

8th March 2021

Symbols

*“L’homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles
Qui l’observant avec des regards familiers.”*

**“Here man passes, through forests of symbols,
which watch him with looks of recognition.”**

Charles Baudelaire, Les Fleurs du mal.

For almost a year now, one of my daughters has been organising a daily “Lockdown Photo” App for the family. Every day she posts a theme for a picture, which finds us searching our personal photo-archive or taking a new picture that fits the bill. It’s a fun way to keep in touch on a daily basis.

But sometimes we’re invited to find a picture that’s ... different! This is what happened a couple of weeks ago when the theme was “Symbolic”. *What?* Why not continue with easy ones like “cloud patterns” or “best friend”, “the colour red” or “my street”. But it made us think. Soon, there was a photo of a garden plant, changing colour, as a herald of Spring – symbolic of hope, it was suggested. Up popped a picture of Pyrex jugs, a new addition to a household – symbolic of developing homemaking skills.

And me? I posted a photograph of a new lamp for my study, to give me better lighting for “Zoom” or “Skype” calls – a symbol that electronic communication is going to be with us forever, and our “new” ways of communicating are not temporary necessities forced on us by lockdown and Covid restrictions. A few things from “a forest of symbols”, such as Baudelaire suggested – hope for an end to the effects of this pandemic; a focus on the creation of a different homelife; an acceptance that we can take into the coming days new things we’ve developed.

What are your symbols for the future? What are they symbolic of – hope, new beginnings, a different way of living? What kind of “looks of recognition” are they giving you? What are they telling you about who you are, and what you feel, and how you’ll face the life that’s yet to come?

And if you choose to take a photo of your symbol, please *don’t* send it to me. I have plenty in my own forest of symbols to be going on with for now, thank you. So why not share it with a friend who needs it ...

A prayer for today

Lord, let me not pass quickly through my forest of symbols without stopping to ponder their looks of recognition, and what that tells me about you. Amen.

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon

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