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## Lenten Joy

By The Rev. Susan D. Parsons

I have always loved the season of spring. I delight in the sprays of cotton candy-colored branches; the sweet, green noses of bulbs poking out from the cold ground; and the song of returning birds calling me awake too early in the morning. Soon, when I go out for a walk, the trees will seem to rejoice at my presence by showering me with tiny bits of confetti that will carpet the ground beneath my feet. The sun is warmer, the breeze lighter. And the only hitch in this paradise of fresh, glorious life is Lent.

My soul rebels at the thought of contemplating death and ashes. It's not the time to concern myself with the apparently limitless need for reconstruction and renewal essential for my body, soul, and mind.

At the end of winter, I want to rejoice – dance around in gardens and stand in the sun with arms stretched out like the vultures greeting the morning sun. Plus, there are bright red, fat strawberries and luscious asparagus to consume, and a plethora of spring flowers begging to be allowed to decorate the house.

But not yet, the Church tells us. We are to be remembering our mortality, the suffering and death of Jesus, and taking a critical look at ourselves. Are we who we really want to be? What precious part of our body and soul do we need to let go of to draw closer to God? Fast, pray more, give more than we usually do so that we, in our own way, will be “resurrected” with Jesus.

It sounds good, doesn't it? And then, every spring I wrestle with the discipline. It's too lovely to be dreary. Spring is too precious for the dark clouds of inner work. Then, grudgingly, I embrace Lent much the way I embrace a cactus – slowly, carefully, noticing only the nasty thorns at first. And every year, I suddenly remember that there's really no misery in it at all.

Even if I don't allow myself flowers for the house or garden, an extravagant display of spring flowers is everywhere else. And this year, the orchid that had quietly done nothing since its first bloom when I brought it home, is now in splendid flower. The walks on the confetti carpet of blossoms are not that much less delightful if they instead become my path for a thoughtful, quiet time to reflect. And notes that I long to write are created in a sunny spot where I can see the magnolia preparing for a fabulous array of blooms in the next month or so.

And, though I still wonder endlessly if I could instead fast on baklava and oranges instead of vegetables and beans, I have also come to realize that my rebelliousness about Lent has nothing at all to do with spring. I just don't want the discomfort. I don't want the work Lent asks of me – even for just forty days. Or in any season.

Perhaps spring is exactly the perfect time for Lent. Everything on earth seems to understand and embrace resurrection, as if God is reassuring us of what a life lived close to our Creator means for us now and at our death.

All creation is coming alive. Resurrection is all around us. What fools we would be not to join with the earth in this celebration of rebirth and resurrect ourselves, too.

I hope this [song](#) “Here Comes the Sun,” written by George Harrison and performed by George Harrison and Paul Simon, offers you a chance to

reflect on God's call to all of us at this time of renewal, rebirth, and resurrection.