



SIEBENQUELL

To become what I am from God



During these days, we Christians are engaging with the suffering and death of Jesus. This is not an easy path, since we live in a world in which the heavy and dark things are often marginalised and unwillingly looked at. We are exposed to many harrowing images via the media, but from a distance! In our immediate surroundings, we prefer to that »all is well«. Many people find it difficult to visit the sick or dying, and children are not allowed to be confronted with them because it could supposedly do them harm. Getting up close and personal with frail, suffering people is seen as an imposition.

Nevertheless, life is full of them. Walking the Way of the Cross may almost tear the heart apart, but it makes us wake up. Not avoiding suffering, but bearing it or helping to bear it, can help us to mature into the person God has always seen in us. Yes, new life can sprout in us that we did not realise was dormant within us. This is the only way to experience Easter and resurrection in the midst of life.

A story from Selma Lagerlöf's Christ Legends comes to mind. A small grey bird takes centre stage: »Robin Redbreast«. Once, in the days of creation, the Creator had called it »robin redbreast«. When the first robin timidly asked why it was called that when it didn't have a single red feather, the Creator replied with a smile that it would have to see for itself how it earned

red breast feathers. Since then, as a robin told his young in the nest countless years later, all endeavours were in vain. Neither ardent love nor enthusiastic singing nor courageous combativeness brought the longed-for colour. This would also be the fate of his young, because: »What more could they do than love, sing, and fight?«

The bird's nest is built in a small thorn bush on a hill outside the gates of Jerusalem - and the robin's speech is suddenly interrupted by noise. Selma Lagerlöf tells the story:

There were riders on proud horses, soldiers with long spears, executioners with nails and hammers. There were dignified judges and priests in the procession, weeping women, and above all a mob of mad, loose people running about. . .

The small grey bird sat trembling on the edge of his nest. He feared each instant that the little briar bush would be trampled down and his young ones killed!

“Be careful!” he cried to the defenseless young ones. “Creep close together and be quiet. Here comes a horse that will ride right over us! Here comes a warrior with iron-shod sandals! Here comes the whole wild, storming mob!” All at once the bird ceased his cry of warning and was silent. He almost forgot the danger hovering over him. Suddenly he hopped down into the nest and spread his wings over his young ones.

“Oh! this is too terrible,” he said. “I don’t want you to witness this awful sight! There are three criminals who are going to be crucified!” And he spread his wings so that the little ones could see nothing. They caught only the sound of hammers, the cries of anguish, and the wild shrieks of the mob.

Robin Redbreast followed the whole spectacle with his eyes, which grew big with terror. He could not take his glance from the three unfortunates.

“How cruel human beings are!” said the bird after a while. “It isn’t enough that they nail these poor creatures to a cross, but they must place a crown of piercing thorns upon the head of one of them. I see that the thorns have wounded his forehead so that the blood flows,” he continued. “And this man is so beautiful and looks about him with such mild glances that everyone ought to love him. I feel as if an arrow were piercing my heart when I see him suffer!”

The little bird began to feel a stronger and stronger pity for the thorn-crowned sufferer. “Oh! if I were only my brother the eagle,” thought he, “I would draw the nails from his hands and with my strong claws I would drive away all those who torture him!” He saw how the blood trickled down from the brow of the crucified one, and he could no longer remain quiet in his nest. “Even if I am little and weak, I can still do something for this poor tormented one,” thought the bird. Then he left his nest and flew out into the air, describing wide circles around the crucified one.

He flew around him several times without daring to approach, for he was a shy little bird who had never dared to go near a human being. But little by little he gained courage, flew close to him, and drew with his little bill a thorn that had been imbedded in the forehead of the crucified one. And as he did this there fell on his breast a drop of blood from the crucified one; it spread quickly and colored all the little fine breast feathers.

As soon as the bird had returned to his nest his young ones cried to him, “Your breast is red! Your breast feathers are redder than the roses!”

"It is only a drop of blood from the poor man's forehead," said the bird. "It will vanish as soon as I bathe in a pool or a clear spring."

But no matter how much the little bird bathed, the red color did not vanish – and when his young ones grew up, the blood-red color shone also on their breast feathers, just as it shines on every Robin Redbreast's throat and breast until this very day.

Would our true beauty shine through if we really embraced the fullness of life in all its diversity? Quite heavy - glorious in the biblical sense and the way to life!

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