

SIGNS AND SYMBOLS

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We had a small group at our *Bereaved Parents* group recently so we just sat and talked about anything anyone brought up. We talked about how, before our children died we might have thought some people's conversations about experiences they had a bit weird, but now we understand and have our own stories to tell.

I have thought more about that in the days since. I think there is something to be said to grieving parents, grandparents and siblings about signs and symbols. How often has a newly bereaved parent told us, "I think I'm losing my mind" or "I just can't concentrate like I used to" and how relieved they are when we tell them that they are NORMAL –we have all felt that way and experienced that. Maybe some of them – and some of you— have had "signs" too and just haven't said anything for fear someone will think we have "really gone over the edge." An old catechism I had to memorize as a child said that a miracle is an "outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace." As children we used to be taught allegories and to think deeply about things to find a meaning. There was a Santa Claus, an Easter Bunny, Angels, etc. Lucky is the child who is still taught this way!

In the June 16 issue of *TIME*, in the report about the first anniversary of the tragedy at Oklahoma City, the story of the Memorial to be built there was told and every design offered includes what they call the Survivor Tree, in this case an elm tree, that is the only thing in the lot surviving the bombing. One father, who met his daughter there at the tree for lunch, still goes there each day since her death in the bombing and remembers her and talks to those who pass by. This is his sign and continued communication with his daughter.

When we were in England recently, we went into Westminster Cathedral and looked at the memorials to kings, queens, poets, warriors, etc. We lit a candle at the bank of candles for Ruthie and, as we left, I couldn't help but have a tear in my eyes as I thought of that candle burning there in the great cathedral as a sign to Ruthie that we haven't forgotten and love her always.

The next day we took Chunnel to Paris. As we returned to London and emerged from the Chunnel, we found that it had rained in England. And there in the sky was – not a single rainbow – but a double, beautiful rainbow. In that we saw a sign from Ruthie that she remembers and loves us still too!

As our group talked we found we had things that had happen or that we had seen that we knew we couldn't mention these things to some because they wouldn't understand.

We wouldn't have before! But now we do understand and we can tell each other about these signs and what they symbolize to us.

So if you have a sign or a symbol, treasure it and don't let anyone tell you it has no meaning. It has meaning to you! And these signs and symbols are of a deep grace and peace that means much to us all. Share your Survivor Tree, your candle, your rainbow, your butterfly and don't doubt for a minute that there is a reason for the happening or sign even though you may not know exactly what it is right now.