

Dear Friends,

Over the past few days and weeks, the garden seems to have sprung into life. New flowers are coming out almost daily and already there is a shift from snowdrops to daffodils and on to other spring flowers. Because of the new flowers that begin to bloom it's easy to take less notice of the ones that are coming to the end of the flowering because something new and vibrant has taken its place. In the last couple of days, I've been able to visit Beth Chatto's garden and whilst there many plants drew my eye. One in particular was a huge camellia bush, or perhaps more accurately, tree. Looking at the marvellous pink blooms it was also clear that amongst the flowers were those which had already gone over. This is typical for a camellia as the flowers themselves are very short lived. The flowers which have died, but not yet fallen sit alongside those which are just coming out. As I looked at it, I was drawn immediately to the Easter accounts.

As we move into April, we are now into the Easter season. We have celebrated the resurrection and are looking ahead. Easter day and the resurrection could not have happened without Good Friday where we commemorate Jesus' death. For the disciples, their sadness has become joy and is now filled with hope for the future as they recognise that eternal life is for now as well as forever. The hope they experience is that of total Christian assurance and certainty. They have a new focus and are renewed in their faith and actions. During this Easter season we should continue to celebrate this hope in the words we say, the actions we take, the way we interact with people, and with God's creation in its entirety.

When I looked up to see if a camellia had any particular symbolism, I discovered that there was a great amount. There were so many expressions of it, it did leave me wondering how this could be expressed. Yet, they were all positive and had at their heart a sense of love, devotion, gratitude, and humility. The first disciples of Jesus showed these qualities at that first Easter. They were willing to take new steps into an unknown world and their characters were formed and developed through their encounter with the risen Jesus.

Resurrection is about a time of transformation and renewal. To be transformed is to be open to the Holy Spirit and to God's work in and through the world. In following Jesus our characters will be shaped by being in his company and we will then want to share this with others in the way we live and act. As we enter and walk through this Easter season, let's continue to celebrate the wonders of the resurrection, the encounters with Jesus and the empowering of the Holy Spirit.

God's blessings to you and your families this Easter season,
Chris