



He indeed died for all, so that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. (2 Corinthians 5:15)

April 29, 2025

Hello Everyone —

The Easter season and the Easter mystery continue to unfold around us. What does that look like in your daily living?

On December 6, 1875, a German ship — the SS Deutschland — sank in the North Sea — off the English coast. Among the 157 passengers who perished were five Franciscan nuns traveling to Missouri to take up teaching in what was considered mission territory at that time.

The young nuns (Henrica Fassbender, Aurea Badziura, Briggitta Damhorst, Norberta Reinkober and Barbara Hultenschmidt) sacrificed their own lives so that others might be rescued. According to one account, the nuns remained below deck as the ship sank. As the water rose around them, they clasped hands with the sister on their right and left and were heard repeatedly praying, “O Christ, O Christ, come quickly!”

The Jesuit poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins, was profoundly moved by the story. So much so that he wrote a poem about the tragedy which he entitled “The Wreck of the Deutschland” — and he dedicated it to the five Franciscan nuns.

Hopkins saw in their deaths a parallel to the suffering of Jesus. Near the end of the poem, Hopkins wrote:

**Let him easter in us, be a dayspring to the dimness of us,
be a crimson-cresseted east . . .**

To my understanding as used here — the word “easter” is a nautical term. For those of you who may go boating or who are anyway associated with the Navy, the term probably makes better sense. It means steering a craft toward the east, that is, steering it into the light.

“Let him easter in us.”

An intriguing concept, isn’t it? The word Easter used as a verb — not just the name of this great festival whose season is unfolding during these weeks — not just the mystery of God’s unfathomable, redemptive love that the Gospel can barely find words to describe — but Easter as something we think — as something we feel — as something we do.

Using Hopkins’ own words then:

“Let him easter in us” that we may live our lives in the light of his compassion and peace — in the way of his justice and forgiveness.

“Let him easter in us” that we may be humble servants like him — healers like him — teachers like him — foot-washers like him.

“Let him easter in us” that we may bear our crosses for one another as he bore his cross for us.

“Let him easter in us” that we may at the end of our voyage, “easter” in him.

Throughout the now-completed forty days of Lent, Paschal Triduum and the Easter week appearances, we have been steering our lives toward the light — trying to shake off the darkness — the doubts — the heaviness of heart — all that comes with life in the body — this side of eternity. As the Easter season continues before us, let us look to the risen Christ as the reason for why we do — what we can do — on a daily basis.

May Easter truly become in our lives — a verb — and not just a day.

As I do for you, please pray for me,

Most Reverend Jeffrey S. Grob
Archbishop of Milwaukee

