

# 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

condition. The point, therefore, of building a flowerbed is not so much to finish the job of building a flowerbed as it is of demonstrating to everyone that I am a person who believes in making the world a more beautiful place. The point of maintaining a structure is not to finish the job of maintaining a structure which may in fact be torn down and hauled away fifty years from now, but rather to demonstrate my ability and commitment to providing a warm and safe home for myself for as long as I live in this specific geographical location. I exercise each day because I believe in staying healthy, not because I will be satisfied with nothing less than achieving the most perfect body the world has ever seen (yeah, right).

The point of all of this simply being that future goals have present as well as future rewards. Though I am fond of telling people that "within each moment of life is both a lesson to learn and a ministry to perform," there is also within each moment a reward for just being alive, even if at times it can be quite difficult to see just exactly what that reward is. To the extent that we bring our full consciousness, intelligence, and receptivity to each moment we live, the rewards can be dramatically increased. We will hear music that others never distinguish from the din of daily cacophony, smell fragrances which others never recognize, see colors beyond anything others have even imagined, taste essences others have never known, and touch reality in ways that others will never experience. Life will be more alive than we've ever dared to think it could be and we will find God in ways beyond what any human theology has taught us to expect.

And my most constantly recited prayer will be fulfilled: may one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

## Update

At long last a newsletter archive has been added to Sister Who's website, located at <http://www.sisterwho.com>.

Single extended scrollable pages are now viewable on the Internet, containing the text of the articles contained in issues of "Sister Who's Perspective" for the years of 1998, 1999, 2000, the first half of 2001, and the second half of 2001.

Anyone who wishes to see what sort of things past newsletters have contained or who wishes to read or refer to previous issues' articles, may now do so by visiting my website.

As always, suggestions for improvement, constructive criticism, and general comments are not only welcome but also invited.

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

## Subscription Information:

"Sister Who's Perspective" is a monthly newsletter available for an annual subscription price of \$25.00 (please make checks payable to Denver NeVaar with the initials SWP on the memo line of the check).

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Do you know someone who might like to receive a copy of this newsletter?

A single sample copy is free and no "sales pitch" or repetitive offers will follow. Just tell me the address to which I should send a single copy.

Do you know of a publication which might be interested in reprinting any of the text contained within this newsletter?

Please feel free to forward your copy of this newsletter to them and request a free replacement from me.

Thank you for your help in spreading my words to new places and people.

## Life Contexts

I always seem to hope that we have finally moved beyond the place of theological debate about certain basic things, such as whether or not God approves of Gay people being Gay, of Lesbian people being Lesbian, or of anyone else simply being whoever and whatever he or she finds himself or herself to be. Yet within the last week I again found myself in the presence of someone quoting bible verses in such a way that it was clear she did not understand the texts which she was quoting.

Similarly, I always seem to hope that we will one day succeed in removing from the list of common oxymorons, the words "human intelligence." Bigotry is neither intelligent nor truly helpful to any person or community. Yet this too is slightly raising its ugly head, right here within my own neighborhood. No matter how exceptional of an example of responsible and intelligent citizenship I attempt to demonstrate, the moment someone's personal bad habits or selfish choices are called into question, the problem (supposedly) is not that the person was or is behaving in a way that has a negative effect upon others, but rather that some "faggot" is demanding special rights. Questions of equality and justice, of the elimination of double-standards, are somehow therefore never answered.

It sometimes seems to me like a pervasive insanity, this way the human world has of being so committed to its ignorance and self-destructive habits. The first lesson of biblical interpretation I ever learned, however, was that one must always consider the complete context of the verse in question.

Similarly, if we are ever to fully understand each other, it is necessary to consider the complete context of the person with whom we are speaking, the many diverse experiences and ideas which have shaped the way he or she perceives and understands the world. Equally so, if we are to fully understand the challenge of living

holy lives in the present moment, to fully understand how necessary it is, and to fully understand how it is not an impossible challenge; we must also be continually moving toward a more complete understanding of our own complete context, neither fixating upon nor overlooking any detail.

A vital aspect of such understanding is the direct practice of the ideas. Living a holy life (by which I mean one inseparable from and described by wholeness, wisdom, transcendence, divine love, and peace) includes a certain attention to application, the demonstration of the ideas, the act of being involved in that place where "the rubber meets the road." To do less would be a symbolic dismemberment of ourselves, cutting our brains loose from the rest of our bodies.

In continuing to pursue participation as a bodybuilder within the next occurrence of the Gay Games, in Sydney, Australia, in November of this year, the most difficult aspect of the preparation, I am finding, is maintaining focus. The challenge of doing this might be compared to a twelve-month (in my case) marathon, in which it is not so much a question of how fast one runs as of how constantly.

As the weeks and months have passed, a repetitive feeling of frustration has come from Life's many interruptions: the time my dog Galahad got very sick and had to spend a weekend at the animal hospital, the somewhat on-going saga of my car's increasing number of mechanical problems and the process of acquiring another used vehicle at a relatively low price which is in somewhat better mechanical condition, the neighborhood concerns with wayward teenagers' vandalism and even burglary of others' houses, and the on-going fluctuations of assigned duties at the office in which I work five days each week as an administrative assistant. As John Lennon so eloquently phrased it, "Life is what happens while you're making other plans."

None of which inherently requires the sacrifice or letting go of the dreams and life-goals which may in fact be God-given. In the interest of not demonizing the more unpredictable and unexpected moments of Life, I choose to "listen" to such moments for the guidance or insight they may have to offer, the gentle prompting that my dream will still happen, but perhaps not in the way I initially envisioned.

In many cases, it seems it's a question of pacing, that a dream not be born before the world is ready for it and thereby emerge into a fatally unsupportive context. As beautiful as any dream may be, it does not and cannot exist independently of its temporal, psychological, cultural, physical, and social context.

One of the primary ongoing discussions at the core of this specific challenge, is the attempt to balance compassion and self-preservation. In a college swimming class, I learned that if one is attempting to rescue (without a relatively large and stable boat) one who is drowning, it is imperative to remain out of reach of the person in trouble. If one ventures too close, the panic-stricken person will attempt to climb on top of the rescuer in order to get out of the water and thereby quite possibly drown the very one who is trying to help. Rather, the use of ropes, flotation devices, or long poles allows the rescue to be successful without adding to the number of people in mortal danger.

Similarly, to maintain any legitimate self-respect, we must respond to cries for help, but in a way that intelligently does not increase the number of people in danger. Within those waiting to march in the Gay Pride Parade here in Colorado a couple of months ago, I noticed a contingent representing a particular group oriented towards racially black Gays and Lesbians, wearing t-shirts with a quote from Martin Luther King, Jr., which I'd not heard or seen before. If I remember correctly, it was something like, "In the future, we will not so much remember the words of our enemies as the silence of our friends."

What answer will we give to future generations who ask us in great astonishment, "You were there, when it was all happening, and you did...nothing?"

Perhaps we can't save the world in the sense of eradicating evil or preventing a terrible event from taking place, but we can still heed the words of Mother Theresa. "It is not so much a

question of being a saint or even an extraordinary person. It is simply a matter of coming to a situation, seeing what you can do, and doing it."

Like my favorite metaphor of an Amish barn-raising, if we all show up and do whatever we can, a solid and durable shelter for humanity's future sustenance can rise out of the ground in a single day. How I pray that such a day is not far off.

Though I find myself surrounded by ignorance, self-serving agendas, and even insanity, a simple glance around shows clouds and colors which are quite unaffected by such smallness, extensive forests containing innumerable trees much older than myself, and high mountains which will remain long after I and all the experiences of my life have faded into the mists of Time. The bigness of the universe is just as real as the smallness of human interactions.

Within each day, I have the opportunity to be a bridge between the two, to the extent that I maintain that small but essential distance. I can extend the tools of healing and, yes, even salvation, to those who may not even realize that they are drowning. I must do so, however, without allowing myself the inattentiveness, complacency, or apathy, by which I would also become a drowning person.

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

**"If you're going to be  
a star, shining brightly  
in the dark midnight sky,  
guiding sailors and travelers  
all over the world,  
you have to be willing  
to stick out and not blend  
into the background,  
from time to time."**

**---Sister Who**

## Life Experiences

Because someone else's Life experiences are not the same as my own, they are not for that reason less real--nor vice versa. There is no legitimate call for me to live as if my Life experiences have not been what they've been.

The distinctions are not to be used for building walls between us, however; for the creation of an "us" and "them" perception of Life.

All things are interconnected, much more so than we generally realize. One of the perhaps unnoticed positive aspects of us having so many diverse Life experiences, is the recognition that the spectrum of Life's possibilities is far too vast for any one of us to ever succeed in experiencing it all. By effective communication, we can nevertheless learn from much more of that vast range, than we will ever have time to experience.

Rather than allow this awareness of the vast range of Life's possibilities in other places and contexts to constantly distract us, however, it is imperative that we pay close attention to our own immediate experiences and context, in order to have significant insights to report to others who have neither perceived nor experienced those aspects of Life which have been our own.

This is what encourages me to pause when I leave the house to go to my administrative assistant day-job in the city each day, to notice the expanse of trees stretching across the mountain ranges and hills around the high valley where I live. It is what encourages me to pause for just a moment whenever I arrive home after sunset, to notice the expanse of countless stars overhead. It is what encourages me to see not just a gray mass of unfamiliarity in each crowd of people I pass, but rather innumerable overlapping but nevertheless distinct personalities and lives; to remember that they are not just a mob, but individuals with questions, hopes, memories, dreams, aspirations, struggles, disappointments, and perspectives. Problems more often arise when I see them as less than what they are.

As I continue to prepare for bodybuilding competition at the Gay Games, one of the things I try to include in every day, is two miles of jogging around my neighborhood, to burn off body fat. More often than not, Galahad accompanies me, thereby getting his daily exercise also. In some ways, he is an

exceptionally intelligent and attentive companion, so I try to notice whenever something he does may be instructive to me. In other ways, I shake my head sometimes at his remarkable stupidity (i.e. "one does NOT run out into the road when a car approaches, to see how it smells!" I tell him again and again).

Similarly, I was talking with a friend who is a rancher in Wyoming recently about pronghorn antelopes. Somewhat beautiful and certainly unique, my perspective of them was perhaps a typically romantic if also inaccurate one, a vision of a beautiful creature racing like the wind across the Great Plains of North America. Actually, he informed me, when they get scared or are startled by something, they run in circles. Why, I wondered with great astonishment, would they run in circles? It makes no sense, especially considering that they would not put greater distance between themselves and a predator that way. He didn't know either why they would do that but added that a rather small herd of antelope could thereby destroy an amazingly large area of a hayfield.

I considered the possibility that the antelope were but one more of the myriad of mirrors God has provided for humanity to perceive and understand itself. Certainly there are many times in which we become frightened by something we do not understand and begin to run, only to realize later when we regain a certain minimum presence of mind, that we've been running in circles from something from which we did not seriously need to run at all. The land upon which we stand and that which might have nourished and sustained us, have nevertheless been trampled and destroyed in the process.

Reflecting on some of the comments of the last newsletter and my on-going home-improvement activities, it occurred to me that building a flowerbed on the end of my house or replacing all of the concrete-block supports one by one underneath the house (in order to re-level the floor and structure), may be not so much about whether I finish the job before the world ends or not, but rather about expressing my own character. Because I am a responsible and hard-working person, I want to maintain all the things for which I am responsible in good