

Sister Who's Perspective

Sister Who's Perspective, Issue #113 November 2008, copyright

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

Overview

We are surrounded by symbols and interpretative possibilities every day of our lives, frequently within such typical and mundane forms that they are completely overlooked. It is not enough to want to see great things, if one has overlooked greatness hidden within lesser things, ordinary things, and unpretentious silence.

We may dance and shout, cheer and strive, and analyze and carefully measure, but still miss the miracles required for a single ant to crawl across the curved surface of a stone in the garden.

Drawing from the insight of the biblical text of Luke 16:10, "He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much."

Let us therefore strive today to be faithful with little things, never knowing whether in fact we may be touching the tip of an iceberg or better yet launching a holy ripple across the surface of the lake of human experience.

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

Hats

There are times when I look at others and all I can see are their hats. Nothing is apparent of who they really are, what they value, or how they behave when they think that no one is watching.

In some cases, this is helpful; for example, when I am on a tight schedule and I need a person offering a particular service to be professional, efficient, focused, and concise.

In other cases, this is aggravating; for example, when I want to know the real person or the values, perceptions, and way of seeing that is unique to that individual.

At times, it is best to wear no hat at all; to understand for at least a moment (if I can) what it is to just be myself, rather than being defined by a single piece of clothing resting on top of my head.

There are times when I am expected to wear a hat which identifies some aspect of my role, opinions, or potential contribution; perhaps a hat which communicates some sort of administrative

rank or responsibility.

There are other times when I'm expected to wear more than one hat at the same time. Unfortunately, those around me or to whom I must answer for the quality of my work, rarely (if ever) agree upon the order in which the hats should be stacked on top of my head. Each such person imagines himself or herself to be at the head of the line, even assuming that there was in fact no line at all when he or she first presented the particular request.

Conversely, there are times when I observe someone wearing too many hats because he or she either can't or won't share them with anyone else. Within the corporate world, one might describe this as an inability to delegate. The unfortunate consequence of such a strategy is that no effective collaboration or community can be formed, since collaboration and community require a sharing of resources, opinions, respect, and opportunity.

What makes this whole hat thing even more confusing, however, are all of the social rules about when I am expected to either wear a particular hat (i.e. within a graduation ceremony) to take my hat off and carry it in my hands merely tip my hat momentarily as a sign of respect toward a particular person. Once I have finally decided which hat to wear, however, I must then cope with a society which all too often dictates the times and circumstances in which particular hats are to be worn with complete ignorance of *why* any particular hat should be worn.

My conclusion, after watching the arguing and dissension for a while, was to make my own hat and to wear it whenever and however I thought best. I do not do this with an attitude of rebellion, however, but rather with a sense of remaining appropriately committed to my own integrity.

Thus it is when I am asked to wear someone else's hat, that I must decline and suggest that together we search instead for the person to whom the particular hat truly belongs.

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

Blindfolds

I've always found it a bit difficult to tie a blindfold around my head in a way that doesn't allow the blindfold to slip upwards or downwards each time I change the position or posture of my neck. In some cases, this results in being able to see a tiny part of what's around me by looking downwards along the sides of my nose. One possible remedy for this would be to tie the cloth in a triangular shape, allowing the point to hang further down, but this creates the possibility that the material may be so thin that I am able to see between the threads (because of how close to the eyes the material is).

When all is said and done, completely obscuring my inherent abilities to perceive the world around me is rather difficult to do--which I suppose makes me wonder why anyone would even try to do so.

I'm sure we all know people who seem hell-bent on ignoring a long list of things. The reasons often given are that the task is too difficult or too unpleasant, too unfamiliar or prone to failure, or more properly someone else's concern or responsibility. In some cases, the lengths to which some will go to avoid awareness are more than absurd. What seems even more absurd still, is that such individuals will object most severely to any suggestion that their strategy itself is in any way foolish.

Whether or not a particular strategy is foolish is an individual decision. One reason that avoiding awareness is foolish, is that decisions must be made with less information. With less information and understanding as would otherwise be available, we cripple ourselves and thereby give aid to our adversaries. We encourage more mistakes to happen. Phrased differently, if I'm going to lose, I don't want it truthfully said that it was my own fault. If I have empowered my adversary or my failure, then I have become my own enemy. As put forth by the cartoonist, Walt Kelly, "We have met the enemy and it is us."

In a perhaps more contemplative approach, the wearing of a blindfold leaves only the option of looking inward instead of outward. Concurrent with this looking inward is an exploration of darkness--both literal and metaphorical. We must be willing to explore the unknown within ourselves, which is something many seem to find more terrifying than mortal danger.

This fear is irrational, however, because

confronting such fear directly and honestly consistently leads to empowerment--that is, if one is willing to respond constructively and proactively to whatever is discovered.

Similarly, removing a blindfold may at first be accompanied by a moment of allowing one's eyes to adjust to the brighter light and the sudden lack of constrictive pressure, but the expansion of dimensions, components, and possibilities is so great that it could even be called miraculous.

Why do we not see the literal removal of a blindfold as being miraculous? Because we understand it to be a very simple physical movement. Removing the metaphorical blindfolds within our minds, hearts, and societal patterns, however, is a much more formidable challenge--specifically because we cannot so easily locate with our fingers the knot behind our head or find a way to slip the blindfold either upwards or downwards so that its constrictive pressure no longer blinds our perception.

Additionally, while blindfolded, one can shift one's attention from inner exploration to other senses. Instead of responding to the blindfold's request to look inward, we focus all attention on hearing, smelling, tasting, or touching. As helpful as these senses are, they cannot duplicate what only the eyes can do. They may provide perceptions that allow us a high level of functioning, but they still cannot completely replace the eyes (any more than the eyes could completely replace the ears or any other part of the body, but that's a discussion for another time).

Adapting to limitations is generally a very good thing because it is unlikely at best that humanity will ever escape all of its limitations. Indeed it is these which tell us where more growth and exploration are needed--perhaps even where more love and wisdom are needed.

If, however, a particular limitation is not genuine, if it is artificially imposed and its removal therefore the wisest action, this particular limitation is lying to us about ourselves and about the world in which we live. This can only lead to varying degrees of misfortune or perhaps even disaster.

Whatever courage is required for the removal of a blindfold, it is a triumph of life to embrace that courage and to move forward within our lives and relationships in the fullness of who we are, what we can do, what we can perceive, and what we can learn along the way.

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

Spectacles

When I was in about third grade, it was determined that I needed to begin wearing glasses all of the time, because I was unable to see things in the distance as clearly as the world around me expected. After high school, I was introduced to contact lenses and after so many years of not being able to function without glasses, I felt liberated. Many years later still, I was blessed with the lasik procedure by which even the contact lenses became unnecessary.

In addition to variations in lenses during these years, however, there were also enormous variations in eyeglass frames, even including a particular pair (which I still have in a drawer) that led to the legal change of my first name to "Denver" (which actually comes from Old English and refers to a bridge or a crossing over a river).

The frames of my glasses may have changed others' perception of me, but they were usually too close to my eyes to significantly change my perception of the world around me. When one speaks of a frame around a picture, therefore, the picture (in this case) which is framed by eyeglasses is not the picture of the world, but rather the picture of each of my eyes.

If, in the words of Thomas Phaer, "the eyes are the windows of the soul," then the selection of eyeglass frames also has metaphorical possibilities for asking what sort of frame we would each put around our souls, were we to make our souls visible to the worlds in which we daily live. Would I select something plain, something ornate, something trendy, or something classic? Would I select metal, nylon, or plastic for the frame material? Would I select larger or smaller frames to alter others' perceptions of the dimensions and

*"In being a window
of the soul,
the eye is metaphysical
and multi-dimensional
and far more
than the mere sum
of its parts."*

-- Sister Who

contours of my face? Will I present myself as I really am or within an embellished light, because I too easily find fault with myself?

A curious detail of that, is that virtually everyone whom I've met, does not honestly see themselves as being beautiful. Somehow the invisible spectacles which they wear, magnify their faults within their own fields of vision and minimize their more attractive qualities--which is often exactly the opposite of others' perception of them (meaning that others more often first notice their attractive qualities and are more inclined to overlook their faults).

Using the metaphor of contact lenses or lasik, could our souls in fact be frameless or is some sort of frame inescapable within this world of hereditary and environmental influences? Is the world in which we live a world in which some sort of eyeglasses are required for everyone? What if it isn't ourselves or our perceptions which are faulty, but the world itself which is unbalanced and out of focus? If this is true, then even the most perfect vision would still need some sort of eyeglasses in order to function within the peculiarities of our world.

Yet it is not the frame that controls how we see, but rather the lense--which can be changed from time to time, as deemed necessary. This ability to change can be abused, however, if instead of honest perception we select a particular tint which serves to obscure what is objectionable. The characteristics of the thing perceived do not change, however, so all this really accomplishes is a means of lying to ourselves.

Yet it is not the lense which determines our interpretation and understanding, but rather a long list of aspects of experience, language, and subculture. Together, these answer such questions as "what is the *right* shade of pink?" or "Is this a serious emergency, an oppressive challenge, or a blessing in disguise?"

When all is said and done, we can really only report on what we see; we cannot legitimately state its ultimate truth (if in fact it has ultimate truth to offer). The truth we perceive, however, may be enough to empower us within our current circumstances. The more accurately and honestly we perceive and frame ourselves, the more we can be true community to each other, sharing in both challenges and blessings, clothing ourselves in wisdom and love.

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

Towels

I have small hand towels in my kitchen, large bath towels in my bathroom, and a beach towel in the linen closet. Within various rituals, I have seen smaller linen towels used for particular rituals of cleansing.

The curious thing about a towel is that its primary task is repetitive and narrowly defined and that it places no judgement upon whom it touches or how it serves, whether drying a human body or mopping up a spill on the floor. In every case, its primary task is simply to absorb moisture from one place, to release the moisture by evaporation, and then to repeat the process all over, again and again until it finally wears out.

All that being said, there are numerous other secondary tasks which towels also serve--acting as packing material during household moves, being a buffer between hot and cold surfaces, retaining warmth and discouraging drafts, or serving as holiday decoration (if appropriately embroidered).

As any or all of these are occurring, the towel cannot be concerned with its own longevity. In order to do its job, it must perform tasks which will inevitably cause it to eventually wear out. In order to do its job, the towel must maintain the strictest integrity, always being exactly what it is and nothing else, while adapting to the conditions of the task at hand.

Sometimes the moisture to be absorbed and released is very hot. At other times it is very cold. In some instances, it may even have some sort of coloring in it, which could permanently stain the towel and thereby alter its specific use within the household. Within all of these circumstances and events, if the towel does its job, it is successful; it is triumphant and in this is the remotest possibility of joy.

To speak of a towel as joyful seems perhaps a bit ridiculous, because we are generally not in the habit of assigning such transcendent emotions to mundane things.

If one understands, however, that joy is synonymous with the triumph of life over its adversaries, then joy it most certainly is.

Beyond and also deeper than smiles and laughter, lies joy--the triumph of life over its adversaries; hidden within small things and perhaps even hidden within ourselves.

May awareness of joy within even the most mundane forms be yours in abundance today.

On a Personal Note

The 2009 calendars are now available by request. As much as possible, they are free of cost as a form of advertising, but please be aware that two first-class postage stamps are required for shipping within the United States. If you would like a calendar, please let me know and I will do my best to send one to you promptly. If you are also able to make at least a small donation to cover postage costs, that is very appreciated.

I persist with my graduate studies, but the past few months have included an inordinate amount of bureaucracy, which temporarily seriously interfered with the flow of governmental financial aid money. This complicated matter may at last be resolved; let's hope so.

With regard to my vehicle, it remains in need of repair and I remain mostly without transportation (which has seriously negatively impacted my ability to create income for basic expenses such as phone and mortgage payments). Please pray for the mechanic most concerned, since he is experiencing an inordinate amount of misfortune at the present time also.

Regarding my house, I have done all I can do, but over half of the task of placing adequate insulation within walls and ceiling remains to be done (not to mention a livingroom window which still needs to be replaced with glass block). The miracle of grace is that in spite of problems and inadequacies, a powerful sense of home is here, which friends and visitors have noticed.

As the year begins to wind down and the USA enters the holiday season beginning with a focus upon thanks, I cannot say that this has generally been a good year, but I can say that I am glad to have lived through it, to have abundant potential for positive development within the immediate future, and to have mostly succeeded in transforming potential tragedies into at least mixed blessings each step along the way with significant help from certain friends--thank you!

May God's blessings, love, and peace be with you now and always, *Sister Who*

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Sister Who, PO Box 593, Westminster, CO 80036

Email: dn@sisterwho.com

Internet website: <http://www.sisterwho.com>