

Tuesday of the Third Week of Advent

A young friend of mine has put me onto the British spiritual teacher/writer/mystic, Caryll Houselander (1901-1954). I had been introduced to her many years ago and was not really interested in pursuing her writings as she had visions and all sorts of spiritual and emotional crises and that kind of spirituality puts me off but when my young friend appears reading her and finding a text written before I was born to speak to his life today, I revisited her and her writings.

Her book, *The Reed of God*, an extended meditation on Mary which my young friend found filled with meaning that worked in his life as it encourages the readers to find the truth of their lives and not accept a script prepared by others because the truth of our lives is prepared for us by the mystery that many of us call, God.

Caryll Houselander says this, "Every person living is-----besides being a member of the human race----himself (sic), and in order to make the raw material of himself (sic) what it is, innumerable different experiences and different influences have been used.

...We are often reminded that we have been chosen by God out of innumerable people whom He did NOT create. But very seldom do we think about the mystery of all the years and all the gathered memories, both individual and races, which have made us individually what we are."

Houselander continues, "Our life has been given to us from generation to generation, existing in each age in the keeping of other human beings, tended in the Creator's hands.

....It is a great mistake to suppose that those who have inherited the material for their life from suffering generations, and who have poor health and a timid approach or some vice or weakness, have not been designed and planned by God as much as others who seem luckier in the world's eyes."

I am aware that many would have trouble with the notion of our creation being a decision by the mystery that many of us call, God, and not the result of an act by our parent's exclusively, but there can be no doubt that we bring with us into the work of our lives our gathered pasts, the follies and foibles of

our ancestors, their fears and failures, not just a physical DNA but, I believe a spiritual, emotional, and mental heritage that gathers in each generation and in making our life what it is to be, we reassemble the lives of our gathered ancestors not as they were but as we are.

Over the course of these last months, I have come to believe that one of the greatest weaknesses of Catholic Tradition is that we have not done a better job of bringing the “resurrection” of Christ forward and sought to find words that more maturely and fully point the way to the idea of a “gathering up” of love and not a reunion in heaven as the dualistic ordinary piety puts forth with heaven and earth running on dual tracks and not one.

Resurrection does not take away the pain of death and loss, it gives meaning to it but it is hard work to attend to as we must.

As I try to say gently and without challenge, when we die there is no reunion because there has been no separation. The idea of eternal life as something we “enter” when we die is a contradiction as the notion of “eternal” has no beginning, it always is.

Grief and grieving are the pathway to the “gathering” of love which I believe is always transformed and not terminated. We are always following love into mystery, always, even in these times.