

Other Signs and Omens, Some Hopeful, Some Not

My last column which would have come out around March 5th discussed some of the hopeful signs things might be picking up. I'd like to continue that theme, with hopes of staying abreast of the rapid - fire non-stop developments characterizing president Trump's first 3 months in office.

The world of the naturalist continues to be interesting. Astronomers like myself are being treated to some amazing, maybe even auspicious heavenly phenomena, thanks to the blessing of recent clear skies. On March 1st the five naked-eye visible planets all occupied the evening sky at one time.

Mercury and Saturn were in conjunction and visible just after the glare of the sun was gone, while dazzling Venus, Jupiter, and Mars hailed a delicate new moon like the clipped toenail of an angel.

Uranus and Neptune were also in the mix for people with telescopes. That kind of planetary show is rare. The last one I can remember was back in the 60's or 70's. Curious folks can look up all the nebulous details on Google Sky, which I haven't got.

A blood Moon is also scheduled for mid month. The astrologers of old would likely have gone ape over such a display. I think of the eclipses that presaged the death of Julius Caesar, as cited by Shakespeare in his play of that name: "When beggars die, there are no comets seen. The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes." And many of the faithful still revere the story of the star that guided the magi to that manger in Bethlehem at Christ's birth. A powerful hymn I recall goes, "The Heavens are telling/
The Glory of God!"

Here in Wahpeton, we're being blessed with one of the earliest springs ever. Most of the snow has already melted and the ice could be out in the Red by the Ides of March. That's a month earlier than usual.

But an ominous sign attends this early spring. In a normal year, ducks, meadowlarks, killdeers, and blackbirds should already be showing up, but my drive out on the 5th showed me nary a bird of any kind. And by now, horned larks should be everywhere along the country roads. That to me is a serious development. Is it bird flu, wild fires or end-time omen? I think often of Rachel Carson's prediction of a "silent spring, if we ignore the stewardship of the environment.

Perhaps all these developments have some connection with the state of our nation and the world. One troubling omen troubles me. I've never seen our country so politically divided. Abe Lincoln reminded us that a nation, divided against itself, cannot stand.

Last night I watched president Trump's 2nd major speech on the state of the nation, and I thought his message was so positive that both parties should have stood in celebration of the amazing initiatives in problem solving he has already launched. Especially hopeful was the fact that many of the criminal illegals are being rounded up.

Also, Trump has bright young geniuses at finance, like Musk, ferreting out the billions in government waste our grandchildren would have to pay. Republicans were jubilant at all the good news.

But on the left, the hatred of the man God saved to lead our country was almost palpable. They could find nothing, not even the honoring of child

heroes, to applaud. They bore witness to the curse Yeats warned us of: “Yet knows that to be choked with hate/ May be of all the evil chances, chief.” (See “*A Prayer for my Daughter.*”)

The words of Kipling’s poem, “If,” also fit: “And being hated, don’t give way to hating,/ And yet don’t act too smart/ Or talk too wise.” We need to pray for national healing, as we face the huge problems before us., and that we can come to “The unity of the Spirit/ In the bond of Peace.” (Eph 4:3)

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