

Morning in a New Land

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17 January 2025



An excerpt from Fr. Laurence Freeman's 2008 Holy Week Reflections, posted at www.wccm.org.

As Holy Week unfolds I am writing from our retreat for young meditators on Bere Island. At this moment there is not a cloud in the sky and the clear light is calling out every hidden colour, shade and texture of the sea, trees and mountains. Nature makes it easy to believe that we are on the human journey into the light of Christ, the Sun of the Resurrection that never sets. The weather forecast however is warning us of some cold snaps and showers (this is Ireland) just as we know that our lives cannot be free from suffering.

In our conversations during the retreat we are looking at the tensions we must hold in day by day living. How to manage the balance among family, work, and spiritual practice commitments? How to deal with the Church in its culturally conditioned forms and still remain within it? How to read the essential revelations of Christian doctrine in the light of modern language and experience? Sacred time, such as we have entered upon this week gives us the wiggle room for these tensions, the inner space necessary to accept what seems unacceptable and balance what seems unsupportable.

During these next few days we are empowered to respond to the whole spectrum of being human that Easter illustrates. Tomorrow in our presence at the Lord's Supper we experience the joy and the tensions of being in community, washing each others feet and learning what faithful relationship means. On Friday we face the deepest repression of our psyche, the fact and fear of mortality, the terror of absolute loss and abandonment. We learn that in facing it we can touch a meaning that opens a door through which we must pass but which is still a passage into the unknown. On Saturday we rest on the horizon of that meaning, balanced between loss and finding. We are uncertain, even unconvinced, yet we have not closed ourselves to the possibility the possibility that rises in the early morning from the nowhere of the tomb into the flooding reality of new life.

After Meditation, *Morning in a New Land*, Mary Oliver, NEW AND SELECTED POEMS (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), p. 251.

Morning in a New Land

In trees still dripping night some nameless birds
Woke, shook out their arrowy wings, and sang,
Slowly, like finches sifting through a dream.
The pink sun fell, like glass, into the fields.
Two chestnuts, and a dapple gray,
Their shoulders wet with light, their dark hair streaming,
Climbed the hill. The last mist fell away.

And under the trees, beyond time's brittle drift,
I stood like Adam in his lonely garden
On that first morning, shaken out of sleep,
Rubbing his eyes, listening, parting the leaves,
Like tissue on some vast, incredible gift.

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