

SISTER WHO'S PERSPECTIVE

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Overview

I sincerely hope that I have managed to "get out of the way" and "trust the work" sufficiently, that the words of this month's newsletter are genuinely empowering to you.

As always, hold onto whatever is helpful and let the rest go; it must be for someone else. Even with the distances between us, communication allows us to move toward a sense of community and perhaps even family. Thank you for being part of mine.

Change and Continuity

Within the first card of the Major suit of *The Tarot of Sister Who*, identified as 0 and "Birth," a purple box has been opened and light is shining from within it. The response could be described as welcoming or curious; clearly uncertain of what will follow, yet also unafraid and attentive to any communication in a non-judgmental way. One's specific response will need to be contextual, so it is unlikely that a response to a particular instance will be identical to any other.

The photo thus tentatively contains both potential change and continuity. One brings all that one is to each interactive moment, while remaining open to discovery, growth, alteration, adaptation, and perhaps even ingenuity and invention. Even the latter nonetheless begins with what is available.

Every inventor must begin with using whatever is available, in order to move from an idea to a reality that exists within the surrounding material or physical context. As insightful and creative as imagination can be, it must take on a form of some sort in order to complete its inherent goal of transforming whatever it touches. A transformed reality, however, because it started in one way and not another, will hold some echo, shadow, or fingerprint of what it formerly was.

This is not inherently a bad thing, if one

knows and retains the best of the previous form throughout the journey to renewal and growth. If one is somehow at war with some aspect of what one previously was, inner peace is prevented and holistic balance has not been achieved. The most obvious example of this sort of inner conflict, is the task of coming to terms with both the strengths and weaknesses of one's parents or progenitors.

One must embody both the change inherent within renewal while respecting what is sometimes below the surface--even to the forebearers themselves--of that which preceded. In a similar way, one may be carrying seeds of insight or future growth of which one is consciously unaware. This is why life is often a long process of coming to fully know one's self--if one is willing.

If one is not willing to look for the light within the box, certain things will never be seen and their positive effects never realized within one's life. Metaphorically, it will be analogous to traversing the years of one's physical existence while wearing a blindfold the entire time--unwilling to perceive both the majority of one's surrounding world and its inherent potential. Tragically, innumerable possibilities of growth will never happen.

When one does not know but is willing to learn--or to at least try--limitations are rendered the primary illusion. The question is not whether anything is possible, but only how long it will take to learn how. Through every moment of that process, however, one's identity can grow while also remaining what its core essence has thus far revealed.

More concisely, my expressions may shift, but the truth of that core from which they emanate becomes ever more defined by both truth and transcendence. One is not merely one's physical form and, in fact, one never was--if one dares to learn how.

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

Growing and Grounding

Within the first card of the Major suit of *The Tarot of Sister Who*, identified as 1 and "The Prodigy," there is simultaneously a sense of innocent unknowingness waiting to be developed as well as a predisposition to undiscovered greatness. Since the first days of this unconventional ministry, with amazing consistency, those whom I encounter do not seem aware of how very special they are--or could be. I have thus sometimes described any and all spiritual paths as processes of learning to see all that there is to see.

It may take some time, however, to accept that one is in fact a prodigy in any sense of the word. If Mozart had never been shown a piano keyboard, it is unlikely his gift would have ever been discovered. It would have been even more unlikely, however, if the world within which he grew up, strove to persuade him that he was in no way special, gifted, or destined to make a contribution that no one else would ever be able to make.

The surrounding world which ignorantly presumed to know both him and his potential better than he did--without the ability to know his thoughts, feelings, or aptitude--would ultimately rob itself of all he potentially had to give. My contention is that the surrounding world within every age of humanity, has made a deplorable habit of treating nearly every individual in this way. Ultimately, it is absolutely amazing that ingenuity, artistry, renewal, and development have managed to occur at all, considering the self-sabotaging and even suicidal ways that societal systems have leaned in adversarial directions.

Distinct from those directions, however, is the phenomenon of grounding or, to use the metaphor of botanical development, putting down roots by which upward development is significantly empowered. As tedious as the development of muscle memory is in relation to writing, drawing, typing, mechanically fabricating, building, weaving, playing a musical instrument, painting, or any other activity, such physical abilities become the essential building blocks of every work that follows. No matter how natural the ability or movement may allegedly be, the body must

still learn its rhythms, repetitions, and forms.

In the words of a professional musician of the twentieth century, "If I don't practice for a day, I know it; two days, the critics know it; three days, the public knows it." Shifting back to the botanical metaphor, one knows which trees have deep roots whenever a storm passes. Those without, have a much more difficult time surviving the onslaught.

The curious thing about discovering any sort of creative or intellectual gift within one's self, is that it is always a mixed blessing. As much as an unusual aptitude may be a blessing, it is equally something unusual that does not readily or easily conform to existing societal norms. If that were the case, the gift would not be able to do what only it can do.

The lingering question is thus whether or to what extent those around are ready to receive whatever specific contributions might follow. Even if they are not, the identity and qualities of the gift are not thereby altered, leaving the individual with a challenge that in truth can only be resolved by others.

Living with unresolved challenges thus very much just "comes with the territory" of being in any way unusual. Very few of those around such a person, however, ever truly understand, making the experience often feel more painful than blessed. Combinations of admiration and sympathy are, additionally, virtually always difficult to integrate.

All of the words that can be said on this topic, sadly, do not necessarily move the conversation forward. Ultimately, as one acquaintance used to repeatedly instruct me, "It is what it is," to which I would like to add, "And one needs to make the best of it." That, in fact, is the essence of growing and grounding: recognizing equally both where one is and what one has to offer, together with in which direction one needs to grow.

In defiance of all of the self-help books and motivational speakers, life remains stubbornly unpredictable and uncertain. If it were any other way, the topic of this essay might be a bit irrelevant and unnecessary. Specifically because one never knows for certain what will come next, these aspects remain essential.

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

Being and Becoming

Many approaches to spiritual growth start with raising one's awareness and learning how to just be. On a contrasting comedic note, I am reminded of the bumper sticker I saw some years ago, instructing, "God is coming! Look busy!" After a chuckle or two, I had to wonder how much we are hiding from being by excessive activity.

While appropriate activity in and of itself is not bad, going to excess suggests that one is fleeing from something that would be wiser to face. Until that middle ground of honest contemplation occurs, however, one cannot truly embrace the following process of becoming something else--perhaps even something more. All that being said, the most challenging aspect of true becoming may be the extent to which uncertainty and perhaps even mystery must be embraced.

As a dismissive equivalent of "I don't want to talk about it," the oft-spoken words, "I don't know," provide no direction. As an invitation to further inquiry, however, those same words shed light on vast uncharted landscapes, waiting to be fully learned. For those who wish to avoid the work involved, this may not be encouraging.

To be born, however, is to have the potential to embrace unknown opportunities and amass a collection of memories and knowledge that no one else ever will. Letting such an opportunity slip by unnoticed, seems profoundly unwise at best. Specifically because we are and remain creatures of time, there is not an infinite temporal space in which to do so; at some point, it will end.

The invitation of life, therefore, has always been to spend one's limited time creating that

which is inherently less limited. The primary disappointment may be that unless future generations remember and understand one's true and authentic story, one's name may someday be primarily associated with a building or an organization and not with who one actually was, what one actually believed, or how one actually lived. Yet in that regard the blame must be shared, because many never take the time to put such personal truth into any kind of enduring record.

Allowing wisdom to die along with one's physical body, robs that insight of its greater potential. At the same time, however, an enormous amount of selection is unavoidable, because an entire set of encyclopedias could not contain the full truth of even a single person. All too often, when individuals and communities look at each other, they see only the tiniest part of what is actually there.

So there is a very real sense within which humanity is stumbling through its existence quite blind to what is passing by, perhaps even just the thickness of a sheet of paper, beyond its current fingertips. How much more tragic then when it is forgotten that the quality of life matters more than its quantity and that love is ultimately more important than life.

Within the movie, "Ever After," Leonardo de Vinci is characterized as saying, "A life without love is no life at all," but for love to occur, some brief moment of life must first exist. To live thereafter, that love must then begin to move--to become something more, as stated by the oracle within the movie, "Matrix," "for as long as it can." Ultimately it makes little difference if one knows the period of time involved, in advance, if one is not effectively utilizing the present moment.

Life is ultimately a gift that each one reading this newsletter has received. The ongoing question is what one will do with it--in whatever pain, loss, joy, or accomplishment one is able to create. The challenge that especially Christians must face is that Jesus did not embrace "social distance" or any other kind of isolation, but instead found ways to heal lepers, when no cure for leprosy existed.

One must do whatever good one can.

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

"Doing one's best is always more work than doing less, but the choices you make will be your contribution to how the surrounding world is defined and shaped."

-- Sister Who

Living and Loving

From one perspective, genuinely loving transcends time. Within the realm of loving, however, is letting go when a healthy and appropriate life-span reaches its conclusion and must consequently return to the larger realm of spirit. Such transitions are never easy or comfortable, but--from a wiser divine perspective--they are genuinely good.

I have always believed that everything is in some way alive and thus needs to be appropriately respected. At the same time, I have never completely come to terms with life having an end to correspond to its beginning. As the saying most often applied to pets insists, "If love could have saved you, you would have lived forever."

A spiritual perspective insists that what is loved, does in fact live forever--in different ways. A human perspective may often find these words insufficient, especially in relation to loved ones. "If love [tears?] could build a stairway and memories a lane, I'd walk right up to heaven and bring you home again"--immediately and without hesitation.

Yet the freedom to live must also include the freedom to die, if love is to have any integrity at all. This applies equally to every object and person that enters my life. As it has entered, it must likewise be allowed to leave whenever its time for doing so comes.

To insist otherwise equates to a sort of selfish or narcissistic enslavement that is inherently contrary to genuine love. True thankfulness must live within awareness that lives have overlapped. For countless others, there was no shared space or time.

From a contrasting perspective, if Gareth, my Old English Sheepdog, were instructed that he would be allowed only nine years of life on Earth, he chose to spend them with me. I can only hope that I did a reasonably good job of loving him every step of the way, even though I was never blessed with as much insight or wisdom as I would have preferred. The blessing is that we were given time to live together in love and create memories of immeasurable value at all.

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

On a Personal Note

Recent weeks unexpectedly included a brief stay in both a hospital and a center for rehabilitation, as well as experiences of more pain than I've ever felt in my life. Yet while the location and a generalization of the problem was identified, the cause was not--suggesting that the experience could return without warning. At the onset, I seriously did not know whether or not I would survive.

What to do now, also remains--at least for the moment--undetermined. Hopefully a meeting with a physical therapist tomorrow morning will provide new insights. That for which I was most thankful is that two friends were willing to get involved and see to my dogs' welfare while I was away.

Thankfully we are now all back together, but daily life remains a significant challenge in a number of ways. Additionally, should the experience return, I think I will be far less inclined to trust the US-American medical system. At the time, I wasn't sure I had anything more to lose, but I was wrong.

Fighting for one's freedom may sound like nationalistic propaganda to anyone who has never had to do so, but it is not the first time I have had to face this challenge. In the final analysis, it brings one's values right to the surface and scrapes away all pretense. I only hope I never again have to endure such adversarial circumstances.

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

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Sister Who a/k/a Rev. Denver NeVaar, MTS

POB 16074, Golden, CO 80402

email: dn@SisterWho.com

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

Additional Informational Internet Websites:

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