



For Such a Time as This

by The Revd Philip Cochrane
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Our journey in time is marked by various 'signposts' and we have encountered another this week with the announcement that 'in person' gatherings in places of worship is suspended for a period. There is the obvious sadness to this and we will not be able to be 'in person' to mark some other signposts – the Reign of Christ, celebrated this Sunday, brings the liturgical year to an end and Advent, marking the start of a new Year in the Christian calendar.

I will come onto Advent next time but for now I wanted to introduce Hildegard of Bingen to you. She was a 12th-century Christian mystic and she spoke of the need to fly – and to fly you need two wings of awareness. The one wing is an awareness of life's glory and beauty. The other is an awareness of life's pain and suffering. We need both to truly fly like an eagle and survey the land beneath.

It seems to me that we are living through a moment in time that invites a new strength of awareness. We need to hear the stories of beauty and love but we must not turn away from hearing the stories of pain and suffering (or even idiot political leaders!). I am learning to feel these emotions deeply and it seems to me that the two wings together enable us to enter into the world as a compassionate presence. It has enriched my prayer life and I sense a Holy Discontent kindling inside me and others that we must not 'return to what was' but rather we need to 'build back better'.

So, I wanted to share a poem that speaks into that from John O'Donohue:

A Blessing: Awakening in the World

***Blessed be the longing that brought you here and that quickens your soul with wonder.
May you have the courage to befriend your eternal longing.
May you enjoy the critical and creative companionship of the question "Who Am I?" and
may it brighten your longing.
May a secret Providence guide your thought and shelter your feeling.
May your mind inhabit your life with the same sureness with which your body belongs to
the world.
May the sense of something absent enlarge your life.
May your soul be as free as the every-new waves of the sea.***

***May you succumb to the danger of growth.
May you live in the neighbourhood of wonder.
May you belong to love with the wildness of Dance.
May you know that you are ever embraced in the kind circle of God.***

O'Donohue has also written on the value of (our increasing) solitude in his work *Anam Cara* and I hope that we could embrace this approach, as best we are able:

When you cease to fear your solitude, a new creativity awakens in you. Your forgotten or neglected wealth begins to reveal itself. You come home to yourself and learn to rest within. Thoughts are our inner senses. Infused with silence and solitude, they bring out the mystery of inner landscape.

Finally, this week, at Morning and Night Prayer, I have been sharing prayers written by John Philip Newell and I hope that this one will be an encouragement to all of us in these times both individually and as a community:

***When it seemed there was no hope
You showed us new ways forward O God
When it seemed there were only endings,
you showed us new beginnings.
Strengthen our belief in the power of life over death.
Strengthen our belief in the power of truth over falsehood
that we may be bearers of hope in the world,
that we may be bearers of hope.***

Remember it is ok to not feel ok, to sit with sad emotions for a time and feel free to reach out to me if you need to talk.

With love and prayers,

~Philip