

### **Welcome to an Easter Pilgrimage (at home)**

I usually follow a well-rehearsed routine on Easter Sunday. I get up early and head out to the hill behind my house. I stand facing east. If weather conditions allow, pre-sunrise colours gradually begin to spread across the sky. In anticipation, I search for the spot of increasing light that heralds the sun on the horizon. And then comes the moment of wonder. The sun rises! After a few seconds, the light becomes so intense that I have to shield my eyes. Within moments, the glorious new sunlight expands to illuminate the earth. Each Easter Sunday it holds a deep and personal assurance for me that Christ is Risen! Following this ritual, I can lead others in Easter worship!



A couple of hours later, I enter church. The air is filled with the fragrance of lilies. On the altar, the sombre purple dressing of Lent has been replaced by resplendent white and gold. Stunning flower arrangements adorn every possible space. Soon the church bells ring out across the countryside. Organ music begins to fill the church with tunes of gladness. As each candle is lit, I sense the light of the risen Christ spreading in this place. Into this sensory overload of anticipation, people are welcomed and joyful Easter greetings are shared. We are ready. The organist gives us the familiar notes of introduction and we raise our voices (and the roof): 'Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia!'

But this year, I can't welcome you in to church so I welcome you to an Easter Sunday pilgrimage instead! This pilgrimage uses your garden and your daily exercise walk but if you don't have access to either, please enjoy my photos instead.

This pilgrimage starts as you open the curtains. Welcome the new day as a gift, given to you. Check the sky. Has the sun risen? Give thanks for the sun and all it gives to the world: light, warmth, life. Easter Sunday sunrise might also draw you personally to God and the reminder that God's son, Jesus Christ rose to bring life and light to the world.

And then, open your window. Listen. What do you hear? Birdsong? A car carrying an essential worker? Give thanks for whatever you hear.

Next, head out into your garden. What do you see? Take some time to really notice the beauty in your familiar patch of the world. It is unique. Look especially for anything white or gold this morning. I'm especially enjoying the cherry blossom in my garden. Give thanks for your Easter Sunday garden.



Later in the day, set out on your daily exercise walk. Rejoice that even in this 'lockdown' Easter, we continue to be given this opportunity to enjoy the countryside around us. Accept it as a gift to you. Give thanks as you walk. Notice the changes all around you. What's sprung to life in the last few days as the heat and light of the sun has intensified? I'm heading to my patch of bluebells today.

As I dwelt for a moment to take this photo for you yesterday, I was met with a surprise: the beautiful gentle fragrance of freshly opened bluebells. I'd been anticipating the sight of the bluebells all week but I hadn't expected this gorgeous fragrance. It was a surprise that brought me such delight.



On the final leg of this pilgrimage, take note of anything that has been an unexpected delight. The first Easter was one huge surprise! In my experience, God continues to surprise us.

Happy Easter!

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