Voices of Sisters
Spirituality



Paperwhite, or Narcissus papyraceus, flowers (Unsplash/Aravind Reddy Tarugu)



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These days of Easter, I find myself looking back on Lent and seeing things I didn't fully notice at the time. Depending on your background and current circumstances, Lent can be seen as a season of deprivation, a season of growth, a season of repentance, some combination or something in between.

The Baltimore Catechism was out by the time I started school, and there wasn't a formal curriculum to take its place. The sisters I had as teachers took the lack of curriculum and ran with it, so my experience and learning of all things church and God was less gloom and doom than previous generations. Much like Advent, Lent was defined for us as a season of preparation, a time for resurrection.

Bright and early on the morning of Ash Wednesday this year, we had an external computer hardware failure, quite the way to begin the day. I tried to keep the staff calm and shared "old school" workarounds for everyone, all the while being super frustrated (to the point of giving myself hives — a first). It took our technology department, our software vendor and our hosting company until Friday afternoon to fix everything.

When I was able to share the good news of the fix, a staff member loudly announced, "Lent is over, after three days there is resurrection!"

That stopped me in my tracks. I wasn't offended or taken aback; rather, I was thrilled with the very genuine proclamation.

It was at that point that I decided to make a conscious effort to look for resurrection before Easter. Big things, small things, whatever I could find. Even though we've had more than one Easter snowstorm, Lent and the Easter season in the northern United States point to spring and the sprouting of green things — resurrection.

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In 2026, there is a lot happening in the world that can easily pull us into a gloom-and-doom mentality instead of pointing toward life and rebirth. War — pick your country; the U.S. government's treatment of immigrants; trafficking — I live in one of the hot spots; violence — the list can go on. Looking for resurrection challenged me more than I expected.

It's long been tradition for the school I minister in to host the Ash Wednesday Mass for ourselves and the neighboring grade school and parish, upward of 1,000 people. One of my first signs of resurrection, recognized in retrospect because of my colleague's announcement, came right before our Ash Wednesday Mass began (which was right after our computer issues started). Our guest presider showed me a handmade stole someone had woven for him. It was simple and stunning. Someone had spent hours warping a loom and weaving to create such a gift, and he was eager to wear it for the first time and for me to see it. His simple and genuine joy was my first glimpse of resurrection.

A week later, resurrection came in the form of sprouts. Every year for Christmas, I purchase some paperwhite (Narcissus papyraceus) bulbs. I had taken a fall shortly after purchasing them, and my broken wrist pushed all things holiday to the side while I negotiated surgery and ongoing recovery.



Paperwhite, or Narcissus papyraceus, bulbs sprout in early March, signaling new life after winter. (Jane Marie Bradish)

Once I was a bit more mobile, I unpacked the bulbs and discovered small green sprouts. I planted them and checked daily for growth. They may or may not bloom, given they should have been planted months ago, but those tiny greens emerging from dried bulbs were signs of new life.

Early in March, my international congregation gathered for our General Assembly (a chapter). The delegate assembly was half a world away from me, but it brought

together sisters from all our provinces and regions. On behalf of all of us throughout the world, they celebrated who we are and who we serve, as well as set direction and elect leadership.

I wasn't there, but I was definitely connected. I followed along through messages, social media and shared prayer. My sisters — people I knew and people I didn't — gathered to help us discern the best ways to minister in a complex global reality. That, too, was a sign of resurrection.

For more than a year our school has had enhanced security screening for everyone entering the building. I'm talking about metal detectors and handheld wands for when the detectors alert. It's a necessary hassle in this day and age, when mass shootings and other violence are so commonplace most don't make the news anymore. Most people take the screening in stride, but there are some who complain every single time they move through the checkpoint.

I'm one of the people who helps with screening, and the students know they need to come to me if the detectors alert. I don't know if they felt sorry for me because of my broken and splinted wrist or if there was some kind of plot, but for a week straight not a single person gave me an attitude when I had to go through their things. Some apologized when we discovered the issue, some celebrated when they got through screening without issue the following day, and others thanked me for helping keep all of us safe. After a year of daily grumbles, that week of having none was also a sign of resurrection.

Was my practice of searching for and naming signs of resurrection before Easter naive? I don't think so. Now that we are in the Easter season, in what unexpected events, places and people do you continue to find resurrection?