

Angels Leaves



When angels visit Earth and tire of dancing on the head of a pin to amuse scholastic theologians, how many of them, do you think, can clamber aboard a leaf and row themselves down Pena Creek, onto Dry Creek, thence to the Russian River and onwards to the Pacific Ocean? I'd love to get invited along sometime.

A cluster of leaves is making its way slowly down the creek, calling out to other clusters which are clinging tightly to the rocks, "Come with us; let us see the world!" Mostly, they are met with dull stares, but, occasionally, a retort will ring out, "You silly kids; how do you know what lies ahead? How do you know that you won't all be destroyed? Cop yourselves on; come ashore."

A young leaf, nestled into his mother, is watching curiously yet cautiously. Something inside him longs for the adventure. His mother senses this and darts him a warning look. The floating cluster veers towards him and one of them reaches out a hand to the young one; he instinctively grasps it and for the moment he is being tugged apart – his terrified mother trying to pull him back and his laughing friends pulling him from her clutches. They win. With a loud wail she surrenders him and they whirl away downstream. But his heart is not fully in it; he keeps looking back at the ever-diminishing figure of his mother. Now his convoy is approaching another landlubber

cluster. Again the same joyful invitation and again the same sullen looks and dire predictions.

“Come away oh leafy child to the water and the wild!” they sing.

“How can you be sure you will ever reach the ocean!” is the retort.

“We cannot. But of this we *are* sure, we will see a lot more of life than you will. Life is not about reaching a destination, nor yet of hunkering down awaiting salvation. Life is a great journey in which dreams of destinations are merely the seductress enticing us to let go of our fears, for “eye has not seen, nor ear heard nor hath it entered into the heart, what God has prepared for those who dance with Her.”

Once more they veered towards the bank, stretching out hands to invite others to join them. This time the “little leaf” grasped a landlubber and, disengaging himself from the cluster, hauled himself ashore. He had lost his mother but at least now he was safe. The little convoy continued downstream and then an unexpected thing happened. A strong wind out of nowhere rushed upstream skating over the surface of the water. Initially it stopped the convoy in its tracks and then forced it backwards. The convoy passed the “little leaf” in his newly-adopted home, and the cynics on the shore announced with glee, “So much for the great adventure!” Backwards they went, even passing the distraught mother. She called out to them, “What have you done with my son?” They told her where he was, which was some consolation, but they may as well have told her he was safe on the moon.

But the cluster never lost heart. For truly it was more important to them *that* they were moving than *where* they might be headed. Soon the wind tired of its trick, for though it could quite easily sweep back the surface skin of the water, it soon realized it was no match for the current, which during all of this time was relentlessly flowing downstream.

Soon the backward movement stopped. For a moment the cluster was absolutely still and then, ever so slowly, it once more began its seaward journey. They set up a loud battle cry of victory and the landlubbers gawked in awe as they again approached. When she saw them coming, the mother leaf pleaded, “Please take *me* this time; I want to find my son.” They veered towards her and she swam out to meet

them in order to shorten the time. She was amazed at how easily it came to her. She scanned the riverbank for signs of her son, and soon he hove into view. A shout went up from the landlubbing leaves, "Here comes that crazy cluster again!" It almost drowned out the sound of his mother's voice, but not quite. "Over here, son; over here!" Once more the cluster veered towards the bank, once more mother and son held hands, but this time it was the mother who pulled hardest, and now she and her son were part of the journey-cluster, for a dream had awakened in her own soul. She had no idea how long the journey would last or where it would take them. She only knew that she was feeling better than she ever had, since the days of her bud-hood. What begins in bud-hood is meant to lead to Buddha-hood, and anything or anyone who does not encourage you into that journey is far too small for you.

She cried; she hugged her son; then she threw back her head and laughed until the echo came back. It is the ancient response of the hills of the planet to the rivers of the planet.

It is a cry of "bon voyage!"

May God continue to hold you tenderly in the hollow of Her hand.

Namasté,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Seán". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the text "Tír na nÓg".

Tír na nÓg
July 2012