

## One Tree in Winter

I have adopted a tree. Nothing formal or official, mind you, but I've taken it under my wing of loving attention. The tree is about 5 minutes' walk from our house and was probably quite mature when we moved here nearly 34 years ago. In all that time, I have given it – and its neighbours - very little thought. I don't even know what species it is. Being a deciduous tree, I now have to wait until the spring or summer to see its identifying leaves.



I realise how I take my surroundings for granted and don't often stop to attend to what is around me. It's good to notice things and I'm aware that others do this so much better than I do. After quite a short time, I am already getting quite fond of my tree. I see there is a nesting box attached about halfway up; a fascinating cleft in its trunk – maybe from some past trauma; small nodules of embryonic buds are evident all along its branches. Visiting 'my tree' has started to become my daily practice of connection.

Some people are very good at regular spiritual practice or discipline. I confess, I'm not. I quickly lose the rhythm and find that whatever I try to do, becomes dry and lifeless. I have to keep changing the pattern in order for my practice to be meaningful and nourishing. It may be that you have found a way of regularly connecting with God, with yourself and with the world; it may be that, like me, you struggle at times.

It seems rather trivial to look for this connection in a common and very ordinary tree. And yet....

There is a way of approach to faith which speaks of a deep and loving attention to ONE thing, the smallest thing even, being a way to guide us and open our hearts to ALL things, ALL of God's creation. Christ known in one tiny part of life reveals Christ in the whole of life.

We are reminded of Julian of Norwich, the 14<sup>th</sup> Century mystic, who saw in a hazelnut, held in the palm of her hand, the profound understanding of God's love and nurture of Every Thing. You can read the text in this link: [Julian of Norwich quotations](#) (scroll down just slightly).

We cannot comprehend all things. We can feel overwhelmed. Yet our attention to just one thing can be enough, is enough. A deep loving focus on something, with the openness to receive whatever that one thing can offer us, is an openness to God and whatever God is speaking to us in that moment.

In cold days, deep within January, I can attend to one solid resting tree. I look forward to watching it evolve, change, become what it truly is, in all its summer glory. I can receive from it; receive awareness I have overlooked for so long. God holds that tree in its life and in its flourishing. I can take nourishment and learning from that and be restored.

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