NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Symbols of understandable eternity

Rich Heffern | Dec. 13, 2010 Eco Catholic

Why do we venerate the evergreen tree as a part of the Christmas season? I think it has to do with the fact that they persist in being green throughout the winter. They are part of the enduring things of nature, and we have known them as long as we have been on Earth.

The pine, the spruce, the hemlock, the fir ? they know no leafless season. They are symbols of life that triumphs over the coldest and darkest of seasons. They are ancient, related to the club mosses that have decorated forest floors for millions and millions of years.

?We gather them now,? writes nature writer Hal Borland, ?even as the ancients gathered them reaching for the reassurance of enduring green life at the time of the winter solstice. For the pines and their whole family were old when the first human saw them. Millions of years old, even then, even when millions of years had no meaning. When we gather them we are reaching back into the deep recesses of time. But, even as the ancients, we are reaching for reassurance, for the beauty of the living green but also for that green itself, the green of life that outlasts the gray winds, the white frosts, and the glittering snows of winter. ..

"They help us catch, if only briefly, that needed sense of hope and understandable eternity.?

Source URL (retrieved on *09/02/2015 - 17:52*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/symbols-understandable-eternity