

A few weeks ago, just before the Sunday Mass here, a mighty branch suddenly detached itself from the Yew tree opposite my bedroom window, falling vertically into the nuns' car park: this was a stunning and disturbing sight - one moment there, and the next half the tree missing. And, this morning at sunrise, this same tree, this faithful Yew, was lit up in a way I'd never seen before, its dark centre now open to the light. As we take shelter in our homes waiting for the current contagion of Covid-19 to pass, we can take hope in the possibility of unexpected light in unexpected corners; of clean air and clearer skies; of pollution-free roads, allowing us to hear the birds once more, and an appreciation of life in all its glorious detail, here, under our noses, but surrendered for foreign travel. And the gift of one another seen now in a new light: not cantankerous curmudgeons after all – or, at least, not only – but creatures struggling, just like the rest of us, to allow beauty to emerge. So, let beauty emerge, even from the deadliest of trees:

*From bitter death and barren wood
The Tree of Life is made;
Its branches bear unfailing fruit
And leaves that never fade.*

Even Helen's crushed car, prophetic perhaps, of the silence and sounds we can all now delight in.

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