

Bible 21

BIBLE 21



Contemporary
Art Collection

Dear Reader,

Throughout the course of history, the arts have inspired the evolution of both science and the economy. We would suggest that this same relationship can be seen to manifest itself even in our time, therefore it can be deemed to be a rewarding experience to know, respect and support contemporary arts and artists much as we do with others who are active in other domains of life. We believe that the arts are able to connect the present and the past with the future, either by confirming and renewing or by refuting the links between them; moreover, the arts do help us spiritually understand and emotionally respond to the roots of our culture as well as better acquaint people with the special features of our own history. The arts can also provide a tool to achieve a state of empathy which proves helpful in finding our place in face of the challenges of our own times. It is thus how we, a married couple, proprietors of the present collection and committed toward the dissemination of the arts and culture, conceive our role as patrons of the arts. This is why -as an adjunct to our activities in public life, in the economic sphere, in education and research and in church-related areas- we invited twelve well-known artists to evoke through contemporary works of art the idea of spiritual search and that these be fused within the collected framework of *Bible 21*.

The *Bible*, the foundation of Judeo-Christian culture, has provided orientation for an endless series of generations throughout the history of the chosen people; it furthermore relates the life story of Jesus Christ. As a collection of contemporary art, *Bible 21* adheres to the Biblical example by presenting the important milestones of the life and deeds of Jesus as it progresses along the path of salvation in twelve identifiable units.

Perusing the collection may prove useful for those interested in the history of culture and the arts since it offers a system of different perspectives on historical events which establish the foundation of our emotions, our ways of thinking and the evolution of the arts. At the same time, examining the items of this collection may prove worthwhile for those interested in Christian culture and ecumenism, for not only are the elements of the life and work of Jesus presented in the way the Gospels do but they open other doors by their inherent variety of artistic approaches which invite the viewers into this special world. Furthermore, contemplation of these works of art can prove significant for those actively practicing their Christianity given that these works may offer new perspectives on meditation and spirituality. And finally, *Bible 21* may prove illuminating for adherents of other religions, as well, for it can serve the pursuit of mutual respect and tolerance by manifesting the unity of various interpretations and respect under the banner of Christian love.

Our mission is to make the grounding of our Christian culture and beliefs better known to the widest possible audience - be it as a first encounter or as repeated practice in reflecting upon these issues. We wish to further underline our conviction that Christ's deeds and presence continue even today and can manifest themselves as constructive cornerstones in the arts of the 21st century.

We extend our grateful appreciation to the artists and curators who have contributed to the realisation of this collection. Soli Deo Gloria!

Levente Kovács and Tímea Kovács-Szabó,
proprietors of the collection

Erik Mátrai

The Four Evangelists

MATTHEW

MARK

LUKE

JOHN

The Bible, the Holy Scriptures, has been of the greatest impact throughout the course of human history. For believers, the Bible is not exclusively a product of human endeavour; it is not just varied sequences of the letters of the alphabet; it is, instead, both Soul and Life. The Old Testament, the first part of the Bible, contains the history, the prayers, the books and wisdom of the Prophets before the time of Christ. The second big unit is the New Testament. In addition to describing the life of Christ, it is a collection of the acts and letters of Christian Apostles as well as including prophetic visions about final times.

The New Testament contains four Gospels. The face of Jesus is made visible through four human faces and souls. Although some theologians were tempted to merge the four Gospels into one body of text, Christianity persevered in maintaining the four different images of Jesus on the grounds that all four are but fragmentary approaches to what with human utterances is inexpressible. Christianity has always felt and known that the four faces of Christ together help us come to a conception of the living Christ through these wonderful but still fallible portrayals which he exceeds in all four cases.

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, the four Evangelists filtered first through themselves, then through their souls the long traditions of their community and the words which were bequeathed through the decades and guided by the Spirit before recording them. Each of the four Gospels gives evidence of this human *modus operandi*.

If taken in chronological order, then Mark is first, having compiled his Gospel around 63-70 AD within Rome or its proximity, this being asserted by Peter's testimony. Mark is like the average evangelist on a soapbox somewhere in the streets preaching that it was God himself who was present among us in a mysterious way, as a human being! Matthew's writings are dated as being from between 70 and 90 AD and were intended for his own Jewish-Christian community. He is much akin to a wise Rabbi, undertaking to prove on the strength of various citations from the Old Testament that Jesus was the new Moses, the perfect teacher, the Messiah himself. Luke was addressing mainly a public with a background of Greek culture between 70 and 90 AD. He reminds us of a priest or pastor visiting the family of an intelligent person; he explains the divine love appearing in Jesus with the most eloquent words possible. And finally, there is John who poured his ideas into written words after a long life of meditation between 90 and 100 AD; he most resembles a hermit penetrating deeper and deeper into the enigmatic Secret which he had experienced in his youth.

Four Gospels were recorded, but these have inspired a further infinite number which are based on our own lives and by reviving in us the old story, the life and words of Christ. Our own Gospel will be based on our life and filtered by it. I wonder of what material the Gospel of my life will consist.

János Székely

Matthew, also known as Lévi, was a publican, a greatly detested vocation in the age of Jesus. It would appear that tax evasion and fraud are not the exclusive purview of modern times and, as a consequence, many people took a dislike to Matthew for limiting them in such activities; they did not appreciate him rummaging in their pockets. Taxes and tolls had to be paid frequently at city gates or bridges, and religious Jews were required to pay tax to the temple, also. Among the different groups of tax collectors, the ones collecting for the Roman Empire were particularly despised and they were considered to be corrupt collaborators. All the same, we have no further information as to what sort of work Matthew was doing. But we do know that the words of Jesus "Follow me" were sufficient for him to abandon his previous life and become a disciple. The Gospels do not specify whether he left behind the money he had collected or settled the affairs with which he had been occupied. What we do know for sure is that his whole life and worldview changed radically and, from that moment on, it was Jesus who had the greatest importance for him. In his Gospel he described this process with the words "for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also". This resulted in him becoming the patron saint of bookkeepers, bankers, tax collectors and even security guards. Artist Erik Mátrai alludes to this profession by assembling Matthew's portrait from bits of Hungarian banknotes.

The representations of evangelists have been influenced by various backgrounds throughout the history of religions or folklore. Mark, among others, is linked with the tradition of rogation which may well be the reason for his portrait having been created with wheat seeds. In his Gospel, Mark recounts the parable of the sower, much as two of the other evangelists, but he is the only one to refer to the "miracle of green corn" growing by itself: "For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head" (Mark 4:28). The poet Sándor Reményik interprets the term "by itself" to be nothing other than Mercy.³

Tradition tells us that Luke was a historian, a doctor and a painter. This is the background he is most often said to have had as an explanation for his writing being of the most eloquent style of Greek. Words for him appear to be like a brush for a painter. His recordings of the parables as told by Jesus are most colourfully presented. To borrow André Gide's description, "For my own secret pleasure, following the practices of old triptych painters, I painted this parable as it was told by our Lord Jesus Christ. ... If the reader expects piety, he will find it, since - like the donors in the corners of pictures - I am kneeling by the side of the Prodigal Son, smiling and with tears running down my face, just like him."⁴ There are several classical as well as modern paintings which show Luke painting a portrait of the Madonna. It is for this reason that the artist preparing Luke's portrait includes details from other paintings, much as in a mosaic, as he pictures him in the company of the infant Jesus and his Mother.

"The Word ... was with God at the beginning, and through him all things came to be" is what we read at the beginning of the Gospel according to John. Here we can find the term 'logos' used in its richest sense. When speaking, we try to arrange sounds in a logical order; in writing we do the same with letters. Much as Hungarian poet Frigyes Karinthy expresses it: "With gushing tears alongside amniotic fluid, with outthrust throat, do I crackle the new signal: God, God, my God, have mercy on us!"⁵ John's portrait is shaped by a conglomeration of the letters A, B and C for the simple reason that he is the evangelist of the Word, of divine Logos.

Tamás Fabiny





Mariann Imre

Mary Meets Elizabeth

In the wake of the signal given by the Angel, Mary set off for the mountains of Judea to meet Elizabeth and share her joyful news about expecting a baby, to witness God's miracle making it possible for an infertile woman to bear a child and to be of assistance to Elizabeth, her relative, after the birth of her child. In crossing the mountains Mary arrives at the point where David once passed with the Ark of the Covenant on his way to Jerusalem. David had been in full exultation, he began to dance and exclaimed in amazement: "How is it possible that the Ark of my Lord comes to me!?" Mary is the new Ark of the Covenant. She, however, carries no stone tablets but instead the living, corporeal Word in her womb. John the Baptist rejoices in his mother's womb, just like David once did, and Elizabeth finds herself exclaiming with David's words: "How is it possible that the Mother of my Lord comes to see me!?"

This is one of the most joyful and beautiful scenes of the Gospels. Two happy women, both expecting a baby, embrace each other while the embryos which they nurture under their heart also greet one another.

In this damaged earthly world, genuine joy can be only experienced if we are ready to welcome the infinite dimension of God and willingly accept the gift of life.

Happy moments ...How short and limited they often are in human life! Like a hug, a petal falling on the road. Nonetheless, they do leave their mark on and in us, ineffaceably. Like hair woven into fabric, or flowers and leaves sewn into cement. These are the moments which confer us with strength to live; they are like oases in the desert; they illuminate long journeys.

János Székely

"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!"
You were declared infertile, you are overage and you are just a simple servant girl.

Both of you had to face prejudice, hostility and shame.

And then the miracle happened. You both are expecting a child. You bear your motherhood with dignity. You stand tall. You are bearers of happiness.

Material is sanctified: this is the secret of incarnation, of all births.

Hair woven into the wedding dress becomes visible on the face of an embrace. These can but remind us of the sober truths that our DNA reveals everything and as well as the encouraging words that "every single strand of your hair is on record".

The organic world of petals sewn into cement evokes the *Visitation* by the master M S, its richness in colour provides a pleasant counterpoint to the discipline of geometrical forms.

All these come to form a multitude of crosses. Having reached adulthood, each of them will suffer a violent death, one by beheading, the other by crucifixion. And herein lies the reason why a sharp dagger penetrates the heart of each of the two women.

Tamás Fabiny

*"In attempting the impossible, I would have liked to have shown
my relationship to God in this work."*

Mariann Imre



Viola Fátýol

From Birth to Baptism

The meeting of the two women – Mary and Elizabeth, both carrying a new life resembles a branch bursting into bloom. It speaks of divine life and of the birth of living bread descending to earth from heaven. This birth is as miraculous a moment as when, billions of years ago, life appeared, formed from inanimate material; it is as miraculous as the soil of the earth nurturing wheat, providing bread for people; or as God’s mysterious journey to this earth or the flight of birds in the sky, like the Holy Ghost – like a dove – descending onto Christ. It is like Christianity which allows the history of a child’s life become part of the great and universal History ranging from alpha to omega.

These are everyday scenes evoking the Eternal. This is our own everyday life as so movingly described by poets. And God entered this transient and wounded world, wanting to illuminate it and live on within us. However, for this to be realised, people need to open their heart, much like the two expectant mothers, Mary and Elizabeth, did.

János Székely

The thirteen pictures refer to Jesus and his disciples. We, as disciples of the disciples, can experience the miracles of birth and baptism. A child is born, a boy is given to us. We can experience the miracle of being part of the process of creation. ... you shall conceive and bear a son ... He will be great; he will bear the title ‘Son of the Most High’.

He is the bread of life, his mercy will be passed on from generation to generation among his followers. Surely the chain of generations will not be rent asunder?

Today’s sign is when you find a newborn baby in the incubator at the entrance of the hospital. My beloved son, upon you does my admiration rest. But I would like to bestow my admiration on the wicked as well. I do not wish for the death of sinners. I want them to convert and to live.

The symbol of all these is the bath of rebirth, something which has been made possible because He is with us until the end of time. He was always on the way: from Nazareth to Bethlehem, from Bethlehem to Egypt, from Egypt back to Nazareth, from heaven to earth, from earth to hell, from hell back to earth, from earth to heaven again.

“What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him” (Psalm 8:4)

Tamás Fabiny

“The miracle of birth is universal. Mary gave birth to a child; this is a miracle and mystery of a nature to which all mothers can relate. Mary endured the same labour pains, the tensions of waiting, the angst, the intense fatigue and it was with astonished reverence that she took her child into her arms for the first time, perhaps even struggling with the nursing.”

Viola Fátyol



Lajos Csontó

Choosing Disciples

Jesus comes upon the fishermen Peter, Andrew, James and John. Looking at them, he says, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men”. They hardly know him, yet, as if charmed, they step up and leave everything behind. They feel content in having joined him, for, from that moment onward, wherever they are, whatever they see, they have Jesus before their eyes in front of them. They are thoroughly captivated. Jesus wanted nothing from them, instead he wanted them. God does not use man like an implement but, instead, views him as a partner, calling him a friend.

Great moments of our lives are always moving moments. There are times when we are not able to take the next step as we had wanted to, or else we slip out of the groove and have difficulty accepting it. We cannot simply shrug and walk away.

One such moment is when a young wife discovers that she is expecting a child. All of a sudden, her entire life acquires new meaning. Her body slowly becomes a cradle, manifesting fulfilment. Another similar experience is falling in love, feeling that I can be loved as I am, with my frailty, with my nature. No need to hide behind masks, no need to pretend to be strong, happy and successful. I am loved as I am. This is not self-evident and it is a moving experience. Another similar case is when someone, who is important for us dies. Everything needs to be re-evaluated, revisited and rearranged. Whatever it is that we were planning to do - appointments, activities - suddenly lose their importance. And concerns such as ‘did I visit them?’ and ‘was I able to convey the important issues of our life?’ gain great significance.

The master calls us, too. He wants nothing from us other than to become his friend. He calls us in the momentous moments of our lives, when the sky opens above us and we can see behind the veil of things.

János Székely

Walking on the shore of Lake Galilee, he saw two brothers ... Because Jesus is always walking along the shores of Lake Galilee, or along the banks of the Jordan river, occasionally on the shores of Lake Bethesda, or in Sychar, at Jacob’s well. His notice always falls on someone: two fishermen, a prophet; someone who has been ill for thirty-eight years, or another person who has to endure humiliation each day when going to fetch water. He simply notices these people even if they want to hide from him, like Zacchaeus on the sycamore fig tree. He notices him also when he is counting his money. He notices people even when someone is about to enter Damascus in order to persecute believers.

Although he might be in a hurry, he can stop. He notices the encircled woman about to be stoned for adultery; he notices the scholar, too, studying the Torah under a fig tree; he stops upon seeing the blind beggar by the roadside; he does not sidestep around the leper whose movements are signaled by the bell hanging from his neck, like that of a beast. He does not see the crowd, he sees the individual. He looks at the person and says, “You are the chosen one. Come and follow me!” He was always present at Lake Galilee, at the Danube, on the road to Emmaus, or in the waiting room at Kocsárd.

Master, you are simultaneously present on the Mount of Olives and in the valley of the shadow of death. You notice us in the crowd. You choose us. You call us by our name or else you give us a new name. Not Levi any more, but Matthew. Not Simon, but Peter. Not Saul, but Paul. You make a disciple of me, saying quietly, “Follow me. You are the chosen one!”

Tamás Fabiny

*“For me deciding on the calling of the disciples as theme is a reflection
on the conceivability of experiencing religious faith.”*

Lajos Csontó





Zsolt Asztalos

The Formative Power of the Teachings

According to the Bible, the world was created by God, this being expressed with ten verbs. Old rabbis see it as a reference to the Ten Commandments which were also called ‘ten verbs’, ‘ten statements’. What can be the relationship between the creation and the Ten Commandments? More than we would think, for God’s law is objective. The Ten Commandments provide divine guidance, for be it known that morality is not a random element of history, varying from culture to culture. The verb of creation and the verb of the Ten Commandments are the same. God introduced in this world wonderful order and harmony. He placed this order and harmony into the atoms, the galaxies, the cells and our soul. This law of order and harmony is objective and beautiful. If we can master living according to these laws of order and harmony, we can achieve fulfilment. However, if we disobey or disregard them, we are railing against reality and we will run into a wall.

The essential elements of this law are love, self-surrender, gratitude and devotion. These are also the essential features of God given that he represents the eternal love of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Eternal birth and eternally giving birth means that God diffuses life. The world came into being from the secret which enfolds the dance of nuclei and of electrons and the love of man and woman. We can be happy if we learn how to love. We can achieve success if we are able to offer our life, making it a gift. One of Jesus’ teachings is that if one wants to find and save one’s self, one will lose it. But if one is strong enough to lose it, to offer it, then one will find one’s true self. This is because the centre of our being is beyond and above ourselves.

This is the essence of the teachings of Jesus. Whoever is able to fly freely, who is not bound by anything, who is not a victim of addictions or bad dispositions can be free. Very often, it is not easy to love – it may even seem to require being superhuman.

János Székely

Being the son of a carpenter, your father’s workshop was a familiar domain for you given that you, as a child, had spent much time there with him. You were able to learn the skills of the trade by watching him and later by working together with him, perhaps holding one end of the saw. On one occasion, the two of you had to fit the two beams of a cross together. You were able to observe that your father – usually of a calm and peaceful nature became restless and uneasy with the task, mumbling something about the Romans.

You kept the workshop tidy and returned the tools to their place; you had no difficulties using the chisel and the vice; you never erred in knowing how and where to direct the hammer. You were able to easily recognise the various types of wood with the touch of your fingers, be it ash, mahogany, oak or maple.

And you deal with us humans much in the same way; you know how to bend, shape and form us. Poets respond to these of your qualities in a telling way. Attila József writes, for instance (in *Nem emel föl* = *No one lifts me*) that having sunk into the mud with no one to lift him out, he beseeches God to adopt him as a son so as not to be left to the miserable fate of an orphan. Being a disciple includes pain: you shape and form me in a vice, you carve me with a chisel, you piece my fractured bits together with nails or glue.

We are to take pride in having been crafted by hand in your workshop, but often we let unclean hands stain us and coarse fingers chip pieces from us. You yourself, however, were fully aware of what it means to live among bunglers. As the poet Gyula Illyés ironically puts it: when being crucified, the carpenter’s son noticed that the chiselled joint of the cross was not right, but it was too late to call his expert father (in *Kontárok közt* = *Among bunglers*).

As for us, we are not about to call the old carpenter, but call you instead, you who are our only leading authority. You always taught the twelve disciples through parables: “God’s kingdom is like when the sower goes out to sow seeds, like when a woman kneads dough to make bread or like when someone finds treasure in a field.” And you also have something to say to the disciples of the disciples (here quoting the poet Attila József once again): “I proclaim to you God’s kingdom, who comes to us to Earth, who is a celebration greater than us, because he is the celebration of each and all” (*Tanítások* 9 = *Teachings no.9*).

Tamás Fabiny

“We shall never be prepared, not even with the help of the teachings; this is why, with the installation, I would have liked to have created a work-studio atmosphere.”

Zsolt Asztalos



Sára Richter

The Healings

Body and soul are inseparable: many maladies have psychic origins and therefore many can be cured by way of the soul! Health is not merely a medical issue; it concerns not only medicines and diagnoses but the whole person. People can be cured and made complete only by the concept of wholeness.

Many miracles transpired in the presence of Jesus, even his greatest adversaries admitted this. Having themselves witnessed and heard of those whose health was restored in his presence, it was not possible to keep this under wraps. The Jewish historian, Josephus Flavius, in writing about Jesus a few decades after the events, claims that “he had carried out astonishing and inexplicable deeds”.⁶

The world suffers whenever it shuns the Creator, the source of life. It can find healing by re-establishing communication with Him.

As John the Evangelist notes, the miracles of Jesus are signs: they give evidence of a deeper reality. The act of him giving bread to masses of people is a sign of him being living bread which has descended from Heaven; giving sight to the blind shows that He is the light of the world; resurrecting the dead affirms that he is both life and resurrection.

Jesus wants to open our eyes so that we can learn to see with God’s eyes, so that we can see the world full of all its painful and hardly comprehensible events from the perspective of the whole, from its beginning to its completion. This is how he ensures our health.

János Székely

The sheets comprising this installation seem to be endless. On them an endless number of maladies are to be depicted, eternalised.

Jesus roamed about and healed the sick. He would ask, “Do you wish to be healed?” He was able to immediately recognise the source of the affliction and reached out to touch both the body and the soul of those in need. He was able to overstep the protocols pertaining to the afflicted: he disregarded the strict requirements of keeping one’s distance from lepers. He would heal even on the Sabbath, declaring that “the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath”. To make his approach even more noteworthy, he would tell the lame to “rise, take up your bed and walk”. Join me in scandalously flouting the law! Together we have to rise up against life-stifling decrees. Should one have been invalid for thirty-eight years, then a day here or there might not matter, but it does matter when there comes an opportunity to gain healing.

The vision of the prophets was fulfilled in Jesus: “He Himself took our infirmities / And bore our sicknesses” (Matthew, 8:17). He took the misery and affliction of others upon himself. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Meanwhile, he himself was bruised, slapped in the face, made ill. His body was wrapped in a long sheet similar to this one, his wounds soaking the white linen with blood. He has been present ever since then in all our miseries, in our physical and psychological suffering. In the midst of his agonies, perhaps he might have prayed as the Brazilian archbishop Hélder Câmara, patron of the poor, did when evoking the 21st Psalm:

“I call out for morphine but no one hears me
I call out while strait-laced
all night in an insane asylum
in the incurable patients’ ward
in the epidemic care hospital
in the hospice for the elderly I call out
swimming in sweat and dying in the institution for the mentally ill
I am choking in an oxygen tent ...”⁷

Jesus healed the sick. “The Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” He was willing to reach out to the leper, to lay his hand on foreheads burning with fever and raises as a model to emulate the Samaritan who, throwing caution to the wind, knelt to tend to the wounds of the beaten traveller and took him to an inn. He was not an enemy but a fellow-man, even a brother.

Tamás Fabiny

*“The purpose of healing is not that our ailment heal but that
we discover the meaning of our ailment.
It has meaning only if it results in us changing.”*

Sára Richter



AKI KÉR, KAP. AKI KERES, TALÁL. ÉS A ZÖRGETŐNEK
AKI NYILIK. AKI KÉR, KAP.

TUDJA A TI AKI...
MIRE VAN SZÜKSÉGTEK, MEG MERT KÉRTEK, TI...

HA AKAD...
MERT...



MEGRENDELTEK...
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AKIT SZERETSZ, BETEG...



Himnusz

Márta Fehér

The Miracles of Jesus

God the Creator arrived on Earth in the person of Jesus. As the poet János Pilinszky writes, “God, while exiled behind facts, soaks the fabric of history with blood from time to time” (*Ars poetica helyett = In lieu of ars poetica*). His infiniteness has invaded this wounded, frail and finite world.

Life appeared in him, Life in its totality. Life that broke through from lifeless material thrust by the miracle of creation of billions of years ago. Erwin Schrödinger explains how from lifelessness, from the equilibrium of entropy and of energy states – anti-entropy, negentropy – life broke forth. In the wake of this, human life made an appearance in the midst of other living creatures, and along with the arrival of humans came ideas, liberty and self-consciousness. God’s soul, like a gigantic magnet, hovered above the world and lent might to material for it to evolve and make the advent of qualitative expansion possible.

It was this divine, creative Spirit and Life which was manifest in Christ. Divine light, a divine life and a divine world all shine from and through his miracles.

When a person opens one’s soul and life upward, then this life from above, heavenly rain and an uplifting gravity will fill and upraise and shine through this person. It is sad to know that most people spend their lives with their soul oblivious to the upward possibility. We should remember Pope John Paul II’s words: “Fear not! Open your gates wide before Christ, open the gates to the wide world of social life, culture and knowledge. Christ knows what dwells in man. He alone knows.”⁸

János Székely

The miracles of Jesus are direct evidence of his divine capacities. God’s power can overcome the miseries of life on earth. Light can extinguish darkness. This is all akin to the glory of God shining through icons.

Jesus never engaged in effecting self-serving miracles. The Tempter tried to persuade him to change rocks into bread or to leap from the upper ledge of the church and thus provoke his miraculous rescue by the angels, but this all proved to be for naught.

The miracles of Jesus are touches of transcendence, an overture toward man and always serving man’s interests. When the vessel bearing his disciples began to be tossed about on the stormy sea, he calmed the waters and saved them. He wielded power over the laws of nature. “Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?” they asked in amazement.

He was able to feed a hungry multitude with five loaves of bread and two fish. It is this particular event which is at the focus of the miracles presented in the collection. The miracles of Jesus were often attended with confusion and would rend existing frameworks asunder.

On one occasion, Jesus assented to an opening being made in the roof of the building where he was teaching in order that an invalid on a stretcher be lowered to his purview. Healing involves confusion, the distending of existing frameworks. But making a hole in a roof is nothing compared to overcoming the power of sin. In addition to offering physical healing, Jesus would also proclaim that “Your sins have been forgiven!” He dismissed the misguided belief that physical frailty or affliction was a consequence of punishment for sin committed. Furthermore, the healings which he effected disabled the power of Satan. When the possessed person in Capernaum cried out that he knew who Jesus was, that he was God’s saint, Jesus demanded silence and the demon departed from the person. From the possessed recluse of Gadara, he exorcised the devils which then entered into a herd of swine. He exorcised seven devils from Mary Magdalene. He would heal body and soul together and empowered his disciples to do the same: “And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues ...” (Mark, 16:17)

Tamás Fabiny

“The concept of multifold increase has significant emphasis in the series, much like it does in miracles. This is symbolic of unboundedness which refers to the nature of love: should it appear, this is the only thing which increases in a multifold way.”

Márta Fehér

5+2



SOURCE and PRINT
Gospel of John 2:1-11



TEMPEST and MIRROR
Gospel of Matthew 14:23-27



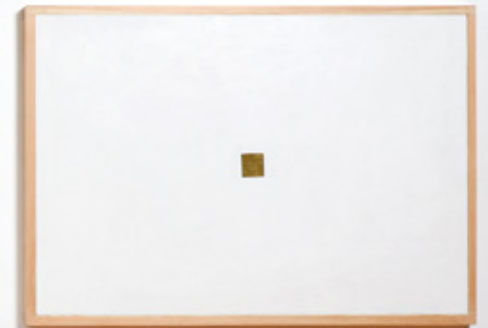
BREAD and STAIN
Gospel of Matthew 8:23-21



IMMINENCE and SIGN
Gospel of Matthew 14:22-33



TOUCH and INDIGO
Gospel of Luke 5:1-11



HEAVEN and PURPLE

Imre Bukta

Parables:

The Lost Sheep

The Withered Fig Tree

The Wicked Tenants

The parable of the barren fig tree teaches us to understand that we have received life in order to bear fruit and to live a fruitful life. If there is life within us, it will surface to create new life which will yield noble deeds, creative artefacts and the many fruits of love. God is patient with us, the parables of Jesus give evidence of this. As such, he digs up the soil around us, he adds fertiliser and waits with the expectation that one day we might bear fruit. As long as we live we have ample time to bear fruit. We have to extend our roots and embed them into the sky so that divine life may course into us, so that each person's life can become fruitful – be it in marriage or in other types of relationships, so as to not search only for the pure self but to achieve, instead, a wider vision in deed and thought.

There is blood in the vineyard. Mankind killed the purest, the most saintly person who ever walked the earth. The soil is covered with blood; it is soaked with the tears of countless starving, suffering, humiliated and trampled people. He took all this pain upon himself. He is not sitting on his throne somewhere far away but instead carries our burdens as one with those who suffer. The winegrower's beloved and only son came to this bloodstained earth to sacrifice his life for us, to wash and recreate the world with his blood and his love.

The prodigal son was welcomed with open arms and embraced by his father. He takes and cradles the lost sheep in his arms. He is the Good Shepherd for whom each person is important.

János Székely

Jesus Christ, you are particularly fond of speaking in parables. You knew well that simple people, such as labourers or beggars, would better understand stories than legal interpretations. You left hair-splitting to the Pharisees and scribes, you yourself preferred to tell stories. You would sit on the hilltop or the river bank, gazing at nature around you and quickly came to realise the mode of illustrating the wonders of God's domain. You took note of how the lilies in the fields were resplendent and of how birds fly in the skies.

You would stand next to the Palestinian hired hand and watch how he would reach into his apron for the seeds which he would sow in a wide arc. Then you would watch to see the seeds grow and worry when weeds would appear among the corn. You carefully observed how the woman kneaded dough for bread – perhaps you saw your own mother do this – and wondered how a little bit of yeast could make the dough rise. Seeing this, you then proclaimed that the kingdom of God also begins with something small but that this small something is capable of penetrating everything; this then is the essence of all things.

We thank you, Jesus, for these three parables. We thank you for what you said about the withered fig tree. Very often we also are like this fig tree, our life becomes barren and we are unable to produce healthy fruit to nourish others. As such we may deserve to be axed. But you decided to give us another chance and to continue providing your laborious care in the hope that perhaps we will become productive. We are grateful for your mercy given this year.

Another of your parables concerns the abuse of this mercy. In this parable a winegrower did everything that he could in the hope of having a good crop. He planted a vineyard, built a wall around it, added a watchtower and made a winepress. When he sent his servants to collect the crop, they were beaten by those leasing the vineyard; when the owner sent his own son next, the lessees killed him and threw his body out of the vineyard. Lord, this they did to you. Please forgive them!

In a third parable you tell of a seemingly irresponsible shepherd who leaves ninety-nine sheep on their own while searching for one which went astray. It is thus that you search for us. This is not irresponsibility on your part but a manifestation of your mercy. And if you do find us, you put us on your shoulders or take us in your arms and return us to our community. This parable wishes to teach us that in the kingdom of God, the most significant number is the number one.

Tamás Fabiny

“Visually I endeavoured to bridge the distant past of two thousand years and today's context by ensuring the presence of both viability and spirituality. As an experiment in identification, the creative process itself became a memorable experience, it having sucked in timelessness.”

Imre Bukta



Ilona Lovas

The Washing of Feet
and the Table from the Last Supper

The Last Supper coincided with the celebration of the Jewish Passover dinner. On these occasions of the matzo meal and the worship services, the rabbis traditionally preached of how world order changed at the time of the Passover. God became servant of man. The Lord carried his people like an eagle carrying its nestlings on its wings. The Lord carried the servant; he gave the servant light, cared for his sandals, washed him and washed the shame of slavery off his people.

The same things happened at the farewell dinner of Jesus: God became servant of man. Jesus washed his disciples' feet. As the poet Sándor Weöres writes: "Long ago I wanted to be a lord; / oh I wish now I were a good servant! / but alas, servant there is but one: God himself, / while of lords there is an endless number" (*Rongyszőnyeg* = *Rug of rags*). How different God is from what we have conceived him to be. He does not sit on a throne, give orders or await admiration. He was born in a stable, washes the feet of fallible men and then gives his life for us. Oh, if we could learn to be good servants!

After that, he would offer himself as food: "Take this and eat; this is my body.

Whoever eats of me lives through me" He would offer himself in the Word and in the Bread. Because he was not able to pass on everything in words. At the table of the Eucharist - the Lord's table - we can also hear the words of Scripture and it is himself which he gives in these. He was not able to fully verbalize himself; he wanted to give everything over, his full self. "Oh, special, holy, grand secret! We are eating God..."⁹

János Székely

I take the bread in my hand, it is still warm. / Father, I am grateful to you for listening to me. / You will not let me down, will you? / Take it and eat. / John, dear John, lift your head, don't be so sad! / This is my body. / Why are you frowning, Simon Peter? / You similarly tried to object when I washed your feet. "You will never wash my feet!" you protested. / But now I remove your sandals, take your deformed foot in my hand. This is your body, This is how it has to happen. I have to wash off not only the dust of the Palestinian roads but also the dirt which has accumulated since the time of Adam. / And this is my body, now covered with white linen. / A few hours more and it will be broken into pieces / like this bread. / This is my body.

This is my body, I give it to you / Here you are, Matthew, take a piece. / Certainly, you had not thought of this / when you stood up from the tax-collecting counter. / Bartholomew, Andrew, Thomas - pay attention! / Watch and take note of the movements. / And then do likewise in memory of me. / Thomas, I see that you are having difficulty swallowing. / Drink a gulp! / And all of you, drink of it / Not only the twelve of you but the other seventy. / Not only the men, but the women, too. / Jews and Greeks, masters and servants: all of you! / Not only ordained clergymen and bishops, / but simple people, too. / No matter if it be in peasants' boots or just barefoot, / Catholics and protestants, everyone!

Slowly I have to set off, / but you, dear visitor, stay on. / There are things to read / about me and my twelve disciples - and about yourself. / Take your time / Here is a chair, take a seat, please.

Tamás Fabiny

"The washing of feet for me means the giving of gifts and acceptance. I feel it important that I be able to accept love directed toward me, love that can change me, and inspire me to be one who can give. The table from the Last Supper is the Lord's Table to which all of us are invited, me. It is this abiding invitation extended to me and to us is what I would like to express in this work."

Ilona Lovas



Miklós Erhardt

The Garden of Gethsemane



After the Last Supper, while singing Passover psalms they walked to the tract called Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives, owned by a confidante of Jesus, a place where they could feel safe. Jesus is preparing for his own great Passover, for his return to the Father. Along with the others, he sings the songs of the old Passover to prepare for this his final one.

There, in the Garden of Gethsemane, he accepts the divine plan which holds for him a gruesome death that from his human perspective is perhaps not entirely graspable. “He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.” (Matthew 26:39) The very first man said no to God and yes to the devil, thus forfeiting the Garden of Eden. Jesus, the new Adam, says yes to God, a yes which costs him his life. He then crushes the head of the Evil One and regains Paradise.

The disciples then fall asleep here as they understand nothing. Their blindness and insensitivity pains Jesus but this does not diminish his resolve to sacrifice his own life for them, and for us.

The secret of redemption was decided here, in Christ’s heart. This is where he said ‘yes’ to his fate and then followed through on it. The significant events of our lives are decided in the heart. Be it the ‘yes, I do’ in marriage, pronounced from the depth of one’s heart, then followed through and fulfilled, or a ‘yes’ to a vocation, uttered in full joy, and repeated throughout the journey leading to one’s own Calvary.

The way of the cross was decided in Christ’s heart while in the Garden of Gethsemane. It was not his feet that took him up to Calvary; it was his heart, his love toward us and his loyalty to the Father.

János Székely

Jesus took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee with him and then began to be troubled. He said to them, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me.” (Matthew 26:38)

“There was no connecting train. They announced / a six-hour delay and in the stifling darkness / I sat for six hours in the waiting room / of the Kocsárd station, on Maundy Thursday”.¹⁰

Feeling cold, the disciples drew closer together. They had witnessed so many strange events. During the three years of following Jesus they had experienced many things but the events of the previous days went beyond all that. He entered the city riding a donkey ... In a fit of rage he overturned the merchants’ stalls in the temple ... And how secretive he was during that supper ... “Perhaps in your fear you will leave me, or fall asleep within a stone’s throw from me, and not be able to keep vigil.”

And, at a given moment, it is as if they were hearing their name being called. “Simon ... James ... John ... Are you sleeping? My soul is tormenting me to death? Shall I accept this calling leading unto death, or shall I decline it? This is why I prayed like this: “Father, if possible, let this cup pass from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.” I looked about: I would have liked to have exchanged / a few words with good, upright men / but it was a damp night and cold and dark / Peter was asleep, John was asleep, James / was asleep, Matthew was asleep and they were all asleep ... / Swollen drops streaming from my forehead coursed across my furrowed face.”¹¹ Look, I have need of you. You could say this, also: “Others are sleeping my sleep / I am keeping vigil over others’ sleep / I will ensure that the first light / will arouse no one.”¹² Are you sleeping when you should be confessing your faith? Are you sleeping when many are counting on your help? Not only me, but your ailing mother who requires your devoted care. And your child, to whom you should provide not only money but also care and warmth. Are you still asleep when the world around you is in revolt? Are you able to sleep on this restless earth? Can’t you hear the cries of pain from near and far? Are you not awakened by the shrieks of mothers, the weeping of hungry children, the moaning of the wounded? Are you still asleep?

Today, I am the one who is asking, tomorrow perhaps a proud Roman. And I shall reply, “You said it.”

Tamás Fabiny

*“The poet Pilinszky spoke on several occasions about this scene of agony,
about its special but nonetheless hyperrealistic dramaturgy.
I wanted to make it as a silent movie but, in the end, I was not able
to resist that we speak about it.”*

Miklós Erhardt



Stay here and keep watch with me.



Yet what I want is not important, for I only desire to fulfill your plan for me.



*Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.
The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.*

Pál Gerber

The Implements of Suffering – The Crucifixion

Caiaphas asked Christ, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of God?” Jesus knew well that if he said ‘yes’ to this question they would kill him therefore he risked his life with the answer, “It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.” (Matthew 26: 64) Caiaphas tears his clothes – the death sentence is announced immediately.

In Pál Gerber’s pictures we can see the implements used for execution. This is what the world offers to God: nails, whip, gas chambers and dismembered innocent children in their mothers’ wombs, chemical weapons and starving millions, filthy media and abused children and women.

God’s work is wonderful. The clouds, the trees, the streams are perfect. They are like a perfect symphony without a single false note. The work of man is often abhorrent and ugly, causing suffering. Nails and whips. That is what we can offer. Jesus came to knock the sword from our hand, to make us forge lances into ploughshares, to help us again find the path leading to love from which we have strayed exceedingly far.

The inscription on the cross (I.N.R.I. – Jesus of Nazareth, king of the Jews) was meant as an insult but in its essence it is true. He is a king indeed: the king of love. More powerful than any earthly power. Huge empires have collapsed and royal crowns have tumbled to the ground while the cross of this carpenter from Nazareth still stands, shaping the world with more power than any other. The cross stands as long as the earth turns.

IHS stands for the first three letters of the name of Jesus (IHSOUS) as it is in Greek. Later these three letters were interpreted to be the abbreviation of a sentence in Latin: *Jesus Hominum Salvator*, meaning the saviour of people. The name of Jesus is the most exalted name – the name before which all knees bend, the name in which the world can find salvation.

János Székely

‘Arma Christi’ – the implements used for execution. In most of the representations these items seem to be in disarray, suggesting that the hammer and the nails were taken there in a flurry. The ladder is needed right at the beginning of the process – while the sheet only at the very end, to wrap the corpse before placing it in the grave.

The listless soldiers always have dice in their pockets. After all, they have to kill the time before the crucified person dies – these dice can even help decide in this brutal game who will claim the garment. The reed enters the story arbitrarily, the sponge tacked to its end is to quench the thirst of the victim. And naturally, the crown of thorns is also there, to be put on the dying victim’s head.

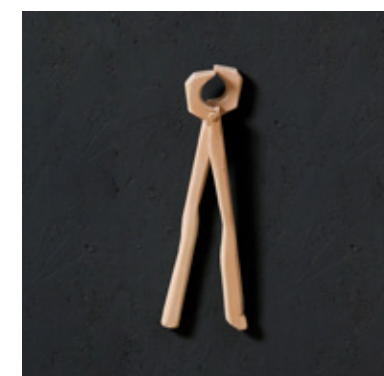
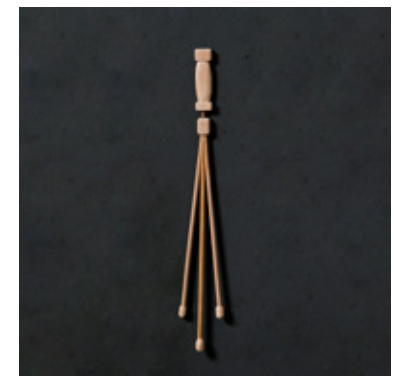
‘Arma Christi’ – the implements used for execution. Each one has a specific role. So many task-specific implements – proficiency above all. Everything fits in a box. The task completed, everything has to be carefully put away. Nothing can be left out, there is an inventory. Like a manicure set – in gigantic size. Or like a huge Swiss Army knife which has everything needed in its practical set of easily accessible accessories for torturous killing. One production has ended but soon the next one could begin: ... “the butchering lads scrub down but that which happened is somehow unable to come to an end”.¹³

The implements seen here and used in carrying out executions were frequently utilized in the decades of that period. Every case was carried out the same way. Ladders were put up, nails hammered, spear lifted, dice cast, sheet laid out. The implements are the same, but this execution site is entirely exceptional – different from the others. It is not to be confused with any other site, just as the victim is not to be confused with any other victim.

Tamás Fabiny

The “Arma Christi” items refer to the event which is “the reconciliation between God and the world stained by sin”.

Pál Gerber



Lellé Szelley

The Final Days: An Icon – Placement into the Tomb



It was life itself, the eternal, imperishable life of the Creator which was manifest in Christ. The iconostas is a mysterious portal which allows us to peer into or even enter the sanctuary, the heavenly world, and see the light of resurrection.

The images - the annunciation, the Spirit descending at the baptism, the three divine guests, the table of the Last Supper, Christ with the crown of thorns, the woman dressed in sunlight: all these are windows to heaven, elements of eternal mystery. In the middle, we can observe the Spirit of Pentecost, by whose presence the story continues even in our time. Christ said, “I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!” (Luke 12:49) All those in whom the spark of the Holy Spirit bursts into flame are vessels of the enduring Gospel.

The Gospel is not a nice, old story. It is not conservative, outdated or even modern; it is eternal. It comes to happen to all those who open the door of their life. “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.” (Revelations 3:20)

János Székely

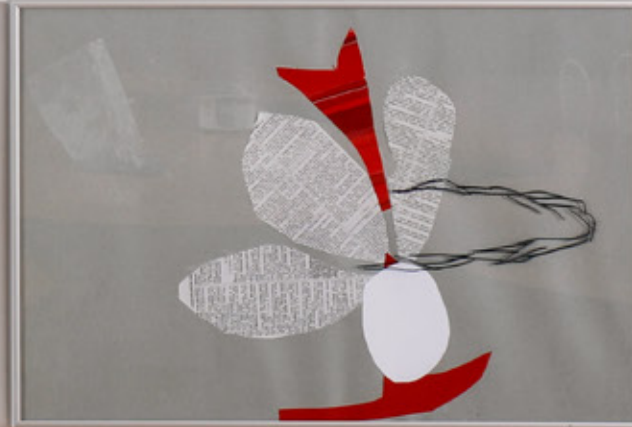
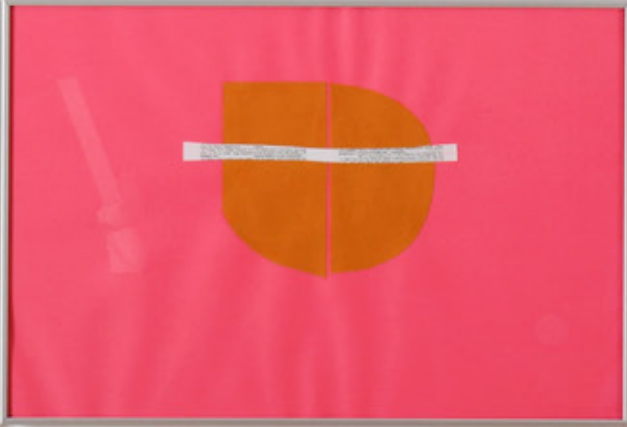
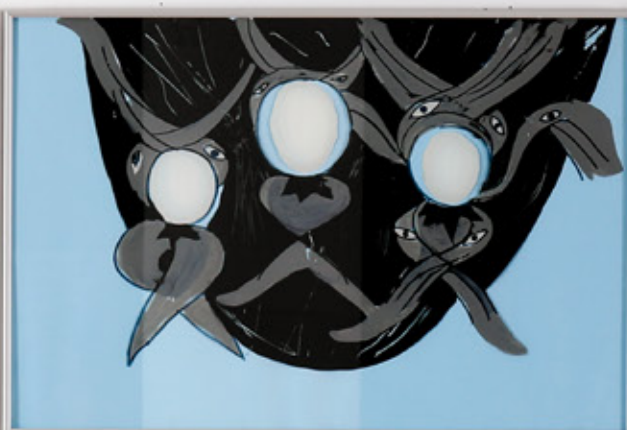
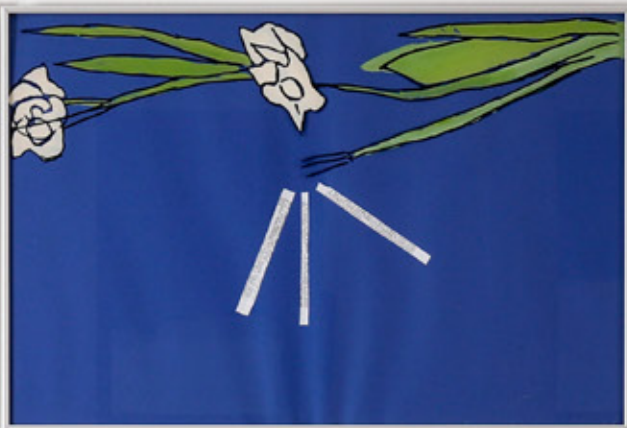
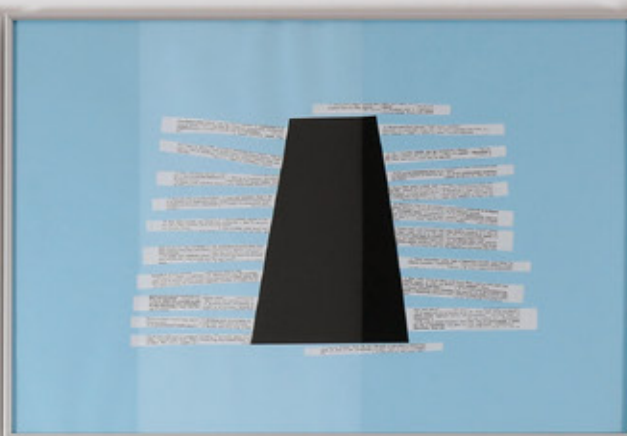
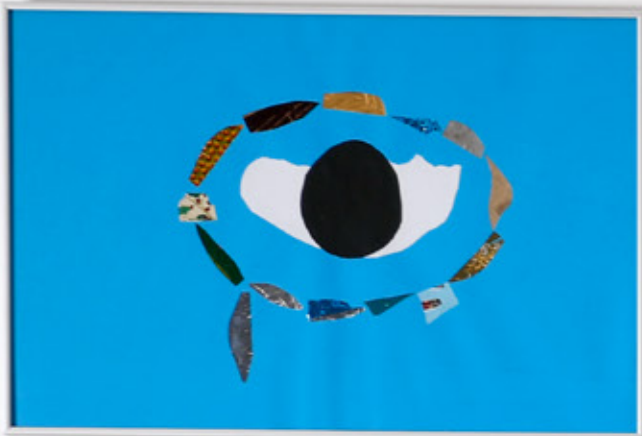
“Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews’ Preparation Day, for the tomb was nearby.” (John 19:41-42)

So the Son of Man was entombed. Along with him were buried the sheepskin coat of the shepherds from Bethlehem and a piece of the manger, some tools from the carpenter’s workshop in Nazareth, the scroll from which Jesus read in the synagogue as well as the sandals whose straps John the Baptist was unworthy to unbind. Put to rest once more were the gauze bandages which had once wrapped Lazarus’ body, and with them the pain borne by Mary and Martha. Buried were the stones which had dropped from the hands of the Pharisees, along with the shame which had settled upon the woman standing at the centre of the circle. Joseph of Arimathea’s tomb was large enough to accommodate the net left behind by the fishermen and the counter at which Levi Matthew once collected taxes. Buried along with the vessel used at the well by the Samaritan woman was all the humiliation she had to suffer. Jesus’ serviette from the Last Supper was folded and placed in the tomb along with the sweaty and bloodstained veil with which Veronica had wiped Jesus’ face. The everyday wrapping materials thus all ended up in the tomb. There was no longer any need for them in their original form, but they do bear a lasting imprint of the Saint. So whoever silently stops at the tomb can feel something of the saintliness of this everyday iconostas. Jesus rests in the tomb but these icons speak of eternal life. And when the final judgement does arrive, the Lord will know which icon to click on.

Tamás Fabiny

*“I decided on the iconostasis format because it has the form of a window.
The artist points toward us, thus the work in this
form is a corridor. Eternal life exists and this is what this
iconostasis wishes to express.”*

Lellé Szellej



Erik Mátrai

The Light of Resurrection

According to nuclear physicists, material should not be imagined as tiny particles – it is more a vibration of beautiful mathematical harmonies of energy. It can be best compared to musical melodies and to the luminance of light.

Our world came into being out of love – out of the infinite goodness of the Creator. We were begotten of this and it was from this that human life burgeoned forth. In the fullness of time, this divine life and light, this beautiful melody of life, took physical shape. Darkness regrouped its efforts to extinguish this light but failed in its struggle in the face of the inherent and invincible life of light.

The light of Christ still shines brightly. Those who listen to him, to the light radiating from him and to their own hearts, will have a radiating countenance.

Monstrance is a liturgical receptacle used when there are processions leading to the celebration of the Eucharist. Bread representing the body of Christ is placed into it. The monstrance’s decorative rays represent the power, mercy and peace radiating from the living Christ.

There is a medieval story about a wanderer approaching a town. The road to town led through an enormous stone quarry where a great number of people were toiling, sweating, their faces covered with thick dust. The wanderer asked one of them, “What are you doing?”

“Can’t you see? I’m breaking stone,” came the angry reply.

The wanderer moved on and asked another worker, “What are you doing?”

“Earning money to provide for my family,” was the second answer.

The wanderer then saw another man, one with a shining countenance, visibly enjoying his work, and asked the same question: “What are you doing?”

“Building a cathedral,” the man responded, his eyes shining.

We all live the same life: we are born, we grow up, we study, we work, we grow old and then we die. We break stone, we earn money. But there are people who progress through these phases of life in a different manner. They do this with their eyes shining; they are aware that they are building a cathedral. They know that they are part of an enormous, wonderful plan; they are participants in God’s plan of love. The poet Dezső Kosztolányi says this more eloquently:

“Truly, today as my muscles are loosening, already

I feel, my friend, that, despite stumbling along

in the dust among souls and clods of earth,

it was of a magnanimous unknown lord

that I was the guest.”¹⁴

Here on earth, we are but guests of a mighty Lord. We came from him, to him will we return. Our life is not from nothing to end at nothing. There is a reason for our life and it has a purpose. Those who are aware of this will be able to live their life more contentedly and with a radiant countenance.

Christ brought light to the world. Those who accept him will have a life full of light.

János Székely

“But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there).” (Revelation 21:22-25)

“Sinking into the snowfall,

I vanished, I vanish

in the devout viewpoint

of the young girls from the institute,

of the park, the trees,

of my first playmates,

of the young and beautiful jailbirds.”¹⁵

“And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” (Revelation 21:4)

“Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.” And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’ ” And he said to me, “These are the true sayings of God.” (Revelation 19:7, 9)

“...if there is something that I know,

then this I know, this sweltering hallway,

this perfectly straight labyrinth, in which

ever more stuffed and more stuffed

and ever-increasingly more unbound is the fact that we are flying.”¹⁶

“And he showed me a [a]pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.” (Revelation 22:1-5)

Tamás Fabiny

“It is neither mannerly nor permitted to work on religious holy days. On the Monday of Pentecost, I was polishing, deburring and burnishing the wings of the Monstrance. It was on the same day, the day marking the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, that I wanted to see my work. It all came together and, for me, the entire creative process was a religious experience, much like a well-composed prayer.”

Erik Mátrai

