

sister who's perspective

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Overview

It is easy to be distracted by experiences and appearances, but also disastrous to neglect one's principles while so engaged. If principles are neglected and wander away, integrity seems to always follow--as if the two were part of the same internal strength.

My hope within this month's essays, is to remind how very important both integrity and principles are, to all that individually and collectively we will ultimately become.

Persistent Truth

Even--or perhaps especially--within the worst of times, positive possibilities remain absolutely real. In a similar way, equally essential to remember, is that neither wishful thinking nor psychological denial of anything contrary nor even dedicated and strenuous effort have the ability to guarantee a desired manifestation. Rewards that are genuinely fair and just, do not always follow sincere and sustained effort--and Godde doesn't always "make up the difference."

If Godde did, then we might not realize how essential our own contributions to the lives of others are. Just to be clear, I am not recommending cynical or skeptical attitudes in spiritual matters. What I am attempting to convey is a strong reminder of remaining grounded and centered while increasing one's maturity in thought, word, and deed.

As much as I would occasionally prefer some more pleasant alternative, I am reminded almost daily that the unfolding of life is primarily concerned with the growth of the soul. It is not what one has, can do, or is able to imagine which ultimately measures the success or failure of a life, but rather what one learns. What one accomplishes may indeed be very important, but it is not as important as what one ultimately becomes or what one helps others to become.

What one does is applicable, in most cases, to a single context within time and space. What one becomes, conversely, is applicable to every context one will ever encounter throughout one's life--perhaps even beyond that of the physical form one currently inhabits. As much as I know where I feel most at home, for example, I know that I would do whatever I could to show kindness to others and make my environment more beautiful, no matter where I ever go.

The truth of "what difference does it make," is merely the identities of those who will benefit from my contributions. Those who refuse to integrate and include me, will not. Those who weave my contributions into everyone else's and adapt in whatever ways are necessary the kindness and beauty which I have given, move humanity ahead within its overall evolutionary development.

The reverse is obviously also true. To the extent that I do the necessary work of integrating others' contributions into my life, I nurture development and genuine growth within myself, thereby also equipping myself for ever-greater ministry and perhaps even for helping to heal humanity's many wounds.

As persistent as the truth of brokenness and oppression is, it is matched in every way by possibilities of healing and restoration. If humanity has overlooked those constructive alternatives, doing so has done nothing to reduce their availability. They eagerly await rediscovery and new implementation.

It is specifically because humans never see all that there is to see, that endless are the possibilities of further discovery, of yet another sunrise, and of the future becoming all that the past was (for whatever reasons) unable to be. As the author Barbara Sher once commented, "Maybe we all think we're special--and maybe we all are." I suspect, however, that only a few actually know it.

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

Fading Lies

I long ago lost count of the number of times I've been told, "It's just the way things are," and "You can't change the world." Yet the surrounding world has always been in a state of constant change, due to choices and decisions of administrators, policy-makers, and people acting upon hungers, beliefs, and goal-oriented pursuits. It's as if, in spite of being the only constant within the universe and being recognized as such by Heraclitus thousands of years ago, change has been the victim of an infinite number of lies, while humanity has paid a high price for looking the other way and neglecting every invitation to constructively and intelligently respond.

Within this current age that is more or less dominated by the Internet and thus also by the availability of more information than any human mind could absorb, change has become infinitely more difficult to resist. Like a hermit crab that has outgrown its shell, the need to locate and inhabit larger forms is rapidly becoming undeniable. Science, art, theology, government, economics, medical practice--all are finding previous answers inadequate for present and anticipated future challenges to established systems.

The notion that any one of these has the ability to solve all of one's problems, can now be regarded as whimsical at least and even delusional at most. As inter-dependent and intricate as every human body is, it offers a constantly present metaphor of just how much every individual piece and process is to be respected, valued, and integrated, along with the systems and dynamics that maintain those symbiotic relationships. Truly living as if "everyone matters" is becoming imperative, while living as if people are dispensable and easily replaced is being exposed more and more each day as a lie.

In a similar way, the value of complete inclusivity is becoming painfully obvious as well. Failing to do so is making conspicuous absences so obnoxiously obvious that any example of snobbery or exclusivity is quickly becoming synonymous with stupidity. What is gained by being inclusive, is individual and collective empowerment that is so essential

that survival becomes doubtful without it.

Past generations have ignored issues of mental, emotional, and spiritual health to such an extreme that the challenges now seem monolithic and unsolvable. They are not, but it will require humanity to work collaboratively, far beyond the dimensions of any past example of doing so. Even the hypothesis that an infinite amount of time is available, is being exposed more and more each day, as a complete lie.

Humanity is a species limited and defined by time and as such must discern and act upon the difference between moments allowed to languish in selfishness and those that instead become investments in more beautiful, effective, and empowering ways of being. As I have often previously said, "When money becomes the measure, community always suffers." We are running out of time to take notice of this and none of the available profit and loss statements will be able to protect us from the loveless world this unhealthy obsession is creating.

I was asked as a pastoral minister one evening within the past two weeks, whether hell is real. I think my answer was helpful to the one who asked. Yet as I have pondered this question since that moment, a more concise answer has come to mind: if it's not, certain persons are aggressively creating it.

What that person needed--what we all need--are not manipulative lies, but rather reasons to hope that life can be better than what we have known. For twenty-eight years of serving the world as Sister Who, I have insisted that all good things are absolutely possible--but only if we will all do the work that is necessary to make them real.

Stains do not fade on their own; they must be removed by cleansing agents. Each and every person is potentially that sort of cleansing or healing influence upon their surrounding environment--either ignoring the stain and allowing its deterioration to persist or saying "Enough! It is time for this lie to go!" The empowering truth which remains where the shadow once stood, will be a new beginning upon which to build.

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

Surrendered Regret

It was a frustration I noticed many years ago, that every life is given more opportunity to do good than to which it will ever have the resources, strength, or ability to embrace. A corresponding and directly related obstacle to further good works, is regret related to past failures to act or the perception of failure to succeed. The problem with the latter, however, is that one can never be certain.

Perhaps the easiest example of that within recent decades, was demonstrated within the movie, "Mr. Holland's Opus." For anyone unfamiliar with the movie, a music teacher who wanted to be rich and famous as a performer was tempted to consider himself a failure until he was brought face to face with a large number of the lives upon which he had unwittingly had a profound and positive effect. Most of us, however, never know how much good we have done, just by being kind and loving to someone in need.

To embrace that victory, however, it was necessary for Mr. Holland to surrender his regret about what his past had not been and embrace the moment his present experience of life was offering. As much as grief is a normal and healthy emotion within the broad spectrum of one's life experiences, there is no emotion--even happiness--in which it is wise to stagnate or become stuck. To do so would be to disallow all other emotions.

Within the moment of surrendered regret, however, is the awareness of just how broad the emotional experience of a life can be. A life of limited possibilities, conversely, is a life of limited potential as well. The greatest accomplishments always require significant personal investment.

For some, that task is made more difficult because the investments are made in ways that are invisible to others, who respond by trivializing the effort one has made. In the

"There is no greater disability than an uneducated mind that is also closed."

-- Sister Who

case of autism, this inspires a paraphrase of the Cherokee Indian witticism, "Don't judge a man until you have walked a mile in his shoes." For myself and others, it might be paraphrased as, "Don't judge an autistic until you've tried to survive for even five minutes, using that person's differently wired brain."

For virtually any person with a disability, it might be tempting to think such persons are given so many advantages--special parking places, discounts, assistance, and so forth--until one considers with any thoroughness what the ongoing experience of living with that disability is. On a similar note, although not a disability, an intelligent and considerate but nonetheless uninformed neighbor years ago asked what made my relationship with my now-former lifepartner different from her relationship with her husband. I responded by describing a typical weekday morning of waking, preparing for the day, having breakfast together, and giving me a good-bye kiss at the door, but added, "and the last thing he does is to take his wedding ring off before leaving for his office in the city."

She was clearly shocked, having not considered the employment-related negative consequences that were absolutely legal at that time. What she and I and everyone who has failed to understand how to love with knowledge rather than ignorance needed to do, however, was to forgive, to surrender regret, and to embrace a new and better start. For better or for worse, the human life experience within time goes only forward and past failure should never be the reason that wiser future attempts are not made.

One cannot go forward, however, if one is anchored to a past heaviness. To be healthy emotion, grief must be not only expressed but followed by forgiveness, realignment, and constructive movement. Hopefully I do not need to specifically list the myriad of ways in which this process is absolutely essential to current human events on both personal and global levels.

An overlooked aspect of surrendered regret, however, is the subtle surge of new energy for life's next phase of growth.

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

Retained Innocence

I suppose I have more than enough reasons to have long ago lost anything even remotely resembling innocence. Perhaps it is my autism, therefore, that allows me to still believe in the possibility of trustworthy and good people--which I also aspire to be. As has been paraphrased in a myriad of ways, "It's a hard job, but somebody has to do it."

In that sense, innocence that is retained is more often than not, intentionally retained rather than being the logical result of any particular set of circumstances and events. I would hasten to add, however, that doing so imparts a depth and strength that may be difficult if not impossible to describe. I do not believe I retained any innocence because it made sense to do so, but rather because I understood how important it was, just when circumstances recommended against it.

The advantage of having done so, is that I can often embrace new challenges with less mental and emotional baggage. The disadvantage in my particular case, however, is that the negative experiences in spite of which my innocence has (I think) survived, have left me with fewer resources with which to address present and future challenges. I have come to the tentative conclusion, however, that the alternative outcome which will be produced partly in spite of and partly because of deficient resources, is not necessarily a bad outcome--if love, peace, joy, generosity of spirit, and kindness have still been stubbornly infused into each day.

All of which inspires me to wonder what the surrounding world would be like, if people were to cling to innocence and the ability to love in the way that the National Rifle Association clings to its guns: "I'll give you my gun when you pry it from my cold, dead hands." It is not the having or not having of guns to which I refer here, however, but rather the obvious passion and commitment inherent within such words. I think too many have forgotten, how tied to passion one's innocence actually is and how, from time to time, it may require equally fervent defense.

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

On a Personal Note

The past month has been a bit of a roller-coaster, but unfortunately the ride has not yet come to a stop (important information is still pending). Additionally, an invitation for collaboration was unsuccessful because the decision of whether or not to do it at all, kept switching between [someone else's] "yes" and "no." So I am trying to focus upon upcoming video production in a couple more weeks, five more modern "morality plays" to write, my autobiographical book manuscript, and ongoing efforts to promote The Tarot of Sister Who.

Housing remains a problem, because the current residence doesn't feel like home and doesn't fully meet my needs. I'm striving to prevent that from having any negative effect upon this ministerial work, however, and to persevere in believing that in some unknown way there are better days ahead--for all of us. The most wonderful thing about the future may be that it is never inherently limited by the precedents of the past; literally anything is possible.

Perhaps the best possibility this month was interviewing for a teaching position at a graduate-level institution, but it will all be for naught if I am not the one they pick--and, thus far, they have not even been willing to disclose how soon they will decide.

Nonetheless, I remain your dedicated ministerial servant, doing all the good I can.

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