

sister who's perspective

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Overview

It remains among the most daunting of humanity's challenges, that virtually everything is a mixed quantity; something good within the worst of us, something bad within the best of us, and the ingenuity to transform even the most unsuitable material and circumstances into what might even be called miraculous salvation. With so much opportunity and so much at stake, "innocent bystander" has become an oxymoron.

Closed Doors

The common metaphorical expression of "kicking the door in" which refers to forcing an opportunity to do something new or even to just get something done in spite of strong resistance, has too often been an accurate description of the struggle required for me to resolve challenges that so many others have insisted should be easy. In virtually every case, they are quick to blame me for any difficulties I encounter--a practice described as "victim blaming," used all too frequently by those who are blessed with few if any such instances within their lives. As much as I oppose victim-blaming, however, I must also consider whether the methods I am employing are in any way self-sabotaging.

In most cases, I find they are not. What I more often find, is a general resistance to a person such as myself existing at all--that is, someone who must do things in a different or unconventional way for reasons that are actually quite legitimate. When I attempt to bring attention to the ineffective ways that societal systems have been orchestrated, however, I too often encounter the attitude that "the system cannot be changed so there is no point in fighting it."

The primary problem with such a claim, is that "the system" is in fact constantly in a state of evolution and change, largely as a

result of changes in the specific persons doing the administration. Where the worst examples of adversity occur, I have noticed, is where the basic humanity of those persons has been most censored and/or removed. In having less freedom to listen, to understand, and ultimately to love, the final outcome of the struggle is negatively affected.

The end result, metaphorically, are closed doors--shutting out all possibilities of future collaboration, personal and/or professional development, and individual and collective empowerment. The world thus becomes small--not because it is inherently so, but rather because such negative interactions have made it so. The corollary, of course, is that if people have made it small, then they can also make it bigger and bigger again.

All that is necessary is enough faith to be willing to try--faith in ourselves, faith in each other, and faith in that which is greater than ourselves but often wrapped in mystery. The mystery of synchronicities and things that are for whatever reason so improbable that they are considered to be impossible, is precisely where empowering resolutions can often be found--if one is willing to look.

What is perhaps even outrageous to me is that when unusual or unconventional but genuinely good answers have been found, they cannot be implemented--specifically because of the closed doors that certain administrators have created. I suggest that this is only because they have forgotten the original goals of their managerial positions and are now forsaking their humanity and "going by the book." Books can neither think nor love nor adapt to any specific context.

Ideally, opening a book is synonymous with opening a door to a new world, but if there is no humanity there, it will be hellish indeed. One could instead create a little bit of heaven, by infusing wisdom and love within every available opportunity.

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

Closed Windows

All too often, what cannot be seen, in practice, becomes synonymous with what cannot be done. Where this becomes most absurd, is when that which humanity refuses to see is interpreted as being that which the Divine is not allowed to do. The example which leaps to the front of my mind at this point, is the platypus, which, metaphorically, is analogous to every marginalized category of persons one could name--specifically because the basis of being marginalized is anchored (in every case) within the simple fact of being in some way different from prevailing societal norms.

The inherent purpose of having a window in any wall--but especially within the external walls of a house or office building--is both to let light into the room and to see what is on the other side. Those who do not wish to see, therefore, must either avoid having windows at all or else maintain curtains or coverings of some kind, which, like the windows behind them, remain ever and always closed. Going through life within an environment of diminished perception, however, limits both one's ability to truly love as well as one's ability to truly live.

Having installed windows on a significant number of occasions, I am familiar with the amount of work required to add, replace, or maintain a window within a wall--which is why it makes so little sense to me to have a window through which one refuses to even look, much less open. In terms of energy efficiency, maintenance, and a number of other pragmatic concerns, it would seem better to not have that particular window at all. If the concern is to have a fire escape route of some sort, a solid door with no window is an available alternative.

The point of this essay, however, is not simply meaningless preferences related to the existence of windows, but the ways in which they are in fact available but kept closed. The deliberate choice to maintain separation from one's self and the world on the other side of the glass, is a matter worthy of serious contemplation. As much as a window may protect one from rain and cold,

not ever having those experiences, leaves one's understanding of environmental challenges conspicuously deficient.

In terms of relating to those around us, conversations and meaningful interaction are windows capable of creating understanding and perception. In far too many cases, however, these are left closed in order to "maintain control." Life--by its very nature--has never been a phenomenon predisposed to control, but rather is such a convergence of unpredictability that it is better described as being a laboratory within which one can learn to constructively and effectively respond to diverse and ongoing challenges.

For some, experiences of religious abuse have inspired a rejection of all theological language, to the point that addressing issues of spiritual health becomes at least difficult and perhaps even impossible. The first task, therefore, is recognizing that what one has been told, is absolutely not synonymous with what actually both exists and is waiting to be discovered--metaphorically analogous to opening a window and allowing some sort of personal growth to happen. This is why I remain absolutely convinced that whatever Godde truly is, Godde is not only what any particular human religion has described.

Of more immediate concern, are those windows of opportunity between each other, which for various reasons remain closed and thus adversarial to creative collaboration. I read recently someone's observation that those who reject one's contributions, will be punished by having a deficiency of the same within their lives. The way in which this statement is incomplete, however, is in failing to recognize the inherent symbiosis of all healthy relationships.

It is not just that they do not have me, but also that both my survival and that of all who would have been in any way empowered by my contribution is to some degree or another prevented. In a very real sense, creation and creative possibilities are diminished. An inherent fact of closed windows is nonetheless that--by one means or another--they can be opened.

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

Excessive Walls

For reasons yet unknown, it seems that another category of marginalization that can at least temporarily be applied to my life, is that of being a person living with chronic pain. As one of the primary subcategories of invisible disabilities, this experience is both a wall that separates one's self from others by being a quality that mere observation rarely if ever detects, as well as an opportunity to discover collaborative and potentially even symbiotic communal possibilities. Relational walls composed primarily of ignorance due to deficient dialogue and/or communication, are a form of self-condemnation by which it is not so much Godde who judges us, but rather we who judge ourselves.

In my case, the best guess of two or three friends, is that I may be dealing with the beginnings of osteoarthritis. All I know, is that the pain in my left knee during the past month has ranged from two to six on a scale of ten, restricting movement throughout most of each day and also interfering with sleep at night. Whether it is merely an effect of aging; a result of excessive skiing, hiking, jogging, and bicycling; or something more, cannot currently be determined. The reason for that is an unresolved bureaucratic snarl involving Medicare, Las Animas County Human Services, and the Social Security Administration, that obscures which--if any--medical resources are available to me (and additionally abruptly but hopefully temporarily reduced my disability income by about 30%).

So through no fault of my own, poverty has once again beaten a path to my door (so to speak) and erected yet another societal wall to again test my resolve to remain proactive and positive in the face of

*"As long as there is money,
greed and forms of slavery
will not be far behind;
salvation lies within a return
to interacting with love."*

-- Sister Who

adversity. A commitment to truth compels me to be up-front with others about my circumstances--which is why I sometimes lament that I embody more reality than some people are able to handle--yet a commitment to remaining life-affirming rather than prone to discouragement and despair insists that I persevere and reject any and all temptation to resign myself to such adversity. Yes, the pain is real and significant, but whenever anything more important than the pain is present, you can be sure I will be pushing myself to still get the job done in whatever ways I am able.

No matter how impenetrable any wall may seem, those who believe in life must be engaged within every moment, in somehow negating the reality, effects, or implications of that wall, in whatever ways they are able. If all I can do is chisel away at the mortar, I will eventually create a hole which can then be continuously enlarged. If even that is beyond my ability, the reality and the implications of the wall can still be negated through the creative mediums of writing, imagining/visualizing, or singing--thus empowering the spirit to remain free.

What the architects of any such wall fail to realize, are the myriad of ways they make themselves weaker and less intelligent by excluding creative and innovative individuals from the ongoing developmental dynamics of human society. As much as they think they imprison those with the courage to question and silence those who call for justice--neither of which is ever as successful as it claims to be--in truth they only ensure their own eventual defeat. Identified by their own actions as oppressors and despots who construct unnecessary and extraneous walls, the most significant wall they build is an invisible one between themselves and love.

The abuse of power is epidemic within the current world and while those who are comfortable wait for the appearance of an easy solution, countless people continue to suffer. This is the manifestation of hypocrisy that threatens life itself--unless or until the walls come down, which in fact they can.

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

Familial Spaces

From a pragmatic perspective, the first family that ever existed was equally the first tribe that ever existed and perhaps even the first nation that ever existed as well. The essential differences are only in the scale and corresponding implications. Capitalism without any infusion of human kindness, love, and wisdom to temper its brutishness, was every bit as evil within its tiny beginnings as it is within current corporate examples that have magnified these dynamics to an extent that they can no longer be ignored.

If anything, current corporate excesses create an even greater imperative that all beings everywhere remember that they are essentially one vast interconnected family and must begin to take care of each other in the myriad of ways that should have been employed all along. The earth itself is in the final analysis, one interconnected and fully interdependent space that, taken as a whole, is a closed system. Nothing is truly created or destroyed, but simply changes form and place--over and over and over again.

Those who were the children become the next generation's parents. Those who were the parents (ideally) become the keepers of the wisdom of the ancestors, by which the younger generations build further and further without having to re-invent what has already been accomplished, being able to thereby modify and extend the capacities of the past toward unimagined new applications. None of this is inherently competitive, but in every case has the ability to be collaborative.

What makes a space familial is the reality of intergenerational collaboration. The first and worst enemy, is narcissism; the selfish notion that one's own needs and wants are all that matter. Without youth, growth falters; without the elders, wisdom is lost--both are absolutely essential to life.

So as I conclude this month's newsletter, my earnest prayer is that doors and windows will be opened and walls will be torn down, so that the best of what each and all of us together can be, will finally be shared.

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

On a Personal Note

It has been a most difficult, roller-coaster sort of month--being slammed by challenges and daunting reasons for despair at the same time that significant steps of progress have easily appeared as if they were always meant to be, but so no need to announce their arrival ahead of time. The blessings have thus been wonderful, but many needs nonetheless remain unmet. Perhaps it is a truer measure of one's ability to survive, to determine with what one can live without.

A major event about to unfold will be my participation in the 40th anniversary events of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence in San Francisco, to which I will travel next week. I have occasionally been called "a rogue nun" because my development during the past thirty years has been significantly different, as are also the particular methods I employ, but I am at least an unexpected spin-off of that organization's history. Sometimes they claim me, but official recognition remains conspicuously absent.

Be that as it may, my unique, creative, and ministerial work continues to expand, touching lives within at least five of the world's seven continents, thanks to the wonders of modern technology. Production of new television episodes and other video projects is also moving toward manifestation.

How far will it all go? Godde only knows, but we can decide the size of our investment.

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