

*We are an Easter people, and Alleluia is our song! (St Augustine of Hippo)*

Dear Friends

Rituals are a central part of our lives, from washing day on Mondays, Saturday morning lie-ins, to the family Christmas traditions (goose or turkey, sprouts or not). They give us a sense of order, of being in control, of knowing where we are.

But our rituals also show what is important. Regular washing days point to a love of cleanliness, Saturday mornings show that rest is as important as work, and Christmas meals only really work if eating together matters to us.

As the Church — the followers of the way of Jesus — we too have our rituals. However much some of us wish to emphasise that Christianity is not a religion, not about rules and regulations, it is still full of habits and practices which have become standardised. Some of them are good, others may not be so helpful. But one which has stood the test of time is the celebration of Easter. In spite of their popularity in the wider community, not all Christians choose to celebrate Christmas, or harvest, or mothering Sunday. But wherever you go in the world, Easter appears on the Church's calendar, and always has done.

The earliest followers of Jesus were nearly all Jews who had been brought up, as Jesus had, to keep Sabbath. While Jesus was willing to do things on the Sabbath that others considered work, he never suggested changing it. And yet within a few decades of Jesus' death, if not earlier, his followers had taken to treating Sunday as their special day rather than Saturday. For them, the resurrection of Jesus was an event so significant it re-wrote their understanding of the world.

The Sabbath was anchored in the story of Creation – it was special because it was right there at the very beginning: "Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done." By changing their special day from Saturday to Sunday, those early followers of Jesus were claiming that what happened at the tomb on that Easter Sunday was even more important than the creation of the world. At that moment, all God's promises came to their fulfilment. As Jesus rose from the dead, so did we, never to die again. As C S Lewis puts it in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* – "Death itself started working backwards". This world that God created is amazing, it's fantastic, it's the world in which humanity gets to know its creator. But the world to come, the world that Easter ushers in, will never perish, spoil or fade. It is a world without suffering, pain or tears. It is a world where we will know God perfectly, for we will see Him face to face.

The events of Easter reveal to us the depth of God's love for us as Jesus died on the cross. They reveal the reliability of his promises as he raised Jesus back to life from the dead. But most of all, they broke the chains tying us to a destiny of death and decay. No wonder we use the imagery of eggs for this season, for through the destruction of that shell, new life can burst forth into the light.

Christ is risen.  
He is risen indeed, Alleluia!

With blessings

