



Easter 2015

Dear friends in Christ across Sudbury/ Manitoulin and Elliot Lake,

In just over a week we will celebrate the Day of Resurrection and the *Alleluias* that have been tucked away for these forty days will once again be shouted from the four corners of the earth.

He is Risen! Alleluia!

I pray that you will discover anew this Easter season the power of resurrection hope, and find that new life does emerge from suffering and death. The Franciscan priest Richard Rohr says this about Easter, "*The Risen Jesus is the lasting image and eternal icon of what God is going to do everywhere for everybody in all of time....Jesus stands for ever as God's promise, guarantee and lifetime warranty of what God has always been about and will forever do: turn crucifixions into resurrections! What else would give us hope?*"

Next week we will all be attending Holy Week liturgies in our respective churches and communities. The commemorations of Holy Week – from Palm/Passion Sunday through Good Friday and to Easter Sunday take us into the depths of human life, suffering, and death as words and music narrate the story of the last days of Jesus Christ. Rich and heartbreaking in its detail, these liturgies are designed to help each of us meditate deeply on the meaning of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. Only as we walk the Holy Week journey can we fully receive the very good news that Easter brings.

Many of you know that St. James Church (Lockerby) has relocated to the Southridge Mall. The mall is not open on Easter Sunday and so members of St. James will be joining other Sudbury congregations for the Holy Week services. I ask that you offer the hand of friendship and welcome to these and all your holy week guests, in the same way that you would welcome Christ in your midst.

You will be so much in my thoughts and prayers next week as we mark this *holy week* together. For even though we will be in different cities and buildings, we will be one in the Spirit. May your worship be rich and meaningful and may you be transformed by the experience.

I look forward to welcoming you to the Easter Vigil service at the Ascension on Saturday 4th April at 8pm. I am grateful to Norm Blanchard (interim music director at the Epiphany) and the 'deanery choir' who have been preparing for this wonderful celebration.

I would like to tell you how an entire town in Hlobane, rural Natal, South Africa, remembers the holiest four days in the church year. It is autumn in Hlobane and the villagers leave their homes in the misty autumn weather and move into the local school. This will be their home and worship space from Holy Thursday evening to Easter Sunday at noon.



A typical South African village

The village stores will be closed for the weekend, and nothing else will take place, for this is the place where Easter will be celebrated.

Each part of the story of the *Passion of Christ* is re-enacted together in movement, word, and song. The classroom becomes the Upper Room; then it becomes the Judgement Hall; and as the drama unfolds on Good Friday it moves to the grave yard just outside the building. The people then return to the schoolroom for the long night vigil watch and the Easter Sunday celebrations.

It is an experience the people of Hlobane call 'iGood'. They believe that in these days God is about to act with his people, as God acted in the past. That good will overcome the powers of evil.

By Saturday evening the group, although exhausted from lack of sleep and from keeping their vigil together, are no longer tired. How can they be tired when '*the greatest happening*' (Axel-Ivar Berglund) is about to take place – when the battle between life and death is intensified? In the dark they sing hymns softly and reverently. The only words are a testimony of faith given by someone. The room is dark except for the light coming from two candles on a table which has been used as an altar.

As the night progresses, and the dawn draws closer, the air is filled with expectation. The churchwarden who has been keeping watch through the night, moves expectantly towards the door and opens it a crack, to watch and wait for the first light of the sun to peek above the horizon. As soon as it does, he shouts, '*ku Yasa!*' (It is dawning!).



Sunrise in Natal

As if the congregation were all one, they rise in the darkness of the earliest dawn and with one voice they take up the hymn that has been set aside for the occasion.

They sing as if there has been no tiredness and wake.

They sing as if there has been a change in their lives.

They sing as those liberated from a prison.

'iNkosi ivukile!

Christ the Lord is Risen Today, Alleluia!



Ku Yasa! It is dawning!

A glance at the sky tells worshippers that within minutes the sun will rise and fill the whole of the shivering community with the warmth of its rays.

'iGood' has come! There is life which is risen from the dead. Today he is risen!

May our worship, and our celebrations this Easter season reflect the same joy and hope and expectation of those experiencing the Resurrection in Hlobane.

Wishing you a Blessed and Happy Easter.

Ku Yasa! It is dawning.

Archdeacon Anne