

CENTRE FOR ECOLOGY & SPIRITUALITY, GLENBURN

Eucalyptus rubida

Newsletter of The Centre for Ecology & Spirituality
183 Burns Rd. Glenburn 3717
Newsletter No.71 Summer 2018

Our Life as a Hero's Adventure

Seen through the lens of Joseph Campbell's seminal volume 'The Hero of a Thousand Faces,' in which he maps out the major themes of mythology, and its place in our lives, we might be able to see our own lives mirroring many of the lives of history's heroes.

We could construct an immense list of heroes and heroines from our knowledge of history. These would typically include names like Nelson Mandela, Malala, Martin Luther King, Mother Theresa, the innumerable heroes and heroines of war and conflict, mothers and carers, and of course, our great religious leaders, Jesus, the Buddha, and Mahomet. In all of these cases the people either chose a path to travel, or were thrust into the path of 'adventure'. These elements are readily observable in our own lives and amongst the people we know.

A typical hero's adventure of mythic times was a journey which involved some risk, but also valuable learning experiences. Then the heroes return to their places of living to enrich the lives of their peoples. In the most celebrated cases of Jesus and the Buddha, there was the journey into the wilderness, the temptations, and the return to gather disciples around them.

Modern day adventures like the Camino, or other pilgrimages are experiences chosen by the individual, and afterward a return to give an account of their pilgrimage

- a famous one when a movie was made, detailing the spiritual journey of a man who had lost a son, and with it some of his zest for life.

This last example suggests that the ritual of the pilgrimage brings to life the much sought-after result of spiritual enlightenment.

In some respects, the weekly attendance at services is also such a ritual, undergone time and time again. The very attendance and observances of the ritual elements has a sacramental effect on the participant, quite independent of but accompanying the words used in the services. Other rituals are annual, like return to family dinners, marriages, burials and the like. Other rituals are the seasonal days of the year, the solstices and the equinoxes. Attendances at football matches with colourful clothing, chants and dancing do have some of the elements of ritual. The introduction of the Jane McGrath day in test cricket, with its 'pink' day gives us a glimpse of the potential of compassion to be triggered by good ritual. Prime Minister Hawke once said that he looked forward to when our cultural identity was no longer focussed on sporting prowess.

At a time when our connection to Earth is being recovered

as a primal myth for humankind, these days provide a ready subject for pilgrimage, learning, and religious and social cohesion.

One of the most satisfactory definitions of ritual and myth is from Joseph Campbell. He has said 'Ritual is the enactment of the myth.'

Now another scholar of myth Jean Houston has also pointed out that nature myths develop and grow over time, and the implication we might take from this is that rituals should also reflect this growth. When a religion or organization insists on unchangeable rituals for their members, perhaps they are setting up a dysfunction between the growing myth and the ritual meant to represent their enactment. One very clear example of this is the rise of women in society and the need for customs/rituals to reflect this change.

In another example the story of the Universe has had an immense effect on the spiritual vision of a whole generation, but religious rituals in the main do not yet reflect this.

In the pilgrimages of Europe a lot used to be made for performing the ritual of the Labyrinth. A popular one is the Chartres Labyrinth. People coming for a retreat to Glenburn invariably want to walk the labyrinth. No words are usually used but the experience of doing it is sublime, if a little difficult to

articulate. Once again, no words, just the ritual.

As Christians we also inherit Jesus' institution of the ritual of eucharistic celebration, with its colour, music and sacred texts. The potential for a religious meal to be a most effective spiritual experience needs to be nurtured creatively. Thomas Berry warned us about taming the inner wilderness of the human. "It would end by reducing those vast creative possibilities of the human to trivial modes of expression." (The Great Work)

To live out your life in accord with your inner wildness is certainly a hero's journey. To stand out from the crowd to speak your truth is not always an easy task, but it is the task of the Universe always seeking to further the emergence of Spirit, - of Truth, Goodness and Beauty, - of the Way, - the Tao, which would unfold in us.

*Do not try To hold on to Tao-
Just hope that Tao Will keep hold of you!*

Chuang Tzu (d.287BC)

Carpe diem!

Trevor Parton



MYSTICS RETREAT - SUNRISE RITUAL