

Season of Belief
By Christine Loughlin, OP

Never before has this “season of belief” required so much of us. In the romantic notion of the season, personified in Kris Kringle or Santa or St. Lucy, we leave believing to children. There are tender stories from near and distant places where gifts of love and delight appeared even in dire circumstances because a child held faith and believed. Perhaps what we need to draw on now is that wisdom that does not judge by exterior conditions but dreams a world of possibilities from a primal place.

Over the past months we have been caught up in non-belief. We watched in disbelief as the great towers of commerce and trade crumbled. The anguish of human suffering touched us. In spite of ourselves, we began to sense the power and greed of our national icon. Our disbelief surrendered to a belief in what we could not or would not hold as true ~ the destruction of the natural world is the desolation of the human soul.

The trade center is both symbol and source of international power through which the resources of the natural world are converted, altered, forever changed for human profit. The forests and flora, the waterways and wilderness, the great blue whale and the laying hen, the habitat and the ‘holy’ interior genetic code of all the phenomena of the natural world have become objects for our use.

On that fall morning came the call of things—believe! We are opening our eyes to see the truth of a culture built upon the separation of the human from the sacred creation. Now the season draws the long arm of darkness over our hemisphere. Not so many years ago, less than three million in Earth time, our ancestors slowly awoke to the terror and beauty of the natural world. Not all at once but a gradual awakening to the Mystery of life—death—rebirth. Now it is our time to face anew into a terror of death and loss, a loss so extensive that only the dream of a promise of a new Reality will hold us in the face of it.

We see the dire circumstances into which our year turns. Our nation at war, starvation, refugees, environmental disaster all around us. We need the courage to see the devastation that is upon us and the faith to imagine, like the child, a world of possibilities. Whenever the great transitions of the human venture occurred in the past, there was nothing to indicate what the next manifestation would be, only a leaning toward Life even in death. Our souls are connected with the rhythms of light and darkness, of the changing seasons, of the moving stars in the sky. There our soul finds its proper surroundings. Never have the times asked us to be more cosmic.

We all must tend to what is before us, to find an enlightened human response to aggression, to recognize the desolation of the human soul. No one knows the way for sure. But we do know it will require all our time and all our will. As the ancestors noticed so must we. We must see what is before us, the beauty of the natural world, the communion to which we belong. We must learn to love the local things, the native plants and wildness of our surroundings, to eat what local farms grow. To be satisfied, to know the meaning of enough. At the winter solstice we might enter together into the ancient ritual and dare our collective belief to open to the sacred Mystery awakening in our souls a compassionate presence to all things.

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