

Recommended Movie

“Angels in the Outfield.” In some ways this is simply a charming contrived “feel-good” movie, yet I find it’s honesty and, yes, even integrity, inspiring.

It begins with something to which we can all relate, the search for one’s family. Like us, the principal people do not seem to understand that what is really at stake is not the mere locating of qualified family members but rather the rediscovery of faith in themselves and in those around them. Nearly all of the relationships one sees at the beginning of the movie are fractured; everyone seems to believe that everyone else will let them down and one of the central challenges of the movie is learning that this is not always so. Equal to all the rest, the humans within the movie must come to terms with those moments when even the angels seem to have let everyone down--which is when the discovery is made that sometimes the angel who is needed is the angel that each of us is.

Being let down--those times when we depend upon someone or something and it just doesn’t deliver the help we need; sometimes this is just the provocation we need to discover an inner resource we didn’t realize we had. Paradoxically, as we look deeper within ourselves, we also find that we become much more aware of how to give love to others. As we sift the depths of our souls, we find something bigger than ourselves for which to live and our faith begins to shine like a beacon. In those moments also, we find our true family and it is often composed of people we would never have expected.

The moments of turning, of glorious rebirth, are also often quite confusing and even misleading, as judged from our perspective. George Knox found himself face to face with a choice to maintain or forfeit his integrity and (I believe) his very soul. For a moment, he seemed to think his fate lay in the hands of corporate executives and intrusive media personnel. No executive, reporter, politician, or military monster can steal from God the final word

on every situation and event that transpires anywhere within the universe.

Most importantly within the movie, just as thousands of people in the stands were given a chance to declare their faith in others and also within themselves, we too must find our way through the confusing ups and downs of life to that place of deeper unshakable faith, take a stand for the divine spark of God within our souls, and allow that divine spark to work its magic over time--whether it takes a whole baseball season or more. When the moment of divine and shining faith comes, it will be more beautiful than we could have dreamed and will touch more lives than we could have planned for it to touch. May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

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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

Friends and Enemies

It is unlikely that there is anyone who will remain unaffected by the tragic events of September 11, 2001. The mixture of emotions the events provoke can bring out both the best and the worst within humanity. It is my contention that any idiot can act with violence. To act with compassion and justice requires wisdom and maturity. Acting violently only shows how ignorant, stupid, weak, and primitive one is. The question that remains with each nation both now and in the future is how the ways they make war will define, describe, and testify to the true nature of their internal character.

Many of humanities wars and conflicts have arisen, directly or indirectly, from the fact that significant portions of the human family have been left behind, while others evolved and forged mightily ahead. One of the challenges of our current age is to reclaim all the scattered pieces of ourselves. As we march bravely into a new global age, unlike anything which has preceded it, we are challenged to make sure that no one is left behind, because the one we leave behind may be the only one with the key which is able to unlock the next closed door we encounter.

I have also observed that God often delivers our greatest gifts of growth and wisdom by the hands of those we hold in greatest contempt. We must listen to our enemies and allow them to teach us because they may be unconsciously holding the message of God we so desperately need to hear.

None of which excuses the evilness of the acts of mass murder which terrorism and war bring to the human race. That God

is able to transform evil events into wisdom, compassion, and growth does not make the raw material any less what it is--just plain evil. We score a much greater victory, however, by shining love onto hate than by reflecting back (and thereby doubling) every ounce of hate we experience.

I’ve heard a number of people speak of “avenging those who died” but I find the very notion offensive. Were I one of those who died in those terrible plane crashes, I would not want my death to accomplish nothing more than the consequent death of some foreign person I didn’t even know. Rather, I would feel that I had not died in vain if my death had somehow brought out the best in someone else, brought he or she into close communication and interaction with a more compassionate, loving, wise, and noble part of the person’s soul than he or she realized even existed.

Nothing is going to bring even one of those people back. Nothing violent and destructive is going to honor them. If their deaths do not purchase a greater valuing of life, then we are every bit as irrational and despicable as the terrorists who tore their bodies and souls apart in the moment of collision of metal fuel-filled airplane and concrete building. If on the other hand, we become more astute and effective at recognizing and dealing with danger before it has a chance to get out of control, then true progress has been made.

At the time of the terrorist attack, I think most people were so stunned (even if they were aware of our international faux pas which made such an attack seem logical) at the suddenness and

severity of the attack, that we could not help but feel that the universe was momentarily completely out of control. Where were God and all of the supposed guardian angels during those moments?

The answer I finally received about ten days later was that they were busy processing a sudden massive influx of new arrivals. Perhaps many of those who “crossed over” are now being trained to be guardian angels themselves to assist with the massive changes humanity will have to undergo within the next few decades as we evolve into a (hopefully) peaceful, harmonious, and integrated global society. This could be one of those times when we need more angels, more than we need more people.

So often we seek to avoid experiences of sadness, anger, and confusion, yet it seems (in retrospect) that these are the experiences which produce the most growth within us and which drive steel into our spines, empowering us to face greater challenges and be stronger people than we would have otherwise ever been. It doesn't feel good for even one second, but it makes all the difference in our future confrontations with difficulties both great and small.

Shall we therefore seek difficulties as those who aspired sainthood in Medieval times did? I don't find this particularly necessary, since a simple commitment to growth has usually brought me an abundant supply of difficulty, without any active encouragement of this from me. It is not about seeking ways to test ourselves or to actively provoke calluses to grow upon our hands. The calluses will grow all by themselves if we simply engage in the work presented to us. The tests will come of their own volition, if we simply dare to try new things and view life in new ways. We do not need to build muscles by finding weights to lift. Instead, we can build our muscles by reaching for new dreams.

I don't know whether I am actually talking to a spiritual entity separate from myself or whether I am in fact just having a conversation with my own imagination, but

I'm not sure it matters because talking with my guardian angel on an almost daily basis seems to nurture spiritual growth within me. I also can not overlook the fact that when I remember to discuss current experiences with him and invite his assistance, the results frequently (but not always) immediately change.

Last night my car needed another repair (SIGH!). This time it was a “u-joint” that needed replacing. I was actually relieved to hear this because I was afraid the problem would necessitate a much more expensive transmission repair. In any case, a particular part was not coming loose the way it should for perhaps twenty minutes or so and the mechanic was getting frustrated. Silently I called out within my mind, asking if my guardian angel could help push that part loose. Was it purely coincidence that the part began to move the very moment the words formed within my mind, and that the parts continued to cooperate until the repair was complete perhaps ten minutes later?

So why doesn't such prayer work all the time, I wanted to know, when he and I were having a quiet conversation at home once. “Would you prefer angels to be little more than robots,” he replied, “having no wisdom or higher perspective of their own to contribute in those moments when humans just wouldn't understand why we do the things we do, in the ways that we do them?” No, I wouldn't ask that of another person, let alone an angel.

But I also choose to understand that angels are not perfect and that, like us, they must make a hundred “judgement calls” each day, decisions which produce a combination of good and bad effects and for which there is no perfect solution available.

Ultimately, it is perhaps not so important that every decision be “right” as that every thought, action, and decision produce growth in the deepest part of our souls, where the treasure

which is thereby crafted will endure into eternity. Somehow I find I am more able to overlook the stumbling which a mountain climb may include, when I notice the elevation which has been gained in spite of all the stumbling. The climb remains a struggle, but the beauty of the summit is not for that reason diminished.

So wrap your cloak around your shoulders and your scarf around your neck against the chilling alpine wind and climb onward, fellow traveler. We shall reach the summit in time and have a deeper experience of it, than those who were flown in by helicopter and never knew the rigors of our journey. The space and endless horizons of mountain summits shall stretch before us in awesome beauty, but our souls will be still larger than the beauty we survey and soar above it all with grace. By the blessings of eternal and omnipresent divine love, may one and all and everything blessed and loved ever be.

Many Hands Make Light Work

Always at 10,000 feet in the mountains, the weather can be unpredictable, which is why many prayers were answered positively when the weather was warm enough and dry enough to welcome the five friends who showed up to help that Saturday a couple of weeks ago. After weeks of caulking every seam, corner, and fixture on the outside of my house, all that remained was exterior painting: “Pine Grove Green.”

It was cold that morning, as I anxiously watched and waited for the thermometer's needle to rise. At just after 10am it passed the fifty degree mark and we sprang into action. Three hours later, it was all done and “thank you” was such a pathetically inadequate word, it seemed to me. After three years of being virtually homeless, of moving nine times just to avoid living on the street, of more job and income struggles than I care to remember, it seemed I had finally come home and I understood all the way to the depths of my soul that having a home is never something to be taken for granted.

“Many hands make light work” one friend commented. “We all take turns being the one in need,” I thought to myself. How wonderful if every challenge of life was met this way, like an Amish barn-raising, a problem swept away by the simple

**“We find our destinies
by watching, listening,
and paying attention.
We give them life
by seizing
every opportunity
to shine.”
---Sister Who**

appearance of hands ready to work.

A friend commented recently that he really didn't have any skills in the area of construction or remodeling of a home. “The most important thing,” I told him, “is to show up.” I recall a movie about Mother Theresa which I saw while in college. I don't remember the exact wording, but I have always remembered the general sense of something she said within an interview, which was presented within the movie. It occurred when people were beginning to call her a saint. She responded that it was not a question of being a saint or having some sort of extraordinary ability. Rather, it was simply a matter of coming to a situation, seeing what you can do, and doing it. Many never get to the first step and almost as many never get past the second. They see what they can do, decide that they do not have time or ability, and go home again without leaving any action behind to testify to the light of God within themselves. I cannot help but think one's inner light is dimmed by such callousness. I maintain and am eager to demonstrate within my life: “we all take turns being the one in need.”