

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

For as long as humanity has populated the earth, the moon has moved in its circular path around us and often been a primary point of reference in measuring the passing of time and seasons. In spite of its silence and remoteness, it continues to regulate tidal shifts and fill us with wonder at its simple beauty and the way it illumines the earth nocturnally, offering a much different view of the world around us, during those moments when most of us are more concerned with sleeping than with seeing.

As essential as adequate amounts of sleep are to the human body, inspiration and new ways of seeing both ourselves and the world around us are essential to the human spirit. When we neglect this part of ourselves, the effects can be disturbingly similar to having not gotten enough sleep. Similarly, when we nurture this part of ourselves, we face our daily challenges refreshed.

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

Being the New Moon

Imagine if you will a brief conversation between two long-time friends after a brief interlude of interrupted communication. The earth: "Where did you go?" The moon: "I was right here all along. It was your own shadow that prevented you from seeing me."

What makes this metaphor more challenging is that sometimes we ourselves are the earth, blinded by our own shadows, and at other times we ourselves are the moon, patiently enduring a time of invisibility, perhaps so that other stars can be seen.

When we are the earth and perhaps quite unaware of the shadows we cast across the lives of others which prevent us from seeing them as they truly are, we simultaneously have greater opportunity to look deeper into outer space than we would be able to do at other times. Constellations and extra-terrestrial phenomenon leap into view, inviting us to see ourselves as being in relationship to all of them and to also see all of them as being in

relationship with us. Perhaps some of them look upon us in wonder, waiting to see what we will create or do next. Yet all of this remains unknown to us if we fail to even look in their direction. In such instances, our ignorance creates limitations.

When we exist as the new moon, we may be invisible, but we are not for that reason less influential or important to the interconnected and interdependent web of life around us. All bodies of water and watery beings on earth continue to move in tidal fashion, pulled this way and that by the gravitation of our being. We live in the magic of that secret spoken by a woman dying of cancer to her son near the conclusion of the movie, "StepMom." "Just because you can't see it, doesn't mean it's not there."

What is conspicuously missing from those moments when we are called upon to be the new moon, is any sort of ego gratification. We serve the movement of tides and the study of distant stars and galaxies while allowing our light to be temporarily hidden. We serve a wondrous balance between heavenly bodies, while drawing no attention to the otherwise fascinating details of who and what we are; to our mountains, our canyons, and other topographical features.

Within our daily lives, there are likewise times when we serve the greater good and pay no mind to whether or not our contribution is noted and properly credited. There are also times when we are blind to wonders and wondrous people.

Additionally, there are times when particular relationships go through cycles of change which make a certain tolerance of mystery both mandatory and inescapable; times when no adequate answers can be found.

Yet even during these times of shadow, the ebb and flow of tides may yet remind us of what is still very real and present, if we will but pause a moment to notice, to quietly reflect, and to remember the relationships which give us a specific place to be and one or more specific roles to fill within the greater universe around us.

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

Being the Waning Moon

The temptation to prolong every bright and shining moment of our lives is a very understandable one, but it works against whatever is to follow. We seem to be quite good at parties and grand openings of businesses or new professional ventures, but not as inclined to master moving toward positive closure, toward letting go, and toward being in a time of diminishing visibility and experience.

Yet with each passing month, the cycles of the appearance of the moon overhead remind us again and again that, as was first written by the philosopher Heraclitus more than twenty-five-hundred years ago, "change is the only constant in the universe." We are constantly moving and evolving from one form or appearance to the next, yet while often retaining a curious constancy of identity deep within, hence the witticism, "the more things change, the more they stay the same."

The question which needs to be addressed within such a discussion, of course, is which things? Within any particular example, anything is possible. Sometimes it is only the external form which changes while the internal values and dynamics remain more or less the same. At other times, surface appearances might remain constant while internal qualities are radically shifting.

In learning to be the waning moon, we begin by allowing room for someone else's shadow. We recognize that we live within an imperfect world that is saturated in struggles to grow beyond its current form and qualities. We recognize that we live within a world abundantly scarred by brokenness and that brokenness will always have a tendency to replicate itself. This tendency does not need, however, to be always viewed as an adversary; it is also the invitation and opportunity for love to step forward, take action, and prevent the replication of brokenness from occurring. Without this opportunity, love would have much less to do within this world.

The most important task of love, after all, is healing whatever is broken, fearful, or in despair. Seen in this light, the waning moon can be a symbol and a reminder of the need for love to step forward, take action, and create a better world in which all can truly live. The waning moon is the invitation for stars to shine more brightly--all across the vast nocturnal sky.

I recall from the years during which I lived in a small home high in the mountains, that although

each star was but the tiniest point of light, the combined efforts of all of them together was positively breath-taking. If and when we join our efforts and contributions within any similar time of darkness, the results are similarly breath-taking; for countless numbers of people, faith in all that is good is (at least momentarily) restored and hope for the future again gives wings to our spirits.

Yet none of this can happen if the moon is unwilling to wane. The lessons of darkness will never be learned, if darkness is never allowed to occur. Such lessons are valuable, if for no other reason than because of the costs by which such lessons come. Many wondrous accomplishments throughout human history only became successful when some sort of personal sacrifice made a way for the accomplishment to happen. Those who benefit from any such accomplishment would do well to be grateful and take nothing for granted.

In this way, the waning moon is also a reminder of the sacrifices which are made every day, so that life may survive and perhaps even thrive within times which follow. The waning moon is our reminder to be grateful for the light which has blessed our lives and guided us through a particular time, even as mystery once again begins to draw its dark cloak around us.

We can take with us into the darkening time all that we have learned and all of the ways we have grown, if we will only remember the glove upon our hand and the shoe upon our foot which will for a time be much more difficult to see, but which will nevertheless even though invisible continue to shield us from the cold night air and the rough stones in our path.

We can take with us into the darkening time all of the relationships we have built during the brighter times which are now fading, all of the love by which our souls have been joined with the souls of others, and all of our abilities to exchange and create wisdom and positive collaboration. All that is needed is our willing participation. This alone will allow for continued blessing upon our individual and collective experience of the ongoing unfolding of our lives within this time and place.

As long as we remain committed to each other, to working through whatever puzzles and befuddles us, and to finding ways to overcome every obstacle, the journey will go on and we will become stronger, wiser, and more completely the best that we can individually and collectively be.

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

Being the Waxing Moon

What could possibly be so difficult about increasing one's light, about shining more brightly, and about becoming more than one has been? It would seem to be very good in every respect. How could anything good have negative consequences?

It is not the particular example of goodness which is the focus of concern but rather my relationship to that goodness. When entering a room from a dark place and turning on a bright light, a moment or two is required for my eyes to adjust to the brighter light. For a second or two, the sudden increase in light is actually blinding.

For my houseplants, too much light can sometimes be overwhelming because nature, or God, if you will, has created them to bring beauty and freshly oxygenated air to darker spaces. Some of them are able to gradually adapt to higher levels of light; some are not. The plant perhaps most associated with healing, the aloe vera, for example, does not do well when exposed to direct sunlight for extended periods of time. Excessive exposure generally causes the plant to turn brown and die. Their ministry to the interconnected and interdependent web of life does not occur within brightly illuminated spaces.

To be a waxing moon, therefore, is to accept one's self as either coinciding with change or actually being an agent of that change--and accepting responsibility for making one's change-oriented influence as positive and genuinely good as possible. Part of accepting that responsibility is also accepting that there will be costs involved with which some will disagree quite strongly. This in turn may bring on waves of self-doubt and a general absence of certainty about whether in fact the right decisions and actions were made.

**"I don't know whether or not
the world as we presently know it
will end tomorrow, but either way,
I intend to make today as wise
and loving and worth remembering
as I possibly can."**

--Sister Who

Popular notions of what it means to be an expert generally include a confidence in the information, decisions, and strategies which the so-called expert provides, but to truly be an expert is to be painfully aware of how much is not known and to therefore wrestle almost constantly with self-doubts of various kinds. All that being said, decisions must nevertheless be made and dissenting opinions not only tolerated but also genuinely heard, in case some greater wisdom might present itself through the particular dissenting opinion. In the words of the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, "Standing in the middle of the road is very dangerous; you get knocked down by the traffic from both sides."

The waxing moon stands in the middle between the new and full moons, leaning first one way and then the other. This does not need to be interpreted as indecisiveness or instability, however, since it can legitimately also be interpreted as indicating growth and development. Standing in the middle is, after all, the best place to hear whatever wisdom comes from either side--if one is truly listening. The task which remains is to integrate the wisdom from both sides toward a single decision as free from regret as possible.

So it is, as the days and nights pass, that the waxing moon listens first to what was and then to what may be, before finding its own current form and appearance. While all the universe watches in silent witness to its development--the realms of material stone and colorful gasses and the invisible populations of spirit, consciousness, and will--the sliver of light grows more full with each passing hour. To do otherwise would be not only dishonest but in a sense suicidal, as if acting against its own life and purpose.

In the waxing moon, therefore, we have a regular reminder of an exemplary role-model demonstrating determination to grow, to shine, and to be all that it can be--all that God intended it to be--whether or not anyone ever even notices. We have the encouragement that when nothing else is certain, when confusion is not only abundant but borders on being overwhelming--we can still shine.

If we know nothing else with confidence, we can know that we are in this time and place because this time and place needs us to shine--needs the light of our love, the warmth of our wisdom, and the fervency of our faith to believe that--all things considered--life is still worth living.

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

Being the Full Moon

For a mere three days out each month, one tenth of the time of its cycle, the moon shines the very brightest that it can. Were a similar ratio applied to each of our lives, it would be reasonable to expect that (if we live to be a hundred) we will shine the brightest that we can for only ten years of the overall journey through this world.

The remaining ninety years are of course still very important, but in different ways, perhaps many of which are related to how brightly and effectively we shine during the time of our greatest luminescence. In the book "How High Can You Bounce" by Roger Crawford, I learned through the metaphor of a rubber ball thrown against a concrete sidewalk, that the height of travel which follows is specifically determined by how the ball responds to that moment of greatest pressure during its collision with the unyielding concrete. The relationship with the concrete within that moment, in order to be constructive, must be understood as complimentary rather than adversarial. Because collision doesn't feel very good, however, it's easy to perceive only pain.

When we perceive more than just the pain, we're on the path to being the full moon. When we understand that the pain is not all there is, we point ourselves toward the light of wisdom. When we move toward being more than the moment of pain can encompass, we become the brightest light in the nocturnal sky and the moment of pain loses its power to completely control us.

The moment of pain, like the darkened nocturnal sky, is very real and it is important to recognize it as such. It is equally important, however to recognize the inability of the darkness to extinguish the light of the full moon--or of even the smallest star, for that matter. True enough, clouds may occasionally come between, but the light persists. Light dispels darkness and not the other way around. If darkness is to diminish light, it can only do so through indirect means.

The challenges to being the full moon are many, but are usually indirect and environmental rather than confrontational. The concern is not the direct assault of any enemy, therefore, but the clouds of apathy, complacency, distraction, and disconnection which form too easily and frequently within us. Therefore, shine so that you (and all of us) may remember!

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

On a Personal Note

The past month has been full but also bewildering. My vehicle's engine suddenly and quite unexpectedly gave out. Complete repair will apparently be a few weeks in coming. Without transportation, mortgage-paying/income-producing activity is seriously threatened. It is far too early, however, to worry too much about the mortgage.

A graduate school conference in Portland, Oregon (thankfully funded by educational financial aid payments) allowed me to make a number of new friendships and to minimally explore an area of the country to which I'd never previously traveled. I was also blessed to meet more faculty members whose assistance may prove helpful to current and future writing projects. Unfortunately I also caught a very bad cold on the way home, so the days since my return have been mostly filled with trying to get well again.

Repairs to my home continue, accompanied by ongoing worries about whether certain important elements will be finished before the worst of winter arrives, but very good progress is nevertheless being made. A new friendship begun a few weeks ago has resulted in a new part-time day-job with limited potential but very desirable workplace conditions and relationships.

Because of a complete lack of response, I decided to cease advertising my home as being a spiritual resource entitled "God Space" and only a couple of weeks later received a phone call from someone who made an appointment to stop by for an hour or so a few days from now. I sometimes tease God that such disparity in events and developments does not support any notion of divine wisdom very well, but this disparity doesn't seem to be of any major concern to God.

Through it all, I remain to varying degrees in awe of how the best things frequently happen only within the worst of circumstances. Hm. I guess I'll have to ask God about that someday. Maybe it has something to do with learning to live by faith.

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

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