

Easter Season as a Time to Delight in Nature

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The story of Jesus' Resurrection tells us that he was buried in a tomb located in a garden (John 19:41). According to the *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (IVP), throughout Scripture, the image of a garden represents both nature and a sacred space (representing heaven, the "place" where God dwells, the focus of human longing or life at its fullest, a way of life and a state of the soul).

Of course, the Book of Genesis introduces us to *the* Garden—the place where God dwells. On the first Easter morning, Mary Magdalene mistakes the Risen Christ for the gardener—which, of course, was no mistake at all! The Risen Christ is indeed the Gardener, who richly nourishes us with new life.

When we focus on nature—God's Garden—we are pulled into a state of mind that focuses on and is defined, not by death, but by life. Recalling that Jesus was buried and risen in a garden, we are reminded to use the 50 days of Easter, which coincide with the new life of spring, to enjoy and delight in nature.

We all know that it's a good thing to get outside occasionally and "get some fresh air." It improves our physical and mental health. There are also profound spiritual implications to spending more time encountering creation:

- It reminds us that we are part of something bigger than ourselves and puts things in perspective.
- We absorb the generative energy of the natural world.
- It reminds us to just be.
- It reminds us of our interconnectedness to creation and to one another.
- The wonder and awe we experience leads to joy, gratitude, and humility.
- It reminds us of our own fragility.
- It reminds us of the healing that takes place in nature and within ourselves.
- It opens us up to mystery.
- It gives us a break from technology.

So, how can we delight in nature this Easter season? Here are just a few ways to "stop and smell the roses."

- Watch and listen to birds.
- Look at stars, clouds, and the moon.
- Feel the sun on your face.
- Watch the wind blow branches and leaves.
- Go camping.
- Go fishing.
- Spend time outdoors with your pet.
- Take a walk in the rain, with or without an umbrella.
- Garden.
- Ride your bike.
- Volunteer at a pet shelter.
- Collect shells, rocks, or leaves.
- Walk barefoot through the grass.
- Pick up litter.
- Take nature pictures.
- Watch nature programs on TV.
- Watch a sunrise or sunset.
- Sit in your backyard or at a park.
- Visit a forest preserve, nature preserve, or state or national park.
- Bring some plants into your home.
- Sketch nature.
- Walk a friend's dog, or volunteer to pet-sit.

How do you delight in nature?

