



Dear Tanja,

I am writing to wish you a happy and wonderful Easter. During this Easter season, Naidiso, the late Musa's wife and her six children, know that you, are an angel and are full of blessings for you. The schools have closed and very shortly I will send you their letters. If you, remember the late Musa was killed by an elephant, as he was riding to a church where he was a pastor.

The concept of Easter is a rather new development here in Africa, and especially among the Maasai, who have resisted cultural change for a long time. To the 19th century Europeans, they were the "noblest of savages", an elite corps of painted and feathered warriors, for whom nothing was an inducement to change. Neither peace for war, nor money for cattle, nor cities and settlement for the plains and open boundaries of their land. This isolation, their land, their traditions, codes and values have all been defended in a long and mostly passive war of resistance, carried out by a community structured as a standing army.

The present day standing army is the Big Life Foundation rangers, 95% of whom are local Maasai recruited from the local community, and famed for their intimate knowledge of the lay of the land and for bushcraft skills. All these have come in very handy in wildlife security.

The majority of the Maasai celebrate Easter as a combination of a religious and secular festival. There is not much giving of presents, much more a giving of presence. People do not have the financial resources to buy gifts for each other, and even if they did, there are not any stores that sell any Easter gifts in the bush.

Our rangers will dress smart in their jungle fatigues and boots. Music will be quite a mix, but mostly Maasai gospel and Maasai traditional folk dance --- the throaty sounds and the shaking of the neck and the legendary vertical jump. And Easter holiday is for everyone, unless you are a goat or cow, and by extension, a rhino or elephant. For rhino and elephants , it is a difficult time, as poachers try to take advantage of the festive period to sneak into the bush and kill rhinos and elephants for their trophies. Security is tightened, and there is a general state of alertness in all our ranger outposts.

So yes, things out here in the African Savannah are different at Easter. But like anywhere else in the world, we get together as family and friends. It is only the ways and means that may differ, but the spirit is the same. And as the ancient story of the death and resurrection of God's son is replayed out here in the African bush, we in turn pass on what has been given, to each other; love and friendship as we wish each other a very happy and wonderful Easter. And from the late Musa's family, me and from Big Life Foundation, we say, "may your Easter be one filled with immense joy, enjoyment and magnificence. May your spirit fly freely on the wings of faith, and may you be renewed and strengthened.

Kind Regards,

**Samar Ntalamia**

**Programmes Manager, Big Life Foundation, Kenya**