

# *Take the Rain to Heart*

*2016 Easter message from Bishop Ough*



I greet you in the name and spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ who prevailed over the dominion of death.

During the past 40 days, we have been on a journey of self-denial, sacrifice, and changing our hearts. We have engaged the ancient spiritual discipline of laying aside those things that limit our lives and destroy our relationships with God, others, and ourselves. The ashes of repentance are washed away as we prepare to exclaim with joy: Christ is risen! Christ is risen, indeed! Alleluia!

As you know, I am a native of North Dakota. The older I get, the more I understand and appreciate how fully my personality, world view, and spirituality have been formed by the vast, rugged Dakota plains. One of my favorite books, *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography*, increased this insight and fed my Dakota soul. The book is my story!

Kathleen Norris, the author and 25-year resident of Lemmon, South Dakota, intersperses her narrative with weather reports. She accurately observes that on the Dakotas plains, the wind and weather, the land and sky become one and are full of the mind of God. Her weather report for March 25 speaks of resurrection:

"Mud and new grass push up through melting snow. Lilacs in bud by my front door, bent low by last week's ice storm, begin to rise again in today's cold rain. Thin clouds scatter in a loud wind. Suddenly, fir trees seem like tired old women stooped under coats. I want to be light, to cast off impediments, and push like a tulip through a muddy smear of snow. I want to take the rain to heart, let it move like possibility, the idea of change."

A prairie spring is the essence of resurrection. In a few scant days, the winter coat, muddy smears, and cloudy impediments of Lent give way to the light and hope and victory of resurrection.

Resurrection means the idea of change is alive. New possibilities abound and the light of the world prevails over darkness and death. Resurrection means that when you most need love, forgiveness, and direction for your life, the risen Christ comes to love you, forgive you, and invite you to feed his sheep. Resurrection means God has wrapped his arms around you and will never let you go.

As you prepare to celebrate the joyous victory of Easter, take the rain to heart. Let it wash away the impediments of life lived in the shadows of despair and fear. Let Christ's victory remove the muddy smears of guilt and sin. Allow God's grace to flood you with new possibilities, new love, new hope, new life. The idea of change is alive. The clouds are scattered; the light breaks through; the tulip blooms. Christ is risen!

***May you, your family, and your faith community have a blessed Easter. Take the rain to heart.***

Bishop Bruce R. Ough  
Dakotas-Minnesota Area  
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