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Alleluia in April and a Sakura Spring

Alleluia!

The Lord has risen!

Luke 24:34¹

<i>Sakura Sakura</i>	Cherry blossoms, cherry blossoms
<i>Noyama mo sato mo</i>	The hills and fields and countryside
<i>Miwatasu kagiri</i>	also as far as you can see
<i>Kasumi ka kumo ka</i>	Is it a mist? Is it a cloud?
<i>asahi ni niou</i>	Fragrant in the morning sunlight
<i>Sakura sakura</i>	Cherry blossoms, cherry blossoms
<i>Hanazakari</i>	Flowers in full bloom

Japanese Traditional Songs- Sakura²

The word April comes from the Latin *Aprilis*, second month of the ancient Roman calendar.³ Old folk etymology had it likely derived from the verb *aperire*, which means “to open.”³ April signifies the end of winter and awakening of spring when flowers begin to bloom in temperate regions. Spring also heralds the *Sakura* Season in Japan, when fragile, fragrant cherry blossoms bloom and wither within a week or so. Their fleeting beauty evokes “the feeling of longing and appreciation for the evanescent beauties of the world” or “*mono no aware*,” the “pathos of things.”⁴

We were fortunate to be in Japan this year when the cherry blossoms reached full bloom, after several years of disappointment from visiting either too early or too late. The experience was both exhilarating and enchanting, heightened by the realization that it was all too ephemeral. Indeed, basking in the blossoms awakened poignant memories of many bittersweet days past. And such memories abound for one in his seventh decade of life. Our visit also fortuitously coincided with the Christian Holy Week, remembering Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and culminating in His Resurrection on Easter Sunday.

Keywords: *Spring; Easter; April; life; death; cherry blossoms; Sakura; alleluia; resurrection; Christianity*

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We usually celebrate Easter in late March or early April. Easter signifies a fresh start, a season of renewal, rebirth, and hope. While “*mono no aware*” describes the attraction one feels towards the sorrowful charms of something fragile and fleeting,⁴ Easter commemorates the ultimate reality that is unbreakable and everlasting: Jesus’ triumph of life over death. As the apostle Peter wrote in his first letter,⁵

we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Thus, we who believe exclaim “*Alleluia!*” (from the Late Latin *hallelujah*, *alleluia*, from the Greek *allelouia*, from the Hebrew *hallalu-yah* “praise ye Jehovah” ... from *hallalu*, plural imperative of *hallel* “to praise” ... with primary sense being “to trill” ... and *yah*, shortened form of YHWH, name of God.).⁶

This April spring differed drastically from those of previous years, however, as our world order precariously hung in a balance between death and destruction brought about by geopolitical forces beyond our control. With fuel prices skyrocketing, living costs escalating, and livelihoods plummeting, the socio-economic situation served as a reality check and reminder that, like the *Sakura*, “all good things must come to an end.” In many other places, and for many other people, the rock-bottom end had come all too abruptly as man’s inhumanity to man knows no bounds. On the other hand, our sorry situation also evokes the promise that “this too shall pass,” just as winter turns to spring and suffering and death lead to new life. No matter how

seemingly bleak, humankind has endured worse situations before and we have overcome. *Pace Fuller*, “the darkest hour of the night comes just before the dawn.”⁷ Armed with hope, we continue to participate in the ongoing re-creation of our nation and our world as we do what we do best for ourselves and our families, our patients and their families, and their communities. As Easter people, we embrace this *Sakura* spring with an April *Alleluia* and proclaim the words of the apostle Paul:

*“Where, O death, is your victory?
Where, O death, is your sting?”⁸*

On another note, we celebrate the 45th Sapphire Blue Anniversary of the Philippine Journal of Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery this year, and my 20th year as Editor-in-Chief. This occasion is marked by important transitions, as we thank Drs. Filipina T. Cevallos-Schnabel and Rodante A. Roldan for their service as Associate Editors, and Dr. Erasmo Gonzalo D. Llanes for his service as Managing Editor. We welcome Drs. Kimberly Mae C. Ong-Nelson and Anna Kristina M. Hernandez as our new Associate Editors, and Dr. Rubliza DLC. Onofre-Telan as our new Managing Editor. We are grateful to our Publisher, the Philippine Society of Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery, Inc. through its Presidents and Boards of Trustees over the years for their continuous support, and to our Printer, AvLich Graphics and Prints for their excellent and reliable copyediting, proofing and layout services, and friendship these past 20 years. *Maraming Salamat Po*. Together, let us look forward to many more *Alleluia* Aprils and *Sakura* Springs to come.

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