

Sister Who's Perspective

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Life is a collaborative effort, encompassing more than we know. In a time of abundant "information overload," news, communication, and travel across great distances, we often talk at each other without listening, communicating, or understanding. Humanity needs its icons, but also its iconoclasts to grow beyond the good and bad qualities that now limit and describe us. The essences of both God and us remain, in the midst of questions, to be discovered, experienced, and expressed. Please share in this ongoing dialogue, remembering to indicate whether and how you wish to be identified. Blessings, love, and peace to you. ---Sister Who

Seeding the Battlefields

At one time they were just fields; each year a different crop but fields nevertheless.

Then a politician's glance at a map in combination with a lack of good character, set a different sequence of events into motion. Soldiers' boots grinding seedlings back into the broken and torn soil as it merged with blood, rotting flesh, and the shadows of beautiful dreams of what might have been.

"Just following orders," the man in the uniform mumbled, without any true understanding of what he had done or was doing.

Soon there was only mud, yet the bullets, bombs, and missiles continued and a great sadness settled over the land.

Then a different person appeared in the distance, a man with a tear-stained face, weary from watching the carnage from a distant hilltop. He wore no armor or helmet and the only weapon he carried was a bag of seeds, hanging from a strap over his shoulder. Carefully he made his way across the darkened landscape, pausing here and there to scrape out a shallow hole and bury a few seeds, before moving continuing his journey across the battlefield. He seemed aware of the crossfire around him, but not so afraid that he would flee from the task at hand.

A long ways off, far in the distance, a woman crept along the darkened horizon, doing the same thing.

As seen by a bird soaring high above, there were actually many such people; different ages and descriptions, but nevertheless creeping from one place to another with their heads held low, putting seeds into the wounded earth.

Among these sowers of seed were also a few who'd been less fortunate, who'd been shot or wounded by the battle unfolding all around them, struggling to plant just one more seed before the strength of life finished leaving their bodies.

The most mysterious quality of the battle, however, were the combatants. They had neither eyes nor ears yet somehow sensed movement and directed their weapons against all that seemed the

least bit unfamiliar. Words spoken to them went unheard and they were quite unable to see the effects of their actions upon the world around them.

Two very different experiences of life unfolding upon the same planetary surface, affecting each other yet unable to communicate; each trying to reshape the landscape according to an inner perception; one perception founded upon fear, the other upon love. The resolution? I suppose when there is finally none of one or the other left, allowing the remaining persons to shape the world according to their inner vision. At this point in time, it's anyone's guess who will win.

I am reminded of the movie, "Matrix," in which human beings function as organic batteries for machines which feed the humans a continuing stream of psychological perception of life as the humans are able to accept life as being--not too terrible, not too perfect, but always somewhere in between.

It has always been my contention that everything is real within its context, especially because of those times in which a discussion with an acquaintance regarding the resolution of a particular challenge has been terminated by some form of the statement, "but it's just an illusion."

The pain we feel when things go wrong (as judged by our individual perspectives), may be confined to the particular experience of life in which we are now engaged, but it is nevertheless very real within that context.

Within the movie, "Matrix," those with greater understanding needed to enter that more limited context, thereby also embracing certain risks to their own lives, in order to communicate with those possessing more limited understanding. Only by placing their spirits within a body of specific limitations, would the limitless potential of hope, of insight, and of growth finally be within reach. Even then, however, no one could do the job for anyone else, of reaching for or responding to that hope, insight, or growth.

In a sense, it was up to each individual to save or judge themselves, by the choices each of them made.

It was up to each individual to respond to something greater than themselves and expand their understanding and life experience, or to aim their weapons in fear at all that was unfamiliar and therefore threatening.

Peace is greater than ourselves. In its truest and purest form a rare and therefore treasured experience, it is nevertheless within reach.

Hope is greater than ourselves. That which draws us forward during those moments when nothing seems to be working, it is nevertheless within reach.

Love is greater than ourselves. At the heart of every positive resolution and act of healing of which I have ever heard, it is difficult but nevertheless always within reach.

These are the seeds which filled the bags of the sowers as they crept across the battlefield, creating the possibility that the field will someday once again be returned to being a domain of flowers and fruits, rather than bullets and bombs.

These are the seeds which must be sown, if the darkness of battle is to ever end.

These are the seeds which spring from each human heart, every time it responds and opens to the transforming touch of the Divine.

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

*"Anything
which is not allowed
to change,
is thereby not allowed
to grow,
to breathe,
or to live."*

--Sister Who

Embracing the Dark

I was blessed with viewing a movie on the Sci Fi channel at a friend's home recently, "The Legend of Earthsea."

The complete story is extremely complicated, being set within a world of magic and wizardry, yet offering a wealth of insights and metaphors for the basic struggles of life which daily confront us.

I suppose one never knows exactly how to do it until the moment arrives, but the scene which most inspired and challenged me was the final confrontation between a young wizard and the embodiment of his personal darkness. The embodiment had been created by his arrogance and for the majority of the movie, ruled his life by fear, but ultimately could only be healed and reintegrated by self-love. Also integral to this was the need to know the embodiment's name, which the young wizard realized at last was his own.

Where once the embodiment of darkness had threatened to consume him by fear, he embraced the embodiment with love instead.

Since viewing this movie, I have pondered the interconnectedness of all things and find I am beginning to realize a new spin on the expression of emotions. More specifically, when I am angry with something or someone, there is a generally a way in which I am angry with some aspect of myself. The illusion which I am therefore beginning (will I ever finish?) to remove is that the other is not a part of myself. The suspicion, then, is whether I have rejected a part of myself.

As with the young wizard, I must seek out a way to embrace that which pursues me. I must be open to the possibility that what I have rejected will more guide the path of my life than the ideals to which I cling, until such time as I am able to embrace all that I am.

Perhaps a silly example, but the one which comes to mind, is that the next time I miss the nail and hit my thumb with a hammer instead, I may want to apologize to my thumb for attempting an action without adequate preparation and focus, rather than expressing anger at the simple occurrence of misfortune. Increased determination, effort, and force is not always the best way to proceed, when things don't turn out as I wish.

Just as I would show compassion to someone else whose circumstances have become unfavorable, let me also show it toward myself, practicing within the little moments, the healing patterns of love which are so vital to success within greater moments.

Annual Reflections

I caught myself this week, thinking about numerous times in the past to which I would gladly return if I could. Given an opportunity, however, I'm not sure I would, since it seems that this could only be done at the expense of all that has happened since those times.

Could I wish away personal growth and development produced by the struggles? Could I wish away the friends I've met and the adventures I've had, for the sake of returning to a moment far more beautiful in retrospect than it was at the time?

I prefer that no one remember, however, the moments of foolishness, confusion, and out-right stupidity. Good intentions or not, a foolish word spoken in haste at the wrong time is no less foolish or inappropriate.

I am reminded of the oft-told tale of two Buddhist monks approaching a shallow river where a young maiden in a beautiful dress was pondering how to cross over without ruining her clothes.

Without hesitation, one of the two monks offered and accepted the task of carrying the young woman to the other side. The other monk was more concerned that this action was a violation of their religious vows, but said nothing at the time. An hour or so later, however, he finally spoke up.

"I carried the woman for only a few minutes," the first monk responded, "but you have carried her for over an hour."

Reflecting upon this now, I find myself wondering whether at times I am a little too attached to others' occasional rejection of myself and my unconventional work.

It is entirely possible that for them, the misdeeds lasted only a few minutes and were simply honest expressions of their ways of dealing with life's challenges. I, on the other hand, have more often been burdened with remembering too much for far too long.

Yet how does one release what cannot be held within anyone's hands? How does one truly release a memory or an emotion? How does one restore balance to a relationship which will never occupy the dishes on each side of an archetypal balance scale?

With regard to emotions, I look for the circumstances from which the emotion draws its substance and strength, because circumstances are much more within my ability to change.

With regard to memories, relationships, and ideas, however, I must reach for things which my fingers cannot touch.

For troubling memories, I reach for a new perspective, a new way of understanding which allows me to recall the incident without being any longer a victim of any specific evil force. Some refer to this as not taking things personally, but jumping to the conclusion without going through the process is, more often than not, not effective. Throwing one's self into the process without any hesitation or guidance, however, is also rarely effective.

Among the ways for me to avoid "taking things personally," is to acquire a healthy respect and understanding of the challenges facing the so-called "perpetrator of the crime." Negative behavior is still negative behavior and needs to stop, but at least I will now have the strength of compassionate understanding by which to seek out a better solution. If I disregard respect and understanding of the other's challenges, I am once again skipping the process, jumping to the conclusion, and creating yet another experience of ineffectiveness.

If I am more concerned about whether the other is doing the same to me (i.e. not attempting to respect or understand), the wall between us nevertheless remains and positive resolution does not happen.

After four decades, two things which I have never observed to be helpful to any relationship are blaming and score-keeping.

Blaming is concerned with who is responsible (and therefore should "pay" for any damage), rather than finding an effective way to correct the problem and prevent its recurrence.

Score-keeping is a preoccupation with who owes whom and is generally incompatible with generosity and unconditional love. If one is concerned about whose turn it is to be mature, loving, kind, etc., one cannot be concerned with being a mature, loving, kind, etc. person. All that being said, I have in jest often remarked, "Why do I always have to be the mature one?" and I'm sure many others have made the same remark to themselves after more irritating moments of interaction with me.

In any case, the wheel of the year is turning and by tomorrow I will have turned my calendar pages as well. I can only hope that the new year will be more characterized by love and blessings than my current memories of the fading year contain and that my memories of the fading year improve with time, as I grow to understand more and more each day, the events and experiences of the past twelve months.

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

When Innocence is Bliss

I aspire to wisdom and understanding within every moment of life, but must concede that there are great many things I have accomplished over the years, only because I did not realize what the particular challenge entailed nor how poor my first attempts may have been.

I remember being absolutely thrilled the first time I wrote a song. The words seemed to flow and the melody to inspire in ways which I was certain would be equally as real to every other person with whom I shared the simple composition.

I remember being completely baffled only a few months later, when I was unable to recapture that experience, no matter how many times I replayed the melody, no matter how loudly or passionately I sang the words.

On another occasion, I began work on a clay sculpture, completely engrossed in my work because of the vision of the finished piece within my mind. A few months later, however, the vision had faded, the clay had cracked, and I was uncertain how to respond to the "reality check" of the material's actual (rather than envisioned) qualities.

I suppose one could wonder whether I would have done as much as I have, had I understood what I was doing, from the first moment I began.

This is a reason to launch our ships boldly, even recklessly, into unfamiliar waters. If the pattern of the past persists, great things presently unimaginable, will become manifested reality and mistakes made along the way can be forgiven.

We will need, however, to make it past the most discouraging challenge of the entire voyage. We will need to get past all of the ships returning to the harbor after encountering more obstacles than their crews were willing to face. We will need to be the obnoxious young upstart who ignores the advice of the educated expert, to avoid all that is painful, uncomfortable, or the presumed cause of others' failures. We will have to believe in at least the possibility of succeeding where better sailors than ourselves have failed.

I have long insisted that arrogance has never been a virtue and although I still hold this to be true, I readily concede that actions which may be considered arrogant in retrospect, have often been required for success.

It may therefore be, to use a completely different metaphor, that arrogance and humility are the two wings by which a plane can fly.

It is arrogant (is it not?), to accelerate toward the end of an airport runway with a craft weighing

several tons. If the wings do not lift the craft into the air, a horrible crash and possible loss of life will most likely occur, where the pavement ends.

It is humility which guides the careful planning of an airplane's construction; a healthy respect for the forces with which the plane must interact in order to achieve the miracle of flight.

An excessive display of either emotion by the pilot, however, dramatically increases the chances for an unsuccessful or even tragic conclusion.

Yet because there were men and women too innocent and uninformed of the dangers and too intent upon trying something new, millions of people all around the world today, have enjoyed the miracle of flight within an aircraft.

Nameless and faceless though these pioneering men and women may be within my mind, they are included within my inspiration to go on being Sister Who, regardless of having generally no precedent to follow. They and I are treading the same path, in asking how to live, how to understand, and what are the limits. What and who is God and consequently what and who am I?

They and I have chosen to continue in spite of all of those returning to the harbor, who call to us to turn back, to give up, and to resign ourselves to known patterns, forms, and maps.

All of which could make further education a bit intimidating, were it not for the freedom to draw one's own conclusions and immediately thereafter to ask new questions.

Perhaps the most important question of the innocent of whatever age, confronted by the supposed intellectual or societal authority, is simply, "Oh? Really?"

"The new year will be terrible."

"The new year will be wonderful."

"The election of ___ means ___."

"If ___ does ___ then ___."

Oh? Really? I think I'd like the freedom and the opportunity to find out for myself. If I continue looking ahead just as much as I look behind, I'll not only be mapping new territory, I'll also be creating a map of where I've been.

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

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