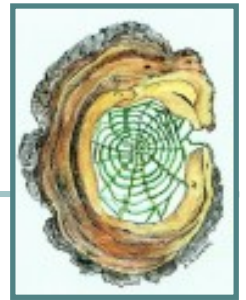


GREEN WINDOW - Tree Roots and Our Lives

Linda Gregg, CSJ, on behalf of the Federation Ecology Committee



From when we were young, as we trace the memories of our human story, we often find that the lives of trees have been intertwined with our own. One of my warmest memories is of a towering weeping willow that graced the front yard of my grandparent's home.

My grandfather was not one given to warm acts of affection but he loved to root and plant willow trees whenever he could. To my younger brother and

I, the giant willow tree that he planted long ago at their home was a friendly, towering giant that could sweep us up into its ever flowing willowy arms and hold us in a magical place. Within the willow tree's world we were safe and embraced in wonder. We chased one another gleefully in and out of its playful branches weaving in the wind. And when exhausted we would collapse on the ground looking up



through the overlapping willowy branches to catch sight of the blue sky and puffy white clouds, a glimpse of heaven and, for a moment, we were held in eternity's embrace.

Timeless moments like these have been a part of most of our lives. I know how my home on the West Coast birthed the towering spires of Douglas Firs that glanced toward the sky and made my spirit soar, in unmistakable wonder. The Red Cedar, Spruce and so many tree families of scent and strength, fresh life and enduring stubborn life that shaped who I am. Trees have been rooted my heart in troubled times when no human was near. Trees ground us and help us remember

that we are a part of an unfolding and wondrous universe, rooted in earth.

When my youngest sister died suddenly by suicide there seemed no sense and we gathered and stumbled to try to find meaning and hope. We only knew she was close to trees and had been a tree planter. We were able to find a forest bower that was a private cemetery. It was

there we laid her and found a wood burl that a friend inscribed with the only words that made sense. Words from Bertrand Russell - "Love is a tree whose roots are deep in the earth, but whose branches extend into heaven."

So we planted hemlock trees in her memory, for the hemlock is known as the "princess of the forest." They still grow today.

We live in a cosmos that knows this paschal mystery that life is born of death and love does not die. These words echo what we read in scripture, for in both the First and Second Testaments from Genesis 1:1 "God created the heavens and earth" to Isaiah 37:16 and Matthew 28:18. It is not a dualistic or hierarchical universe that our God created but a unitive cosmos that yields a vision that we are only just comprehending. Into that mystery all creation speaks of this unending secret and often trees are the bridge between the worlds, speaking in ways that need no words.

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