body lay in the crib, Lora's spunky spirit was no longer there. We would see her again in Heaven. My pragmatic, scientist father held me and said, "I'll have the first dance with Lora in Heaven." No more words were needed. When faced with our mortality, there seems to be an innate belief that relationships continue beyond the grave. This is felt by many and is not unique to the Christian community. Easter celebrates those continued relationships.

Russell M. Nelson, President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, recently shared, "When He suffered for our sins and weaknesses, died on the cross and rose again, the Savior rewrote humanity's story. Because of Him, we do not have to deal with our frailties, sins and fears alone. Because of Him, death is not the end. Resurrection will come to all who have ever lived. Because of Him, families can be together forever. Because of Jesus Christ, we celebrate Easter. And Easter is all about peace and hope."

Jesus Christ experienced betrayal, scourging, the weight of humanity's sins, and a horrid death by crucifixion. But he overcame all and rose again, triumphant over the cold tomb. Like that vibrant yellow daffodil outside my window, the resurrection of Christ exemplifies a rebirth of life. There is hope of a Heavenly reunion. Please join me in celebrating Easter 2021 as a time to resurrect gratitude, joy, faith, and forgiveness in our lives.

On Easter Sunday, 9 a.m. PST, I invite you to hear a global message of hope from President Russell M. Nelson. His words will focus on the positive attributes of renewal and Christ's resurrection. This message will be available Easter morning and anytime afterwards on FB, Twitter, YouTube and at this site:

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/comeuntochrist/easter-2021>