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Opinion

Allen Mendenhall: Easter hymns in bloom

[Allen Mendenhall](#) | 04.20.25



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Spring has arrived, a polite guest bringing gifts of dogwood and redbud to make amends for winter's harsh lingering. The daylight now washes the world in watercolor transparency – something the British Romantics would have recognized immediately.

They haunted my adolescence: Wordsworth verses copied into notebook margins, Coleridge's fragments tucked between chemistry formulas, Keats and Byron hidden beneath my pillow. Their words became my liturgy for this season of renewal, when even the most ordinary afternoon might suddenly reveal itself as extraordinary, perhaps through a chance encounter with immortality among the daffodils.

Auburn, where I live, blossoms in response to the air's gentle coaxing, traces of pollen still accumulating on car hoods and driveways. Irises and sun-loving flowers stand sentinel in neat garden beds, their purple, yellow and white heads nodding in the wind. Hanging baskets appear on porches like strange fruit, pendulous with fuchsia and verbenas. Azaleas have exploded into pink and white declarations against red brick walls. And the roses – still demure in their buds – hold their secrets close, promising but not yet revealing.

Spring, in the South, announces itself in blossoms and rituals – some sacred, some secular.

Last weekend, for instance, televisions flickered with that peculiar shade of Augusta National Green, a color that exists nowhere else in nature. "A tradition unlike any other," they say, and one believes it, watching white-covered caddies and those perfectly manicured fairways.

On sidewalks and in churchyards, girls appear in sundresses, as though they too have bloomed overnight, their winter pallor giving way to the first blush of sun.

Amid these outward signs of renewal, a quieter devotion moves me most this Easter.

Since February, my daughter has attended the chapel choir before church service each Sunday. Such dedication in one so young. Her small, fragile shoulders square

with responsibility as she clutches her choral folder.

I observed her in the rearview mirror as we drove to church, her lips moving silently, rehearsing. She pinned the lyrics to the back of the passenger seat: a makeshift teleprompter for our morning commutes. We listened to the recordings on our way to school as if repetition might improve her pitch.

Last Sunday – Palm Sunday – she and her peers performed their first song. I watched from the pew as she, wearing blue and pink, processed in with the other children.

How seriously she took it all. There was neither fidgeting nor a sideways glance at friends and family. When she began to sing, her eyes remained fixed on the choir director's hands, watching for cues with the concentration of a diamond cutter.

En route to church that morning, she asked to review the lines. "Just one more time," she said, unfolding her creased printout. I indulged her, of course. How could one refuse such earnestness? She traced each word with her index finger, working through them with the determination of a scholar.

Her devotion to getting things exactly right touched something profound in me. It isn't perfectionism; it's reverence. She understands, in her way, that these songs carry meaning beyond their melodies, that they tell the oldest, most perfect narrative of renewal.

This weekend, she will stand before the Easter congregation, among the lilies and morning light, and sing of resurrection.

Knowing her, she'll sing as though the world depends on it. And perhaps, in a sense, it does. I imagine the scene already: the hush before the first note, the faint rustle of papers, and then her voice – clear and not self-conscious – rising into the vaulted air with the others.

There is holiness in that, not only in the music but also in the act of remembering, of retelling the story. She'll sing for us, *all* of us, the centuries of faithful hearts and trembling tones, of parents watching sons and daughters do small, sacred things.

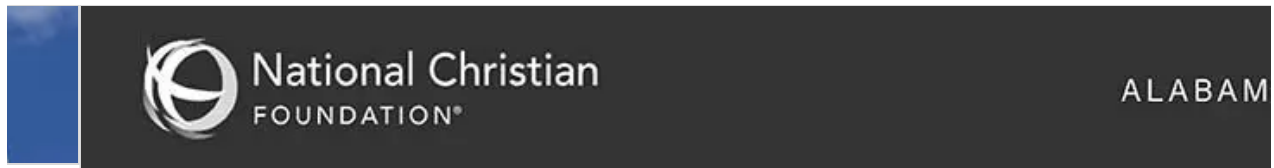
The Romantics taught me what my daughter seems to know instinctively: reverence is found in moments of pure attention, when time folds upon itself.

Today, of all days, I'm more aware we're part of an unbroken chain of witness and wonder – reaching back to Christ's triumph over death and forward through our children's joyful sounds, singing timeless hope into being.

He is Risen. Amen and amen.

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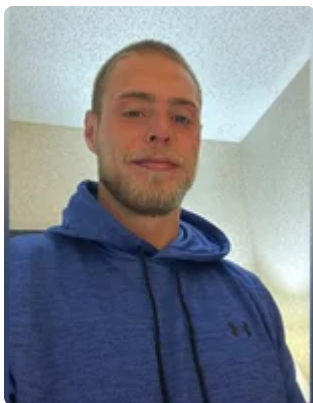
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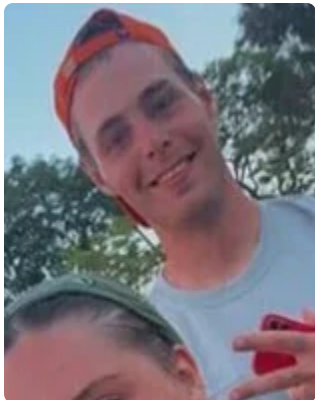
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