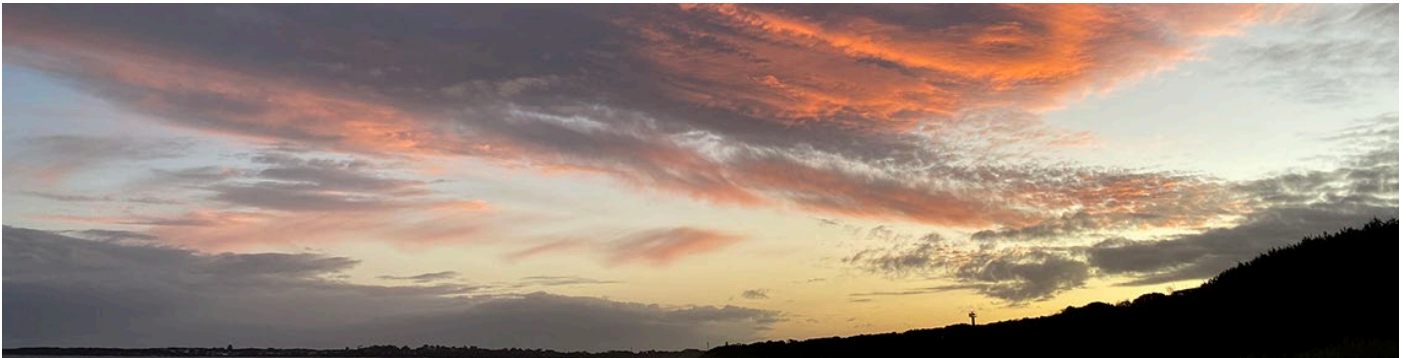


## *The Tree Laid Bare... From Winter to Spring*

**Trisha Boetto**



*We are here on earth a little while to bear the beams of Love. (William Blake)*



The tree laid bare stands tall, quiet and still,

in the middle of the courtyard.

"I am here, I am enough"...

gnarled, scarred and leafless.

This tree has a profound effect on me

its stillness, its dignity, its vulnerability...

As I sit with the stillness of the tree

I reflect on the stillness and the quiet of our daily gathering in  
contemplation -

...a time of holding,

a time of hope

a time of healing,

a time of being, like the tree, just as we are,  
naked but enough,

with our roots going deep, deep, deep...

a time of **holding, hope, healing and connection.**

As I ponder what to write for this reflection, a friend asks me:

'How do you hold suffering? How do you hold the pain of a loved one?'

James Finley says, '*God protects us from nothing and sustains us in all things.*'

I know this to be true.

I did not want or choose the suffering of a loved one,  
but it has cracked my heart open to something bigger.

I am held by love, by the gentle strong network of love that surrounds me.

And I am comforted by the women who came before me, our Mothers.

"And what of hope"? my friend asks me.

Hope is essential, I know.

Sometimes it means letting go of a desired outcome,  
and recognising that somehow there is a bigger picture that I cannot see.

I have a habit of looking upward every day.

I am filled with hope and wonder when I look at the sky and the clouds  
and when I walk among the trees.

I think of the news and how we are bombarded daily with words and images of war, of climate destruction,  
of natural disasters, of famines and violence...

yet the heart still hopes.

'*There is love in darkness*' I hear at a recent gathering.

What do you mean I ask? There are acts of love, of courage, of kindness in the midst of a war but we don't  
hear about them. Again, this truth resonates at a level hard to articulate.

As Sr Rebecca Ann Gemma says in her introductory address to the LCWR Conference for religious 2023:

*"Hope is the virtue of a heart that doesn't lock itself into darkness, that doesn't dwell on the past, does not  
simply get by in the present, but is able to see a tomorrow".*

For me our quiet time together at 4 pm or thereabouts, is an invitation into such a "tomorrow" – a  
tomorrow filled with healing and hope as I become still, centred and come home to my essence. While I  
struggle at times to sit quietly, this way of contemplation is life-giving...

and expansive to my soul as I sink into –

*a luminous web where everything is connected  
creating a participatory field.*

*(Cynthia Bourgeault).*

Just like the tree, I come as I am.

I cannot see the roots of this  
magnificent old tree,  
but I know they are there, deep,  
and wide,  
in the ground sustaining it...  
...and to my delight and awe,  
sustaining me too.

Our contemplation time is one of  
communal healing,  
where we can hold all that is dark  
and difficult with Love ...  
in a Love that is bigger than our  
own small loves.



But now, as I look at the tree more closely, I notice that even though it is bare,  
and without leaves, small, green buds are beginning to appear,  
in preparation for spring.

The tree's beautiful, outstretched arms are ready to burst forth with new life...  
its winter is but a time of preparation for growth and renewal.



When I think of the Contemplative Evolution Network it is the words of Ilia Delio that resound profoundly for ourselves and for our world:

*The only way into a sustainable future is to regain soul,  
both individual soul and world soul,  
by disciplining the mind,  
setting the mind on oneness or unity,  
and acting out of this oneness as a part of a larger whole.  
Our thoughts are not neutral or private,  
and what they do is create the world.<sup>i</sup>*

Just as the tree clothes itself with leaves, with new life, may spring be a time of holding, healing, and hope as we connect in our communal roots!

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<sup>i</sup> Ilia Delio, Making all Things New, Orbis p. 162