

20 April 2014 Easter Day – Sign(s) of resurrection

1

Signs provide us with direction and so give shape to our journey....

During Lent some of us explored the sign's in John's gospel, signs that gave us some direction on our journey through the wilderness and our journey toward Easter.

Now we are here, celebrating Easter; but what does that mean....

For many today is a celebration of the miracle of Jesus' resurrection, celebrating the event over 2000 years ago that confirmed Jesus as the Son of God. They are essentially celebrating Easter as an anniversary, in a similar way that we would celebrate a friend's birthday.

However, when we look at Easter as a **sign**, as something that is revealed through Christ, then it becomes something quite different and we open ourselves to its deeper **significance**.

The gospels seek to record and pass on to the future the significance of Christ's revelation, they give us a sign, the very sign that Christ revealed for humanity. The significance of resurrection is not in the event itself; when we look back to the resurrection, the raising of Lazarus, we can see it as a sign that pointed us toward Easter, and now we need to see the significance of the sign that is revealed to us at Easter..

Let's take another very simple example to illustrate this important point...

In 1961 [traffic psychologist] Karl Peglau revealed a sign....

It was officially introduced on 13 October 1961 in Berlin; and four decades later, Daniel Meuren of the West German *Der Spiegel* described the sign [Ampelmännchen] as uniting "beauty with efficiency, charm with utility, [and] sociability with fulfilment of duties"

The very same sign [Ampelmännchen] reminded others of a childlike figure [with big head and short legs], or a religious leader.

The sign is called *Ampelmännchen* (German: *little traffic light man*, pl. Ampelmännchen), or Amplemann for short, and is the symbol shown on pedestrian signals in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR – East Germany), now a part of Germany.



It is a sign, it gives us direction and we are asked to respond to it.. When the green man walks, we walk, and when the red man stands still baring the way ahead, we stand still...

The Easter narrative is also a sign and we are asked to respond to it....

We claim ourselves as “the Body of Christ”, not the watchers, nor anniversary celebrators of Christ... We are the ones who have seen the sign of resurrection....

And now the green man is walking... right from the very tomb of death, and that is asking a response an action from us.

2

Just as a pedestrian does stand looking at the changing colours of the traffic light man so we should not just sit looking at the anniversary of Easter, rather we should read the sign, the sign that tells us of “A New Creation”, a new understanding of life and living that is lived in the light of eternity.

We adopted the sign of the peace crane, an icon from another tradition, to make universal the sign the sign of resurrection.

Throughout history, birds have been viewed as animals of special value and have been laden with meanings often derived from legends and stories that have survived over many generations. The Crane may conceivably be the oldest bird on earth; there is fossil proof that they existed over 60 million years ago. Greek and Roman myth tended to portray the dance of cranes as a love of joy and a celebration of life. The crane was usually considered to be a bird of Apollo, the sun god, who heralded in Spring and light. Throughout all of Asia, the crane has been a symbol of happiness and eternal youth. In Japanese, Chinese, and Korean tradition, cranes stand for good fortune and longevity because of its fabled life span of a thousand years. Existing in fifteen species which inhabit five continents, the most majestic is the Japanese Crane which stands almost five feet tall with its wing span of more than six feet and its white body capped with its red crown. The Japanese refer to the crane as “the bird of happiness;” the Chinese as “heavenly crane” believing they were symbols of wisdom. The powerful wings of the crane were believed to be able to convey souls up to paradise and to carry people to higher levels of spiritual enlightenment. Over time, the crane has also evolved as a favourite subject of the tradition of paper folding – origami. It is said that a thousand folded cranes, one for each year of its life, makes a wish come true.

In Hiroshima, Japan, the peace crane is a symbol of new life, life that was birthed from the tomb of the atomic bomb.

We can, and do, read the signs of the world with eyes of despair; and we read our own lives through those same eyes that seem to get dimmer as we near death's tomb.....

But the green man is walking from that tomb and out of the place of despair...

What is revealed through the sign of the Easter narrative, is another way of seeing the world.. and so too another reality for life; Easter offers us “A New Creation”....

Jesus sought to teach his disciples about this ‘New Creation’, he showed them that death is not the end when he raised Lazarus from 4 days in the tomb. However he also needed to reveal the process....

What do we do when the red man Changes to the green man walking?

The response of seeing resurrection is realised in the activity of giving.. we have to give of ourselves in order to find ourselves alive in a “A new Creation”. That is the Easter sign, it is

the self giving of Christ on the cross, that's the red man stopped dead in his tracks, in order for the green man to emerge walking in the Easter garden.

Most of us, most of the time live in the world as consumers, Easter asks that we be consumed; giving ourselves into the Divine reality that life is a Divine oneness, an eternal gift that is made real in giving.

Dom Bede Griffiths, a catholic monk, saw the sign of resurrection:

“God had brought me to my knees and made me acknowledge my own nothingness, and out of that knowledge I had been reborn. I was no longer the center of my life and therefore I could see God in everything.”

Phillips Brooks, an American clergyman and author, during the early 1890s saw the sign of resurrection

The great Easter truth is not that we are to live newly after death - that is not the great thing - but that...we are to, and may, live nobly now because we are to live forever.

Richard Rhor shared in a recent reflect his seeing of the sign of resurrection;

The Jesus story is the universe story..... Following Jesus is a vocation to share the fate of God for the life of the world. Jesus invited people to “follow” him in bearing the mystery of human death and resurrection.

Those who agree to carry and love what God loves, which is both the good and the bad of human history, and to pay the price for its reconciliation within themselves—these are the followers of Jesus—the leaven, the salt, the remnant, the mustard seed that God can use to transform the world. The cross is the dramatic image of what it takes to be such a usable one for God.

These few are the critical mass that keeps the world from its path toward greed, violence, and self-destruction.

Today, we see the sign go from Cross to empty tomb, from red to green; and now the green man is walking we too can move.

In the morning light, O God.

may I glimpse your image deep within me

the threads of eternal glory

woven into the fabric of every man and woman.

Again may I catch sight of the mystery of the human soul

fashioned in your likeness

deeper than knowing

more enduring than time.

And in glimpsing these threads of light

amidst the weakness and distortions of my life

Let me be recalled

to the strength and beauty deep in my soul.

Let me be recalled

to the strength and beauty of your image in every living soul.

J Philip Newell Celtic Benediction