

sister who's perspective

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Overview

The fact that we are here and able to read this newsletter at all, confirms that we have each been given life. What is less certain is the exact nature of the way we are living life from one moment to the next. Within the very essence of life itself, however, can be found the imperative of discovering all of the joy, the sadness, and the transformation it has to offer.

May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

The Call to Inclusive Peace

An absence of violence (both obvious and subtle) is perhaps a good beginning, but establishing a genuinely honest and inclusive reality of peace requires much more. I strongly suspect it is not even possible until after we have done the work of rediscovering the truth and potential of each other. Within the vast pursuit of greater numbers within various reports, it seems most have lost touch with their own inherent humanity, resulting in even greater losses within humanity as a whole.

Was there ever a time when humanity genuinely experienced wholeness and to what extent is the experience of wholeness (perhaps even holiness) separable from peace? Even if a negative response is the only honest one, is there any justification whatsoever for selecting an alternative goal?

Acknowledging that institutionalized religion does not have a particularly good historical record within any land or people, true holiness/wholeness is not something that can be accurately therein contained. I would even suggest that a holiness of Atheism is both possible and necessary, if one understands this as a reverence for the potential and fragility of life, of love, and of wisdom--none of which can be truly controlled or contained by any known human system of religion.

One might wonder, therefore, from

where a call to inclusive peace could originate, to which I would respond that the call is inherent within life itself. Whether or not one wishes to personify this, does nothing to alter the dynamics with which life must inescapably contend. Consequently, a call to inclusive peace is inherently one of humility and ongoing openness. More concisely, it is not that we are called to create peace, but rather to discover it.

As tempting as it usually is within the current competitive manifestations of so-called human civilizations to rank things hierarchically and to hold as important those which command greater power and occupy greater prominence, a longer broader glance at historical records instructs that the least may become the greatest and vice-versa. One's place within such records is never entirely of one's own choosing. In fact, devaluing one's work for no greater reason than that one lacks obvious power and prominence, may ultimately be regarded as mere silliness to be brushed aside if or when future generations are grateful for the trail that various pioneers have blazed for all who came after them. Galileo lived under house-arrest for the last twenty years of his life, but this failed to dim his light throughout following centuries of scientific development.

To discover the powers and potential of inclusive peace, we must first respect that while every individual is called to participate, the task can be completed only by all acting together. To the extent that any are ignored, overlooked, or even devalued, the work is sabotaged and weakened.

In recognizing that peace is inseparable from love and truth and that these have the ability to heal all wounds in various ways, the wholeness of any individual ultimately invites the wholeness of every community. In reaching for a peace that is not inclusive, however, one erroneously settles for a peace that is not truly peace at all.

May one and all everything, blessed and loved ever be.

The Call to Unconditional Love

There is something most perplexing in those times when one is suffering, to think of those who have previously expressed concern for one's welfare, who have both the resources and the ability to alleviate that suffering, but for various reasons choose not to do so--and to know even within that moment of suffering that to persist in loving such persons genuinely and holistically, one must also persist in loving unconditionally and not hold against them their unwillingness to act. Our fundamental calling as human beings is not merely to be a reflection of each other, reaching for a lowest common denominator, but rather to be independent portals of love and wisdom to a tragically broken world populated with tragically broken people--all of which can ultimately serve the conclusion constructively, that life is primarily concerned with the growth of the soul.

Just don't expect it to feel good at the time it's happening--to you or to anyone else.

Regardless of how it feels, however, it is imperative that one persist, because one's contribution may in fact be essential to any and all future success. The reason a call to unconditional love is even necessary, is that far too many have far too much faith in their inability to make a positive difference within the surrounding world.

All that being said, there is also the issue of timing. As Whoopi Goldberg in the role of the Grand Banshee within the movie, "The Magical Legend of the Leprechauns," instructed, "You can't stop people from doing what they really want to do"--even if what they want to do is self-sabotaging. Until the fairies and leprechauns were ready, peace between them remained impossible and loving anyone unconditionally was an act of rebellion.

As a writer, I have similarly found that there are certain things that can't be effectively written until certain struggles of life have been experienced. Within truly good writing, there is a sense of something greater being expressed, which may be the soul of the writer or it may be a tiny glimpse of transcendence, perhaps even of the Divine. This is that to which Madeleine L'Engle referred within her book, "Walking on Water: Reflections on Faith and Art," when

she said "a writer writes more than he knows."

Until one has lived certain truths, serving certain aspects of life remains beyond one's abilities. A call to unconditional love could be summarized as a plea to move beyond the state of being in any way a novice, toward the development of deep understanding and true expertise. Please expect that it will take an entire life time at least, to master the skills therewith associated.

Labeling one's self a novice without any ability to effectively serve a particular work, however, is not a legitimate excuse for doing less than one has the ability to do. The ability will not always be there, but if it is neglected, the wages which will still be paid are an abiding sense of regret and some degree of awareness of what might have been. In some cases, in looking back upon earlier times, I am forced to conclude that I was too busy being angry at the particular accompanying adversity to notice whatever opportunities the particular moment nonetheless contained. None of those opportunities have for that reason ever again been offered.

Thankfully, perhaps mercifully, new opportunities continue to arise. Remarkably, even within the most dire circumstances, love continues to find ways to enter and it is up to each one of us to welcome love in whatever ways we can.

In striving toward practices of love that are specifically unconditional, a deeper wisdom and awareness are required than is generally practiced by a world obsessed with narcissistic and/or capitalistic competition. Unconditional love wants not only for businesses to be successful, but also for the employees of those businesses to similarly experience success in all areas of their lives, because wisdom knows that a sustainable world cannot be built upon "either... or..." thinking, but rather requires the more inclusive approach of "both... and..." If a decision must be made of which to love rather than of how to love both, unconditional love is rendered impossible and the dynamics which create such dilemmas are adversarial to life itself. In loving all unconditionally, however, all are ultimately and truly blessed.

May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

The Call to Substantive Hope

I have occasionally done actions which others at the time considered unwise, but which I considered to be acts of faith or demonstrations of beliefs that were chosen, rather than merely facts which I observed.

While on one hand I have never intended to be an anomaly or to stick out in any way within social situations, my intention to always live with integrity and to embrace truth in every way I can, has apparently served as both a source of hope for individuals who felt oppressed and a justification for exclusion by those whose narcissistic agendas had goals of a contrary nature. In many cases, this could be described as being at odds with the often-duplicious world around me.

Indeed, those who wish for a more amended version of reality often describe me as too intense, because they generally prefer to sugar-coat or white-wash everything around them. If one knows the warmth of sunshine or the beauty of a night blanketed with stars, such modification is rendered completely unnecessary. Reality can potentially be more wonderful than those who avoid it comprehend.

Additionally, I find such practices (sugar-coating, white-washing, or euphemistically misrepresenting) to be dishonest and thus objectionable. In the ritual garb of Sister Who I have sometimes been accused of being a drag queen, but only by people failing to understand an important distinction: the goal of drag queens is glamour; the goal of Sister Who, conversely, is the discovery or expression of empowering meaning, often conveyed through extensive use of symbols.

Specifically because deeper meaning is among my most basic priorities and values, it is an attack upon my very soul within those thankfully rare instances that I am accused of

*"Sometimes we
are the hands of the Divine,
which are tied and immobile
if we fail to act."*

-- Sister Who

being superficial, conformist, or the embodiment of a category that ignores the unique, specific, and detailed truth of who and what I am. As much as I try to respect those who choose to live their lives in such ways, I emphatically and adamantly refuse to "play along." I am content to have a smaller circle of close friends, if such intensity is objectionable to the rest, because the hope which remains is that we will find a treasure the others overlook.

A plaque hanging on my kitchen wall proclaims, "For those who have had to fight for it, life has a meaning which the protected will never know." What is sometimes overlooked, are the protections inherent within the unique contexts within which our lives unfold. While I am not willing to consider these protections to be privileges, they are circumstances which need to be considered when engaging in any sort of empathy for others who have known contrasting circumstances.

It is for these and other reasons that I also sometimes need to withdraw from social situations that I experience as seriously lacking in depth. I find such interactions to be a peculiar game that wastes the limited number of unspeakably precious moments of life that each of us is given and I have no hesitation about declaring to anyone and everyone who needs to hear: "I'm not playing. I choose to truly live instead, for as long as I am allowed (or required) by Godde to do so."

To truly live is maintain an ongoing hope that one's life matters, that one has the ability to make a positive difference, and that hope itself is not merely an ideology but also an opportunity to act in ways that bless the lives of others, the moment the time is right to do so.

To the extent that individuals and communities instead enable existing problems, deny the reality of oppression and adversity, and ignore the creative treasure hidden within each individual, substantive hope remains disappointed and without any positive effect.

To the extent that each responds to the underlying inclusive call to substantive hope inherent within life itself, the world has the very real potential to be reborn each and every day, within each and every person's life experience.

May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

The Call to Enlivened Faith

Believing while it is easy or comfortable is no great accomplishment and nothing about which to boast. Faith requiring supportive circumstances in order to be visible at all, is more a reflection of those circumstances than of its own inherent nature. Insisting that truth is only what one wants it to be, selfishly elevates one's self to deity, but only a most pathetic example of such that ultimately has no ability to enforce even a single word that is spoken.

Faith is ultimately not concerned with any statement of belief or theology, but rather with spiritual interconnectedness, to all that is larger and more transcendent than one's self, in ways that guide and empower daily life. To live with diminished awareness of this is to avoid fully living one's own life. While on one hand I would defend someone's right to make that choice, I cannot defend it as being an intelligent--or necessary--choice.

In having a genuine faith, one can still participate within activities of institutionalized religion, but one participates as a contributor rather than as a parasite. The essential difference is that while the first puts life into a religious community, the latter takes it out.

A similar dynamic of faith can be practiced in relationship to political or social communities as well. Having genuine faith in the constructive capacities of communities of these and other descriptions invites infusions of life that are equally beneficial to the community as a whole and to its individuals inclusively.

The faith that instead ranks specific individuals and/or sub-groups hierarchically, quickly ceases to be true faith at all, but rather evolves into an oppressive burden serving no constructive purpose. Ridiculous within such situations is the degree to which participants imagine themselves to be doing less work, while slapping band-aids upon one major hemorrhage after another at a frenetic pace.

The need is for faith that is genuinely filled with the invisible but essential substance of life--not just a functioning body, but a merging of body, mind, spirit that makes all of the corresponding work absolutely worthwhile.

May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

On a Personal Note

In some ways, I am chronically a failure: struggling to survive, seeking true community, searching for a sense of family in spite of the fact that I am really more a citizen of the world than of any one particular place, never truly fitting in no matter where I go for more than fifty years so far, and striving to make the best of every situation I encounter, but ultimately conceding that happiness is stubbornly elusive.

Yes, there has been an impressive amount of progress in certain areas, but at a cost I could not recommend. I am surviving and the dogs are happy as long as they're with me, even when my emotional state is far from pleasant, but each day remains far too filled with problems to solve.

Curiously, the specific creative content of the 2017 calendar has already taken shape, allowing that a few of the photos may be taken before the end of this winter (if I can find a volunteer to act as photographer).

By request of the public access TV entity in Colorado, this year's episodes of my ongoing show will be upgraded to HD quality, which means adapting my computer software and digital camera to produce this standard.

The house continues to evolve toward becoming a communal space, but for now remains inadequately insulated and thus very cold, but livable. My car remains without winter tires, making transportation difficult, but I am devising ways to either do without or cope, trusting that something better may soon unfold.

Nonetheless, may one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

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