

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

Overview

As much as equality is a worthy ideal and goal, it is clearly not a naturally occurring phenomenon within the natural world. Virtually nothing is evenly distributed throughout the world or within its individuals. There is always those who are more wealthy, intelligent, gifted, talented, beautiful, capable, or successful than ourselves, as well as those who are less so. Among the inescapable forms of tension within which we all live, is the awareness of being somewhere within a much larger spectrum of possibilities and recognizing that every place within the spectrum has both wonderful opportunities and solemn responsibilities to which we must respond, if life is ever to even begin to be all of the miraculous things that it can in fact be.

I invite you to take a moment to consider the powerful potential and respectful humility which may guide you today to better ways of living.

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

Economic Distribution

It is frequently aggravating to me that the most pressing and oppressive problems I see all around me are produced by inequitable economic distribution, but that this is also one of those general topics that is almost never discussed unless all personal or immediate particulars can be avoided. Within various academic and religious institutions, discussion of social justice issues and combatting poverty are common--as long as the examples being discussed are somewhere else rather than sitting next to us in a classroom or church pew.

If the haves and the have-nots cannot even talk to each other, how will we ever work together enough to resolve common challenges? A simple redistribution of wealth would not solve the problem, because with the possession of wealth--ideally--must also be the wisdom to manage it efficiently and effectively. Conversely, however, is the need for society as a whole to provide opportunities and means by which the financial resources which are

possessed or bestowed are able to actually be enough.

Before any constructive dialogue can happen, however, we must be willing to openly and honestly own whatever place we currently occupy within the spectrum of economic wealth and we must also be committed to not judging one another for the whatever difficult decisions are made. We live within the tension of not being able to resolve everything, of having to choose to which persons or parts of our world we will make contributions, and of deciding in what ways we will make those contributions.

No economic or physical need will tolerate being unmet forever. Either we will find peaceful ways to see that needs get met or more violent ways will find us. Similarly, because of increasing international communication, travel, and commerce, global community is going to happen. Either we will find peaceful ways for it to happen or more violent ways will find us.

Advice on financial distribution and management, handed down from previous generations, is abundantly available. Some of it still works, but some of it does not. Our world has changed in many ways, even within just the past two decades. Some of these ways are obvious and some are very subtle, but all of these changes demand a response from each of us and therefore collectively from all of us.

We are all interconnected and interdependent. Nothing will change that. Ultimately, no one truly wins until we all win and no one truly prospers until we all prosper. Within each moment we have the opportunity to affirm and practice the healing power of mutual respect and support or the fracturing and wounding of pathological narcissism--a selfishness that chooses to be blind to the ways in which the continuance of individual lives is completely dependent upon the continuance of millions of other lives all around us.

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Intellectual Distribution

It is impossible to say that not everyone is as smart as everyone else, without first assuming a particular area of intelligence as being somehow more important than all others. Importance of any specific quality, however, depends completely upon context. While in graduate school, certain skills and knowledge were essential to academic success. While hiking in the mountains of southern Colorado, however, much different skills and knowledge are essential. Similarly, there are societal contexts which are individually unique, in which the skills of engineer, beautician, actor, attorney, minister, artist, singer, musician, teacher, writer, gardener, chef, carpenter, machinist, and accountant become most important to the action needing to be accomplished. It is reasonable to believe, therefore, that everyone has some area in which he or she would excel if given the opportunity and therefore a specific way in which each individual is somehow essential to the local or global health of the humanity.

So how do we get people to those places and situations in which they will individually be able to make their greatest contribution? How do we get past the superficial and myopic competition that labels people as being winners or losers instead of discerning in which professional or vocational direction each could positively move?

We may have to begin by reintroducing ourselves to those around us, since perhaps most human interactions have moved away from honesty and toward pretending to be whatever the other seems to want. We must begin with the truth of who we are, exploring what can be changed and what cannot and also allowing others to come to different conclusions, since the very ability or inability to change may rest upon deeper components of ourselves than of which we are currently aware.

An added challenge of intellectual distribution which must be considered, however, is the great fluctuation of this distribution within Time. My mental abilities do in fact fluctuate considerably in response to weariness, hunger, education, training, experience, and cognitive focus. I am not always--in actual practice--as intelligent or charming as I may appear within specific moments and situations and I am fairly certain that this could be said of every other human being as well. It would be a great blessing indeed, if every time my intellectual abilities were faltering, God provided

someone to me who could compensate for my short-comings. Hopefully there would be other times when I could similarly be a blessing to others.

Years ago, I coined the phrase which is very much relevant now that "Life is a collaborative effort: we all take turns being the one in need." At times when my intellectual abilities are low, when (metaphorically speaking) the tide has gone out, I need to be receptive to someone else's waves washing over my beach. Similarly, when great blessing comes, it may very well be that God has not provided this abundance so I can spend it frivolously and wastefully upon myself but rather so that I can be a much greater blessing to the world around me. It is not an opportunity to be in some superficial way better than everyone else, but rather a chance to show everyone else just what sort of person I truly am. Even more importantly, it is a chance to show God just what sort of person I truly am. This, I believe, is within the reach of every level of intellectual ability.

An additional aspect of intellectual distribution to consider is prompted by the oft-repeated phrase, "God never gives anyone more than he or she can handle."

The first assumption within the statement is that there is a way to come through the particular challenge successfully; that God is not in fact providing an opportunity for the powerful and frequently painful learning experience of significant loss. A charitable and humble understanding of one's own limitations may be one of the most difficult things to accept, but I believe it is essential to the beginning of true growth beyond those same limitations.

Similarly, a charitable and humble understanding of others' limitations is also a most difficult thing to accept, but is equally essential to the beginning of true growth beyond those same limitations. A lie will not become true, no matter how many times it is repeated. An ability may be developed, however, through intelligent refinement of skills.

Interestingly, participation in intellectual distribution, as in participation in unconditional love, increases one's own abilities while simultaneously increasing such abilities within others. If we are less concerned with who is smarter, we may be able to work together to make a world in which everyone is smart.

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

Vocational Distribution

I continue to believe that God blesses humanity with individuals uniquely gifted to resolve every challenge. The greatest adversary to this, however, seems to be humanity's disagreement with God about what is genuinely needed. A primary difference within such perceptions is that God understands that everyone has to be somewhere, doing something which allows the heart, soul, and mind of that person to breathe and live. Humanity, on the other hand, includes and excludes individuals on the basis of immediate perception. Anyone who seems anomalous or unnecessary is simply supposed to go "away."

Where is away? How would we know if we got there? What's it like and what do we do if it's not a nice place to be? I find it irritating that nearly every recommendation of going away which I hear, is spoken by someone who assumes that he or she will not be the one who must do so.

On a different note, what if the person being told to "go away" has exactly what is needed to resolve my next challenge? Most likely, my challenge will not be easily or effectively resolved and the loss of the one who was told to "go away" will then become my loss as well.

Individually and collectively, we are our communities resources; the raw materials from which better tomorrows are made. Like the very atoms which compose all of matter, we must be willing to join with others quite different from ourselves if the basic necessities of life are to be available. If, for example, oxygen refuses to join with hydrogen, water will not exist and we will all die of thirst. Perhaps it would bring a certain sacred awareness to life, if before each refreshing drink we paused for just a brief second to consciously be grateful that such atoms cooperate and collaborate, thereby allowing us to live.

On a similar note, perhaps it would bring a

certain sacred awareness to life if before entering a grocery or department store, we took a brief moment to consciously be grateful to each cashier, janitor, stocker, and delivery truck driver for equipping the particular store to meet our needs. If any one of these people were missing from the relevant chain of events, the items which we need would not be on the shelves, available for purchase. Each of these persons, in turn, has needs of food, clothing, shelter, transportation, and communication which must be met, if they are to be available to the processes by which the products we need are made available to us. It is not a question of "either...or..." in deciding whose needs will be met, but rather of "both...and..." if either is to survive.

To satisfy the needs of each person on whom to some degree or another we depend, would be an overwhelming task well beyond any of our individual resources. Working together, however, every person who benefits from someone's contribution can jointly make certain that the particular worker's needs are met, by contributing what they can either directly or by dialogue with relevant administrators.

Vocational distribution happens because none of us has the time, energy, or resources to be completely self-sufficient. An awareness of this societal interdependence is what rightly inspires us to demand of our administrators and elected officials that everyone's needs be legitimately met.

It is not only the responsibility of our administrators and elected officials, however, because they too are individuals with a contribution to make. They cannot be everywhere and do everything.

Ultimately, our world depends upon each of us to be its eyes, its ears, and its heart; responding as we are able to whatever crosses our individual paths. Ultimately there is no "us" and "them," but only a wider spectrum of "us" than of which we're usually aware.

What separates us is ignorance; a lack of knowledge and awareness of how our fates, our lives, our communities, and perhaps even our daily individual experiences really do affect each other in various ways. We may insist that no connection exists--until a specific piece of information which we can respect is presented. Then our response suddenly becomes, "Oh. (a long pause) Well, if I had know that..."

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

*"The God who loves each and every one of us
unconditionally and completely,
has equally hidden within each and every human spirit
the essential ingredients of loving, peaceful, and harmonious
local and global community."*

--Sister Who

Spiritual Distribution

Why does anyone seek the presence or power of God within his or her life, especially considering how uncontrollable, mysterious, and frequently incomprehensible these are? Yet love for the Divine has existed within every age and culture. That we cannot control or understand God has not discouraged humanity from continuing to reach in that direction. Still, profound insights and perhaps even experiences have rewarded those who reached for God persistently and completely. Within such moments, a surge or rebalancing of overall spiritual distribution is often clearly distinguishable.

All of which is disturbing to those who prefer God to be predictable, formulaic, and constrained by human doctrine. Regardless, if God is not free to speak through the lense or voice of a religion other than our own, God is not truly God.

What if spiritual distribution were in fact equal; if God were indeed omnipresent and willing to be accessed through a wider diversity of languages, rituals, and perspectives than any of us is able to individually encompass? What if God were more concerned about hearing from each of us daily and of being constantly on my minds in a loving and empowering way than of which words, language, ritual tools, or physical posture were used? What if the fact of our relationship was more important than its form?

Distribution is clearly not only a matter of what is available but also of what we are willing to both invite and receive. Participation in any such distribution is ultimately an activity requiring courage, because although there are a great many things we do not know, we can be reasonably certain that by such participation we will be changed; ever afterwards, we will never be the same again. If we are among those who are giving to others, we will be changed by awareness of our impact upon others' lives--that we have now left our fingerprints upon the stories of everything they are becoming. If we are among those who receive from others, we will be changed by the resources we receive, for which we must now accept a certain managerial responsibility.

The opportunity may present itself a thousand times, but we must be careful because we do not know whether in fact the chance before us is the last one we will ever see.

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

On a Personal Note

With each passing month, life brings events, discoveries, insights, and challenges. Among the more difficult developments of the past month is the recognition of irreconcilable differences between myself and Michael, who will therefore be soon relocating (we expect) to another place of residence, leaving myself and my three dogs to continue being family for one another here.

With regard to the much-anticipated portable chapel, a revised quote for the construction of the fabric shell was more than three times as much as the quote I received a year ago, necessitating an alternative (and slower) approach to the completion of this project. Rest assured that whenever this project is in fact completed, I will include a photograph or two of it within this monthly newsletter.

The contact with Landmark Artists mentioned briefly in last month's newsletter was unfortunately met with abrupt rejection, in spite of the intervention of someone personally known to the owner of that agency, so it is most unlikely that any future opportunities will be provided through that channel.

I have often described the construction and renovation of my various homes as the creation of a personal convent and this seems equally true of my present residence, which continues at a very slow pace to evolve into a collection of healing spaces and gardens which hopefully will increase in their ability to provide an effective launching pad and base of operations for the diverse ministry to which I continue to commit myself, in spite of severely limited resources.

I do hope within the next month to continue with the work of transferring previously recorded video for re-release through the local cable-access organization, Denver Open Media, and also of beginning to create altogether new shows, just as soon as a good camera operator can be found.

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

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