



SIEBENQUELL

Tree of Life



SOURCE: E. RIECHERS 2018

During the first 5 months of 2018 we presented a series of Wellspring Days on the topic of »Living from the inside to the outside: Making friends with the rhythm of life«. We contemplated 5 phases of life, from childhood to the middle years.

On the last of the Wellspring Days of this series we placed a Celtic tree of life in the middle of the room. This beloved symbol of the Celtic Christians summarises the five phases of growing up in a wonderful fashion.

The roots represent the birth of the human being. It is our first path and, from the start, it gives us the direction which a healthy life must follow, from the inside to the outside. Just as with the roots of a tree, this phase is mysterious and invisible. What grows and develops here takes place in deeply hidden places. This is always what the new beginning for the life of God among us looks like.

The trunk of the tree stands for our childhood. It is very important for a tree as for a life that this phase of growth be protected. That which springs forth from the roots must not be abandoned and neglected. The phase of life of childhood must be a time of carefully nurtured safety in which the original goodness and the innocence of the unfolding life is protected and fostered.

The large, weight-bearing branches represent the years of our youth, the time of our awakening. In a human life his phase of life is determined by two questions: Who am I? With whom will I foster and share my life?

The smaller branches or twigs are the image of the time of young adulthood. Here people discover their passion and must clarify the difficult issue as to how they wish to move from inner inspirations, which they carry and sense in themselves, to the decisions which must arise from them, to the actions which must flow from these decisions.

The leaves or fruits are the metaphor for the middle years of a human being. In this phase of life we discover where our true devotion lays and whether we are willing to serve it. In this time, people decide what is truly precious and valuable to them and whether it is worthwhile enough to invest time and space in it.

But in the Celtic tree of life everything is encompassed in a circle. There is nothing that the Celtic Christians could not place into a circle. From a simply physical point of view, the phases of life are a linear process. When we have completed one phase of life, we leave it behind us and move to the next stage. However, from the perspective of the inner life and the soul of a human being, the process is circular and we repeat the phases continually. Over and over again new life is born in us, which needs to be protected and nurtured and awakened to potential. This new life in us must also mature develop from inner inspirations to decisions, which in turn need to show themselves in our actions. And then the new life within us needs to ripen unto maturity and devotion.

The symbol of the Celtic tree of life states that everything is in motion. The unending knot is woven throughout the tree in order to emphasise the tight link between the inside and the outside, the divine and the human, the physical and the spiritual. The outer processes of the phases of life are tightly linked to the interior processes of the development of the spiritual life.

Those who contemplate the Celtic tree of life, may take away a deep inner consolation: In contrast to linear process, which take places one and are then completed, the tree of life say that we are not finished. Life is still flowing within and through us. We are still unfolding, developing, becoming. We have not yet discovered everything, nor have we lived out everything that is within us.

We often prefer a linear development. It gives us an overview and clarity. It gives us order. The tree of life does not do that. This image gives us development and rhythm. Trees do not develop according to a linear order. When this order becomes too important to us, then we should remember the wise words of John Shea. "When order collapses, Mystery rises!" (Stories of God. p 29).

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