

# 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

Ships have been a common metaphor throughout human history, the waters through which they sail being compared to the unknown, the unconscious, the mysterious, and the realm of infinite possibility. Within this issue, I offer some thoughts on four different kinds of ships: friendship, relationship, partnership, and citizenship. Each focuses upon certain aspects of our individual and collective voyage through life, carrying persons, cargo, and ourselves from one point within space and time to another. Hopefully we will all be better for having braved the journey.

I hope also, that these thoughts will empower your journeys through whatever challenges and mysteries may confront you at this time, that perhaps together we can encourage, inspire, and even empower each other toward the creation of a global family of dynamic individuals.

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

## Friendship

A particular movie suggested that there are only "Six Degrees of Separation" between any two people on earth. That two strangers could be somehow related, is not so difficult to believe. Crossing the divide between relationship and friendship, however, is more difficult. While the first may be given, the second must be chosen, supported, and pursued, regardless of accompanying challenges and rewards.

In considering those with whom I considered developing deeper relationships, the most common reason this failed to occur, is simply that a letter or a phone call went unanswered. On a very few occasions, this was by my choice, perhaps because I found myself pressured to be something or someone whom I am not. More often, however, it was the other person who failed to answer, perhaps having moved on to other relationships, career pursuits, or opportunities. Left alone, I went looking for a new friend and (perhaps by the grace of God), I usually found one. I generally could not go

looking, however, until I honestly accepted that something important was now gone.

I also found that I needed to allow whomever I met to be (sometimes) completely different in comparison to myself. I needed to be interested in their activities, pursuits, beliefs, and personal growth. I did not need to agree, but I did need to make every effort to understand--and I needed to be supportive of the best possibilities of their chosen experiences and involvements. To the best of my ability, I needed to show up whenever the particular person needed me to be there.

I also needed to be honest and not pretend to be supportive when in fact I was still working on creating an understanding that would allow me to be genuinely supportive. There are few experiences of betrayal more deeply wounding and perhaps even more evil, than that which results from the projection of false friendship--even if that falseness is societally both encouraged and rewarded.

We may very well live within a world that has forgotten what friendship is, whether between individuals or between nations. As essential as this dynamic is, we will never witness its resurrection if we do not begin--today--to demonstrate those qualities which are most needed. We can each be the teacher which those around us so desperately need.

Individually, I may sail the seas of my life within my own little boat, hoping that sufficient resources come near enough for me to survive, as I am tossed from one wave or season of weather to another. In forming friendships, the sharing of resources, abilities perceptions, and possibilities, lifts us higher than any storm's wave will ever reach. This is even more true when friendship accurately describes the interaction between humanity and God. Friends are not, after all, two persons who are the same, but rather two persons who dare to love and to learn together, regardless of similarities or differences (or perhaps because of them).

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

## Relationship

Since the time of my earliest childhood memories, everyone around me seemed to agree upon who were my parents and siblings. Also since the time of my earliest childhood memories, however, I have been aware of how shared activities, concerns, and goals can create a sense of relationship, perhaps even a sense of family. In most cases, what makes the relationship real and what raises it to the higher level of being family, is the commitment each one has to supporting the other members. I continue to remember the wonderfully non-judgmental grandmother who entered the department store where I worked for a couple of years after high school, asking where recordings of rock music could be found. She clearly didn't know anything at all about rock music, except that it was the style of music her grandson preferred. Her only concern was that his birthday was rapidly approaching and she wanted to buy him whatever he would like, to encourage his self-defined interests in music.

This grandmother remains one of my reference points, whenever I need to define unconditional love and acceptance. In her own simple little way, she was demonstrating the profound power of unconditional love. I sometimes wonder whether her grandson understood the gift, in the same way that it was given by her and, if so, what sort of man he eventually became.

In a similar way, we often don't understand what relationships of the past have given us (myself included). Even if the particular relationship was exceptionally dysfunctional or even painful, there is within every dark moment, a mysterious opportunity for light to be born. Perhaps this light will be expressed as a heightened sensitivity to a particular social problem. Perhaps the darkness will open our eyes and allow us to see more than others generally see, much as the pupils of the eyes dilate when in more dimly lit places. Someone who has been sitting in a darkened room for a while may be able to take the hand of someone who has just entered the room, in order to lead them around so that they do not stumble over furniture and other objects in the room before their eyes have adjusted.

The lives we live within this world may be just such a darkened room, within which those who have been present for a longer period of time have guidance to offer to those who have more

recently entered. The one who has more recently entered, conversely, may have brought along an essential resource which has the ability to revive or empower everyone else within the room. Both persons must therefore be willing to listen, to speak, and to share whatever they have to give.

True value within such a room lies not in the objects the room contains, but in the interaction that the persons there individually and collectively create. Too many objects in the room, in fact, will adversely affect the abilities for interaction. The more material things present, the more things there are over which to stumble and about which to be concerned--all of which distracts from joyful, educational, or constructive interaction.

Perhaps the human imagination is a darkened room within which humanity can visit with God and create forms of familial interaction. If we began each day with a few moments of quiet meditation within which we imagined entering a darkened room, feeling our way to a comfortable couch, and after being seated called out, "Are you here, God?" The answer may come as a word, a feeling that someone is there, or perhaps even an actual touch upon our hand or shoulder. The answer may also come to us as silence--which does not necessarily indicate the absence of God.

It is sometimes within learning to listen to silence, that I am finally able to hear the whispers of my own heart (as well as other whispers). It is when I am most distracted by responsibilities, tasks, and concerns of every description, that I am most able to momentarily forget the constellation of relationships which guide me through the long nights and days of human existence.

When I am not at home but rather out doing some work at some other urban location, it is easy to forget the wagging tails and joyful whimpers with which my dogs will welcome me home again. When the telephone fails to ring and I am spending long hours laboring over doctoral writing on my computer, it is easy to forget the good friends I have in other places, who are deeply concerned about how well I am doing. When the laundry needs folding, the bills need paying, the houseplants need watering, and I was supposed to have left for a meeting downtown five minutes ago, it is easy to forget my spiritual family invisibly watching my every move with love.

It is in remembering all of these, that I am once again able to smile and persevere with joy.

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

## Partnership

When I first encountered a religious organization called the Dance of Universal Peace, a unique component of some of the dances, was a progressive rotation around the circle of dancers, within which particular dance partners within each repetition might not be people of the opposite gender. Traditionally, in most cases, dance partners are opposite gender couples (e.g. women with men and vice versa). For each brief repetition of such dances, one had to be willing to engage in a brief partnership of movement and harmony with another person who may be a man, a woman, a transgender person (one making an association with or actual physical transition toward a gender other than what was originally physically apparent), or even an intersex person (one having certain characteristics of both genders). The first lesson for me within participation in the Dance of Universal Peace, therefore, was the metaphor that dancing through life's myriad of experiences was not a matter of men dancing with women and women dancing with men, but rather of persons dancing with persons.

The essence of this particular partnership was harmonious (and also frequently contrasting) movement and voice. The roles played by each dancer might also change, from one repetition to the next as the dance continued. If the dance continued, one could expect to eventually experience all of the various roles which the dance included. This particular expectation is by no means limited to circular liturgical dances. If the dance of life goes on, we will each eventually play all of the available roles.

Even within the business world, it is in fact advantageous for business partners to experience (at least briefly) all of the various roles, so that they can perform whichever particular role ultimately corresponds to their greatest aptitude with the greatest expertise and understanding possible. When each understands how their contribution affects and is affected by everyone

else involved, the entire relevant population is able to do its work in a more mutually supportive and ultimately joyful manner--encouraged by the knowledge that their coworkers or business partners have some understanding of what they're experiencing and what their needs within their respective roles are. In a sense, they may even become family to one another.

For the sake of clarity and because marital partnerships are at present still not universally available, I continue to choose the word "lifepartner" to describe any choice of gay or lesbian persons to literally build their lives around each other. A particular challenge within such relationships--which is not at all limited to gay or lesbian relationships--is the perception of this mutual choice as being a form of ownership. From my perspective, however, this reduces the ability of the relationship to be a partnership and places it at great risk for being destroyed by any extra-marital mistake (which might never be repeated).

It is imperative within every partnership that all important matters be openly and honestly discussed, that agreements and commitments be jointly made, that they be considered binding, and that they be completely respected throughout daily life. It is not imperative, however, that the agreements and commitments be exactly the same as everyone else's.

At the heart of lifepartnerships, as I understand them, is a commitment to nurture, to support, and to completely and unconditionally love each other in ways that are empowering rather than limiting. For myself, the standard of love to which I aspire, is that I desire my lifepartner's happiness and complete fulfillment more than my inclusion in that happiness or fulfillment. Considering the general weakness and frailty of humanity, this is a lot to ask. If one cannot openly and directly communicate about all important matters, however, one is not ready for true partnership. The decision to enter into such agreements and commitments, therefore, must never be made casually, emotionally, or lightly.

I have likewise observed many people throughout my life attempting to enter into business partnerships with God, negotiating rewards as payment for this or that action. Only unconditional love, however, will allow a partnership with God to become the most precious and beautiful celebration of life possible.

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

*"To unite in anything  
other than pursuits  
of genuine love and wisdom,  
creates division."*

-- Sister Who

## Citizenship

Whether or not we wish to acknowledge the interconnection of all things, the reality of our interdependence remains (for the most part) inescapable. An escape from this pervasive reality is only possible within isolated moments or within a practice of self-deception--both of which have other negative consequences. Once we have accepted that we are, in fact, inescapably interconnected with life all around us, extending backwards and forwards through time as well as filling the present moment, we are left with the general question of what we will do with this myriad of inescapable relationships.

If we can begin to think of the world and everything in it as a sort of community, even if it is not functioning in the manner of a true community, we can perhaps begin to understand and to accept that the welfare of each and every part is (to varying degrees) our concern. It is not that we must, like Atlas, labor under the task of holding up the entire weight of the world. It is rather simply that we must do what we can; we must fulfill those specific creative tasks that we were individually born to do, encouraging or actively supporting others' need to do the same, in whatever ways are genuinely both recommendable and possible.

We are, in a sense, citizens of this greater world--of this "undiscovered country" (to use a metaphor suggested by Gene Roddenberry). Just as citizens within every country ideally pay a certain amount of attention to the maintenance of virtue and integrity within their respective countries, we must also struggle with ongoing concern for effective management and distribution of resources within the now-forming global community. If we neglect any other citizen or group of citizens, we can expect to experience problems similar to those recorded within the pages of history. Whatever societal disasters have been recorded there, they have always begun with the simple neglect of persons in need.

It is by listening, engaging in dialogue, tolerating non-violent disagreement, celebrating our unique and diverse creativity, and responding to others' pain that peace on earth and good will toward all not only becomes possible, but also even becomes probable--to the extent that we consistently practice the divine qualities of unconditional love and ever-greater wisdom.

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

## On a Personal Note

Whew--a very busy and chaotic month it has been. The motorcycle mechanic who thought he'd finally discovered the source of electrical problems, has conceded defeat and is now attempting to sell or part-out this vehicle, in hopes of generating funds for the purchase of a better machine. The graduate school conference in Dallas, Texas, was an adversarial experience, but tempered greatly by a generous individual who provided free lodging within his suburban home.

The video production which occurred on January 31 was finally able to resolve the audio problems completely, but video problems were encountered (argh!). A friend is coming to my house later this week to see if we can resolve the difficulties and prevent them from recurring. I'm hoping thereafter to produce some new shows of sufficient quality to present them to a local Public Broadcasting station, in hopes of reaching a much larger viewing audience. All prayers and positive thoughts in this regard are very much appreciated.

As always, if you are living or traveling within the Denver-metro area of Colorado and would like to be a guest within a future episode of "Sister Who Presents," discussing any generally applicable issue or insight that is personally important to you, please feel free to contact me to schedule a production session.

2010 desk calendars featuring Sister Who are available by request, for anyone who does not yet have a copy and would like one.

On Wednesday, February 17, after more than a year of very difficult but persistent preparatory work, I will be recording the vocals for my third album of original songs, entitled, "Along the Way." I think this may be my best album yet, but each is somewhat unique so it's difficult to say for certain. I hope to have this album available for purchase either through my Internet website or by postal mail within the next four weeks (\$18 including shipping costs).

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

### Subscription Information:

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