

The Christian Community

Movement for Religious Renewal

Hollywood Congregation

Rev Ben van Lieshout
3 Stewarts Place
Hollywood, Co Down
BT18 9DX
90424254
07974960570
benvl@onetel.com

Newsletter for the week of Sunday, 6 June

This week we begin with a letter from Tom Ravetz:

In ancient times, initiation was reserved for the few. Aspiring initiates left home and trod a lonely path, passing through many trials. They gained knowledge of the spiritual world which allowed them to understand the world they had left behind. Their own soul-life became clear to them. Then, they gained insight into destiny of their tribe and their people. Then their souls were filled with vivid pictures of the spiritual beings at work in and behind all earthly phenomena. They learned to receive inspiration from these beings and –as the culmination of their initiation –they experienced that they became one with them. Through all of this, they brought a second human being to birth within themselves. They returned to their old home as strangers. Only in this way could they gain the insights they needed to become leaders of their culture. The Christian church was founded in a time when the old temple-culture was fading away; indeed, once the church became a part of the Roman state, it played a part in bringing this about. For over a thousand years, the leading cultures of the west have lived from the memory of spiritual wisdom, but they have not replenished the source. The twentieth century brought an historic change. If we read “How can one attain Knowledge of Higher Worlds”, first published in 1905, we may form the impression that it was addressed to people hearing about the worlds of inner experience described there for the first time. The descriptions may have interested them and stimulated their desire to become pupils on the inner path; however, they were firmly rooted in the world of experience given by the senses. Now, when we read descriptions of how the powers of the soul split off from each other and challenge us to reintegrate our thinking, feeling and willing, or how a monstrous being holds up the mirror to us, showing us what we have not yet transformed within ourselves, we may feel that we are hearing about experiences that we know very well. All of the learning about the inner life that went on in the last century, the understanding of group dynamics and the concern with universal human rights, and the concern for the planet as a living organism: these show that the desire to achieve a higher perspective is at work. When on the other hand we look at the challenges we face: violence, polarisation, deceitfulness –we recognise that humanity is facing its double or shadow side, just as the initiates had to. The whole of humanity is going through the same processes of initiation that once were reserved for the tiniest minority. In the Act of Consecration of Man we tread a path as community that is similar to the ancient path of individual initiation. The Epistles and the Gospel reading help us to understand the spiritual realities at work in time. In the Offering, we move into the world of images: the cup is revealed; the smoke ascends; we imagine the fire of love aglow on the altar. Here, we may also confront those parts of ourselves that are not yet transformed. In the Transubstantiation, we may

experience that we are drawn into the presence of Christ when the priest kneels and speaks the words that come from the Last Supper. Finally, in the Communion, we unite with Christ. We return to the world renewed, with tools to understand and help our world in its becoming.

Hollywood

For Sunday services, please ring to book a place as we can only seat 12-14 people.

(Trinity)

Wednesday 2 nd June	The Act of Consecration of Man	10.00
Sunday 6 th June	The Act of Consecration of Man	10.00
	The Sunday Service for Children	11.30
Wednesday 9 th June	The Act of Consecration of Man	10.00

Glencraig

Thursday 3 rd June	The Act of Consecration of Man	9.15
Thursday 10 th June	The Act of Consecration of Man	9.15

The gospel reading for Sunday 6 June is John 3: 1-17



There was a man in the circle of the Pharisees, whose name was Nicodemus; he held high rank among the Jews. He came to Jesus in the night and said, “Master, we know that you are a high teacher of mankind, come to us from God, for no one can do such signs of the Spirit as you do unless God himself is working together with him in his deeds.”

Jesus answered and said to him, “The truth out of the spirit I say to you: whoever is not born anew from above cannot behold the kingdom of God.”

Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born again when he is old? Can he return to his mother’s womb to be born again a second time?”

Jesus answered, “the truth out of the spirit I say to you: whoever remains as he is, and does not come to a new birth out of the formative power of the water and out of the breath of the spirit cannot enter into the kingdom of God. What is born out of earthly elements is of earthly nature. But what is born out of the breath of the spirit, is itself spirit. Do not wonder that I said to you that you must be born anew from above. The spirit wind blows where it will; you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from, or where it is going. So it is with everyone who is born anew out of the breath of the spirit.

Nicodemus replied and said to him, “How can one attain this?” Jesus answered, “You are a teacher of Israel and do not know? Amen, the truth I say to you: we speak of what we know, and we bear witness to what we have seen in the spirit, but none of you accepts our testimony. When I speak to you of earthly things and you do not believe them, how shall you believe when I want to speak to you of heavenly things? No one has ascended to the spiritual world who has not previously descended out of the spiritual world, that is, the Son of Man.



William Blake, raising the serpent

Just as Moses once lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who finds his power in their hearts can win a share in the higher life beyond time. God has so loved the world that he has given his only begotten Son. From now on, no one who fills himself with *his* power shall perish, for he will share in timeless, higher life. God did not send the Son into the world to condemn it, but in order that the world be saved through him, and not fall prey to ruin.”



asperatus cloud

A homily on John 3, 1-17

The interplay of water and air creates ever-changing forms. Water become invisible as it rises into the air. It condenses into clouds that continually form, shape-shift and disappear. Water as liquid sunshine drops from the sky back to earth and forms lakes, rivers that flow to the sea. We human beings have formed bodies in the womb to be our earthly house. Before that, we existed as invisible spirits, spirits who then formed and entered matter.

Nicodemus's puzzlement about being born anew from above shows how much humanity had lost touch with its own spiritual being and activity. Christ came to help us join our invisible spiritual self, the part that descended from God, with our earthly selves, in a new way. He came to help us become effective as spirits working on earth. He came to help us connect with the 'real time' activity of the spiritual world, that creative realm which continually brings the new into being.

Christ came to help us bring spirit into matter, so that ultimately everything on earth can be filled with the renewing creating power of becoming. And this mighty process will take place through the divine power working through human beings, through Christ in us. Through Christ in us we are born anew out the spiritual power of eternal becoming. In Christ we are touched by the might of the spirit world, so that the earth may be renewed, and not fall prey to ruin.