

sister who's perspective

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Overview

Times of transition are virtually always very difficult, specifically because success is never fully guaranteed. In truth, one is always "in process;" always becoming a little bit different than what one was only a relatively few moments ago. The fact that everyone is experiencing this, however, does little to minimize one's struggles or pain. Yet knowing that others feel something similar, may provide insight about how to help.

Maintenance

I don't think it is only humanity's current generation which strives for what is popularly termed "instant gratification." The simple fact is that everyone wants to know that what they are doing is effectively addressing their challenges. Yet specifically because of how slowly trees and people grow, measuring by days is often discouraging, measuring by years is sometimes amazing, and measuring by decades is where a sense of awe arises.

It is bewildering to me to reflect upon the myriad of perceptions, accomplishments, activities, and conversations the years have encompassed and to consider that in only another three years I will be measuring the time of this unconventional ministry by a trio of decades. On one hand, I often wonder how it is that I receive so many compliments yet so little compensation, but money has never been my reason for doing anything anyway. I was actually momentarily stunned when someone recently commented on finding ways to "monetize" my creative and ministerial work, wondering how to address such a challenge without losing any degree of integrity along the way.

I can think of only a few individuals who have done it, yet because they have done it, it cannot be considered impossible. There

are numerous allegedly impossible things that I myself have already done as well, which sometimes helps me to keep going when it makes no sense to do so. More important than such internal conversations, however, are the framed quotes from diverse individuals that hang on my wall, pleading with me to never stop.

Whenever I begin a high elevation hike, I don't know if I will ever reach the summit of the particular mountain upon which I stand. I know that while I must contribute the steps, I must also respect my environment and not invite danger by ignoring the weather or any unexpected obstacle along the way. Others have had their own experiences, but there is nothing that guarantees that my journey will be analogous to theirs.

As much as every life is unique and every day is a collaborative invention, potentially filled with every emotion known, I must continue making the steps. No one following my footprints will know what the emotion was, that I felt within that particular moment that my shoe connected with the earth. The steps made while feeling anger are, for the most part, just as effective in moving me ahead as the ones made while feeling fear, because it is not the emotion but the step itself which diminishes the distance between myself and my intended destination.

Moving forward in any way whatsoever, is ultimately what maintains my journey. In contemplating the emotions and thoughts of each step once an appropriate amount of time has passed, however, I also maintain the inner journey of becoming a hopefully wiser and more loving person than I have thus far found the strength to be. Too much contemplation before a painful moment has had a chance to stop bleeding, however, discourages the onset of healing.

Still, I must maintain my compassionate presence, if the healing is ever to begin.

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

Investing Inches

A friendly acquaintance a number of years ago noted that what set me apart from everyone whom I knew, was that I never settled for less when more was possible, even if only by the most laborious means. I often find within my conversations with others that I'm unusually self-aware, noticing dynamics and feelings within myself that others generally overlook within themselves--but I'd not previously ever heard myself described this way. I guess it has always seemed better to me, to do what one can with whatever is available, rather than resign one's self to an absence of improvement--but I had not realized what a rare quality this seems to have become.

As is often the case, however, once noted, it became glaringly obvious how many others have simply given up on themselves and the best possibilities of their surrounding world. Perhaps it could be described as a loss of faith--in themselves, in each other, in a higher power of whatever description, or even in any notion of a harmoniously yet delicately balanced universe. Idealist that I am, I continue to stubbornly argue that much more is still possible; that, whether or not we are aware of it, humanity still lives within a universe of infinite possibility--most of which has not yet been discovered or explored.

Yet considering the size and scale of this universe, we are comparatively little more than ants crawling across the floor of a school gymnasium--never knowing if we'll make it to the cafeteria on the other side of that faraway door. Giving up guarantees only failure. Perseverance, however, can make miraculous things happen.

Yet because of numerous limitations, the steps between here and there will be both small and numerous. Can we forgive ourselves for, in fact, being so small and limited that no other means of progress is available? Can we refrain from judging the dandelion seed that falls into the sidewalk's crack, which will ultimately make light of our skepticism, sprout, grow, and bloom, without any concern at all for our insistence that such manifestations of life are unwanted,

unwelcome, and--specifically because of the adversity humanity provides--impossible?

The acts of kindness which are undone only because they are small, is the sad contribution of subconscious brokenness to a world already reeling under the weight of selfishness and greed. Humanity's holistic health has never been found within such dynamics, but rather within acts of selfless service--doing good simply because one can. Our fingers may be only a few inches long, but, oh, the wonders that have been built by applying them wisely to a task.

At the center of the current struggles of life for myself and literally thousands upon thousands of others, is the re-establishment of a good, safe, and adequate sense of home. It would seem that there is nothing one person's hands can do, but I can only imagine how inspirational it was to everyone else there, to see President Jimmy Carter returning to a Habitat for Humanity worksite within days of being treated for cancer. I've also spoken with individuals who've so completely given up on their government that they refuse to use their fingers to vote, much less using them to call or write their elected officials, demanding better public service.

When we invest our inches collectively, however, as literally demonstrated by Habitat for Humanity, a new house rises into view and the hope is revived that life will go on in a better form than has previously been known. In remembering that the world is the integrated combination of contributions by friends and enemies, wise and decent people--no matter how contrasting their opinions--strive for more of the former than the latter, through practices of global mutual respect, that begin within their very own fingertips. I am more and more convinced every day that there is nothing that makes one ugly more quickly or more certainly, than indifference to the suffering of another.

So I get up each morning and wrestle again with the questions I was unable to answer during the preceding day, investing my inches so that my adversaries will never have the final word on anything at all.

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

Being Bigger

I have often described the need and have also pushed myself continuously as well, to "find the self that is larger than the corner in which one appears to momentarily trapped."

When I made an attempt to participate in the archery event of the third incidence of the World OutGames, which was held in Antwerp, Belgium, in 2013, and found that an enormous number of things had been either left unsaid or miscommunicated, I chose to remain respectful and conduct myself in as courteous a manner as I could, as a guest within a foreign country. I have wondered ever since, whether or not I made the right choice, but there does not seem to be any opportunity or reason to re-address the matter. Suffice to say that in spite of all of my preceding disclosures and (I thought) careful investigation of whether it would be acceptable to participate in full ritual garb, the reaction to my attempt to participate in a practice session about which I was informed during the initial registration process, was a bit shocking and completely unanticipated.

Thankfully, the local police were able to discern within just the first few minutes that I was no threat to anyone whatsoever, but they then had the complex challenge of figuring out how to diffuse public suspicion and paranoia. When the local media threw their influence toward supporting these negative qualities, however, I was left with only the choice of whether to defy these expressions of public opinion or defer to them. Without any sort of personal support system available to me, all I could do was to reach for that larger sense of who and what I am and acknowledge that my life and my work would always be much larger than a

"It is so very important to face whatever suffering exists within one's self or others and also remember that it is not all there is."

-- Sister Who

single event in Belgium which had turned out to be quite different than it had on numerous occasions previously claimed to be.

"What sort of person will you show yourself to be?" is the oft-repeated challenge within my second modern "morality play" entitled, "A Sequential Journey," and I frequently continue to challenge myself with this question as well. Within that moment in Belgium, I chose to demonstrate global mutual respect, regardless of whether or not the rest of humanity's global community was willing to do the same. Nothing would have been gained by reducing myself to the very small dimensions of that brief (but perhaps pivotal) moment in time.

That choosing to be larger or smaller within that moment would nonetheless have a profound effect upon the dimensions of future opportunities and encounters, I had no doubt--which makes me wonder if my brief four weeks of attempting to live within upstate New York in February of 2015 was a similar sort of turning point, within which I was once again being asked to embrace a larger sense of myself. I have never wanted this ministry to be associated exclusively with Colorado, but I continue to feel at home here in ways I have not felt anywhere else. It may nonetheless be that at least one of the reasons the last three years have been filled with so much struggle, is my dedication to spiritual service--that, unlike the biblical Jonah, when the Divine seems to point in a new direction, I immediately reply, "Okay, if that's what You want, that's where I'll go."

Considering how much bigger the Divine is, it only makes sense that humanity will have to become much bigger also, before any significant degree of understanding or even a minimally effective common language will be accomplished. For now, innumerable attempts to answer, "what does the Divine want" have resulted in an over-abundance of possible answers about which the wise refrain from being dogmatic. Humanity does not have the perspective needed to make such assertions with any legitimate confidence or veracity--at least not yet.

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

Unconditional Light

I often hear people speak of love's need to be unconditional in order to be genuine and true. Light is much the same--shining on both the good and the bad without concern for the quantity or quality of any response that is given in return. Whatever else human beings are, it does seem that light and love are among our signature qualities--whether within a specific individual the quotient or amount of these is positive or negative.

Even if a particular individual displays a negative quantity of light or love, it remains true that human beings are uniquely and creatively empowered to share spiritual light and life-changing love with their surrounding world. The unfolding of life is an ongoing question of how much each one will actually do so. In much the same way, however, that the current age is monstrously caught up in narcissism and greed, intellectual and spiritual light are also being hoarded and withheld from those in need in ways which are positively evil in nature.

It is not the words of intellectual and spiritual light but rather the substance which makes the constructive difference within the lives of others. As I've stated numerous times in the past, if one doesn't believe it enough to do it, then one doesn't really believe it at all. If one merely gives advice without remaining nearby, ready to ensure the result predicted, then the recipient of that advice is at risk of being victimized by a (probably unintentional) lie.

Religious abuse is among the common forms of this. If the ideology or theology is not willing to be held accountable, then any and all associated loss will be born by those willing to give the particular ideology a chance. Being sufficiently generous to give any idea or person a chance, deserves a reward rather than a punishment--regardless of whether or not the attempt is successful.

Not every attempt will reach its goal, because "life doesn't come with any guarantee," but love and light must even then continue to shine, if life is to endure.

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

On a Personal Note

I've had numerous friends over the years who are living with chronic and/or incurable physical pain. For some of them, however, this is balanced by a constellation of resources and supportive people that provide ways to cope. For myself, the pain I experience is usually psychological and difficult to describe and my refusal of pharmaceutical remedies confusing to certain persons. My need, however, is often not a feeling, but rather a material resource--such repairs to my car's transfer case.

Regardless, within this unconventional ministry, I have been able to find sufficient purpose and meaning in my life, that it really doesn't matter that much if every moment isn't sunshine and sweetness. A virtually infinite number of human history's greatest thinkers, artists, and inventors had very troubled lives as well. My challenge is thus to persist in whatever creative or ministerial activity I can do, even within the least supportive circumstances--so I do.

In spite of still not knowing where home is or how to escape my current oppressive location, all of this year's television shows are done, the photo shoots for The Tarot of Sister Who are more than half complete, and a requested submission to a student publication of Oxford University in England, has been sent. Clearly, even in my worst moments, good can still happen.

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

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