

## **Easter is a gift, not a tax**

### **An Easter message from the Anglican Bishop of Newcastle, The Right Reverend Dr Brian Farran.**

As we celebrate Easter, the Australian community debates the issue of our Carbon footprint. Whether people are advocates for this Tax or sceptics of global warming, the issue of our Carbon footprint is lively and persistent.

The debate about our Carbon footprint mirrors our society's attitudes towards death. There are those who take death seriously and prepare for its eventuality and there are those who seek to deny it by refusing to discuss or even think about it.

If those who are prophetic about our Carbon footprint are correct, then ignoring what the world is doing will impose on future generations a lesser quality of life. In effect, our generation will leave a footprint of diminishment. The environmental advocates argue for preventative and restorative actions that will allow us to imprint the earth lightly and gently.

We are being made aware of a universal life and death issue facing ongoing debate and decision. This is not so with Death itself.

Each person is impacted by death - some tragically, others peacefully. But every person has to face death, and often we have to face death alone.

There is still an inhibition about discussing death, acknowledging its prospect and being open with the one who is facing it imminently. There is still an entire industry that seeks to minimise death.

One way of thinking about Easter is to consider the Resurrection of Jesus as God shrinking the large and heavy footprint of death forever. The restoration that God offers to us through the Resurrection of Jesus is a sharing in God's own eternal life. It is an exchange that prevents the footprint of death being final and destructive.

This exchange is known in the Bible as eternal life. Eternal life is a relationship with God that we experience through faith.

Faith is trusting God as the ultimate source of trustworthiness. Faith is believing that God's love and graciousness confer eternal value upon human beings. God's love and valuing far exceeds even our most generous love and valuing. God's conclusive action is in overcoming the footprint of Death by the Resurrection of Jesus.

The Resurrection of Jesus from the dead is understood in the Bible as the guarantee of what God is offering each person.

It is an inclusive and loving offering because that is God's nature. Easter is the festival of life, the direct outcome of God's love. Easter eggs hint at this fact, but the reality is more effectively signalled in the Christian celebration of Easter, especially in worship.

Just as everyone will have to learn new lifestyles in order to respond creatively to the effects of our Carbon footprint, so too the Bible teaches responses that we need to practise if we accept that God has dealt with the heavy marauding footprint of Death. We must not act in deadening ways like being violent or intolerant or neglectful.

Easter is not only a festival of fifty days, Easter is also a lifestyle. This Easter lifestyle commits us to ensuring the triumph of life over death in all the decisions we make.

Easter is God's assurance through the Resurrection of Jesus that the haunting footprint of Death has been overcome. There will be very lively consequences for us. Do please celebrate Easter knowing its gift and assurance of life! Easter is a gift, it's not a tax!