

As I write, a robin sings, and has been doing so since late summer. Other birds sing, too, but on and off as if not sure of themselves as heralds of spring – tentative explorers; whereas the robin holds firmly to the tradition, that is, to the knowledge of life passing through the darkness of winter from one summer to the next. It has a rest in midsummer, when other birds hold the tradition for us, but its easy to sing in midsummer when food is plentiful and the sun has real heat. The robin, it seems, is more contemplative and waits to sing again when the going gets tough and continues its regular litany through the bleakest of days, almost in defiance of the elements.

The writers of our passages today are also holders of a tradition through the bleakest of days. Prepared to wait at the tomb's entrance to let others have their say before affirming what they already suspect and know: an empty tomb which speaks, not of death, but resurrection – of life continuing through the bleakest of days.

We had a small gathering yesterday, to keep that flame alive, and spoke of loss and yet life also: myself of Br. Herbert and others of lost husbands; it was a song, of sorts, keeping the tradition going – a *koinonia* as proof of life after death. And I'm reminded also of the robin that sang in *The Secret Garden*, a book Br. Herbert discovered only recently and was re-reading at his death. A book I've also just read, in order to understand Br. Herbert a little more; to pass on something of his tradition: the tradition he kept for us so well, of life in Christ, of joy in others and constant hope. And the song of the robin in this story, brings life to two otherwise embittered and destroyed human children as it leads them into a walled garden, sealed as a tomb because of the loss of a wife, leaving a husband so bereft that he couldn't bear to stay still for too long in one place. But the walled garden which his wife had so delighted in now brings life and maturity to the two bereft children, led there by the song of the robin. A robin which seemed at times to almost speak to them and, Br. Herbert believed, spoke to him too in our walled garden, though there was a bit of cupboard love involved as well. But whatever the cause of the companionship it mediated healing; brought life out of death; restored a son to his father and a daughter to herself; the promise of spring. Life after death, after all.

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