

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

Bracing for Success

Sometimes I feel like the title character played by Lucille Ball in the movie, "Auntie Mame," at that moment when she returns home after being discharged from yet another day-job, clinging to the belief that somehow everything really is going to work out but completely at a loss to say just how that will occur. Between day-jobs once again, I am trying to make wiser choices so that the negative pattern does not continue to repeat itself.

Nevertheless, it does seem to me that everything really is going to work out and I am in fact happy in my new home, in spite of the many significant repairs yet to be made. Reflecting upon my current situation and attempting to see beyond the surface events of the last couple of weeks, if things really are going to work out, then I'd best get busy and use this time as wisely as possible to address some of the needed repairs here, since I will have little time to do so once my next day-job becomes a reality.

Each day is thus a combination of a little bit of job-searching and a lot of maintenance and repair work. Job-searching being the depressing activity that it is, wisdom seems to also recommend doing this in bite-size pieces instead of trying to swallow more than my soul can handle.

Then there is the frequently both perplexing and amazing element of intuition.

My intuition insists that everything is going to be fine, but won't say why or how. I've heard people say one should always trust intuition, but even this is a challenge because intuition generally speaks through symbols and vague impressions rather than with clear and concise terms in any familiar language.

Intuition also speaks from a deeper place of knowing what struggles are necessary for the sake of my soul's growth and I sometimes find myself angry at the situations into which I felt I was guided, and realize only much later the ways in which the experiences were not only necessary but also significantly beneficial.

The ideal would seem to be balancing the intuition of the right brain with the rational analysis

of the left, but merging the two is much easier said than done.

Whether or not I reach that point of merged understanding, however, seems to have little relationship to the fact that things always do somehow work out. My ignorance is unable to prevent a resolution anymore than my understanding is able to force the resolution to happen more quickly.

Considering that significant steps in life draw success at some point from things beyond my control, it seems I am again in a place of seeking indirect rather than direct response.

As with my small vegetable garden in the backyard, I can only provide the most nurturing environment. The growth of each plant is some mysterious thing which happens between each plant or seed and the Divine which is the source of all life. I prepared the ground, planted seeds, and this morning while watering the dark soil noticed the first sprouts coming into view.

I will continue to water and weed my garden all summer long, but I cannot directly force even the smallest measure of any plant's growth. Similarly, I can make my best presentation in as many times and places as possible, but positive response from any other individual or potential employer is something over which I have no control.

The fact that I have no definite control over such situations is not a problem, however, if in an expression of that mysterious thing called "faith" I remember that something much greater than I has not forgotten me and that if this greater something (or someone) will be concerned for the growth of a radish in my garden, I have no doubt that I am worthy of love and care also.

As a humble sprout within a divine garden, I too will be given a most nurturing environment in which to grow, so I'd best prepare myself in whatever ways I can, to be just that sort of success.

May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be--including me.

Loving the Past, Forgiving the Present; and Vice Versa

For each time I have heard of friends seeing each other years later and picking up where they left off as if they'd never been apart, I've also known and experienced many times when after years apart, friends discover too many differences to pretend that nothing has changed.

I know that I am, for the most part, not the person I was in high school. I am also not the person I was on the day I graduated from college. If on any conscious or subconscious level someone whom I have not seen in many years, comes to visit and expects this of me, I suspect the visit will be a disappointing and uncomfortable one.

In pursuit of inner peace, therefore, as I pondered such thoughts, I was moved to give thanks for the happy times I've had with various persons in the past and forgive the present for not sustaining those moments and relationships.

In order to move on with my life, I must find a way to be okay with the honest truth of what my life has been. I may not ever view myself as being no more than the sum of my past experiences, but I can neither pretend that my past experiences have no current influence upon myself and the ways that I interact with life.

I do find a certain instruction, inspiration, and even inner strength in reflecting upon moments of the past, but only if through such reflection I create an empowering relationship between such moments and my current challenges.

If I fail to create the specifically empowering relationship with current challenges, however, the past memory becomes a sort of temporal blood clot which impedes circulation and begins to create toxicity and a form of illness within my current spiritual and mental body. More concisely, a part of me gets stuck and cannot move in the way it needs to move.

I must also remember, however, that some memories require more time and effort than others to find or create an empowering relationship to present challenges. I once read many years ago of a person struggling with what was called, "a hurt too deep."

Some wounds of past experience are so deep and traumatic that it would be completely fair to ask whether any of us will live long enough to see the wound finally completely healed. Generous

amounts of compassion are needed, both from ourselves and from each other, to address such challenges.

This is where we have the opportunity to become emotional time-travelers, drawing love from the past into the present or vice versa, in order to accomplish the empowering relationship through which healing will come as quickly as it is able to come.

I try not to belabor the point, because I do not wish to give the wrong impression of my very human parents and siblings, but for anyone who doesn't already know, I am estranged from all of them for various reasons.

The reason I mention this is simply to illustrate from within my own experience that if I were to avoid all positive thoughts of them in a way which strongly suggests a lack of forgiveness, I would equally be maintaining an area of emotional woundedness within myself.

Suffice to say that they have chosen not to include an openly gay family member within their lives and I have chosen to respect that choice and stay away.

Nevertheless, I do myself and everyone else a great disservice if I do not remain open and supportive of loving family relationships. It is imperative for my own emotional, psychological, and spiritual (and consequentially physical as well) growth and health, that I remember the moments of expressed love, however few or brief or conditional they may have been, and forgive the existence of moments which could be described in much more negative terms.

Neither the positive nor the negative

*"It all begins
with finding
the courage
to stand alone."*

--Sister Who

moments are sufficient to describe the totality of any individual involved, since we are all combinations of diverse qualities and experiences. Furthermore, within the process of maturing is a process sometimes referred to as "individuation," which I sometimes describe as the need for each person to make his or her "declaration of independence" at some point in life.

I am thankful for what I have received from my parents (well, most of it; there are some things on which I'm still working), my friends, and the contributions of every other teacher or stranger whose life path has crossed my own, but I am the embodiment of a spirit which is far greater and far more inclusive than any of those moments or experiences ever could be.

Perhaps I'm going out on a limb here a bit, but I would also say that until I find the courage to live as that greater embodiment of everything the Divine has planted within me in combination with all of my past and present experiences, thoughts, feelings, and so forth, I have not begun to live my own life.

Until I find the courage to stand alone, my life will not truly begin and I will be little more than a poor shadow of all of the words and wishes of others.

Only after having found the courage to stand alone, curiously, can I then begin to dance in the most beautiful way with the people and events which will combine to fill my life from that point onwards.

Within various folk dances I've learned over the years, people are usually grouped in couples, sometimes dancing independently of other couples and sometimes moving in relative harmony or collaborative interaction with other couples. Within each couple, the two are sometimes side to side and facing the same direction and sometimes face to face and facing in opposite directions. In no instance, however, did any of these couples ever merge into a single entity. Differences in appearance, dress, movement, facial expression, and so forth were nonetheless insufficient to keep the two people concerned, from dancing beautifully with each other. What mattered was whether anything caused them to misstep, slip out of rhythm, or stumble in their performance of the particular dance in some way or another. Additionally, if the couple was able to get back in step with the dance, rather than leave the dance floor in frustration, the dance was able to continue

and the momentary failure was generally quickly forgotten.

The conclusion which I draw from this illustration, is that within the maintenance of any relationship or friendship, it is more important that we not be thrown off-track by any difference or misstep, than that we never make a mistake.

This is the mirror of the title of this article and the flip-side of the coin: the need to forgive the past and love the present.

The present is after all where we concern ourselves not only with being absolutely honest with ourselves and others about what has transpired, but also with doing and being even better. More concisely, the present is where we grow.

The past cannot be grown or nurtured to be anything more than it was (though memories of the past can be transformed through increased understanding).

In order to forgive either past or present and also love either present or past, it is essential that we cultivate a willingness to grow, a willingness to look into whatever mirror life provides, to see what is really there so that we can respond as positively as we are able.

When I chose the spot for my vegetable garden, I took a good look around to determine whether it would receive enough sunshine or whether it would be too often in the shade. I did so because I understood that this is one of the things needed by plants, if they are to grow and produce a bountiful harvest.

Similarly, when I choose a spot in which to nurture my soul's growth, I look for relationships, challenges, and so forth, which draw from the soil of my body, honest expressions of my spirit. I look for those who will not simply make me feel comfortable but also those who will not allow me to become lazy or weak in some way. I do not look for things to be easy; I look for them to be meaningful to producing a bountiful harvest.

When I am prompted to deal with memories I'd probably rather leave behind, I know that I am being asked to grow. When I am prompted to deal with current challenges to the ways I think and interact with life, I know that I am being asked to grow.

Summer storms can be very destructive, but after each one, plants and trees again return to the pursuit of providing a bountiful harvest and thereby continuing the cycles of life on earth--an example well worth following.

Seeds of Faith and Hope

Just before closing the purchase of my new home, I purchased a new mailbox. A premature action? Perhaps.

My prayerful intention was that this purchase was an act of faith that the closing would indeed be successful and that I would soon be living within a new and better home--and so it came to pass.

Other times, however, my actions of faith were followed by disappointment.

I have often heard that falling is best followed by getting back up again. Similarly, I suggest that when faith is disappointed, remember that disappointments are no more consistent in their occurrence than blessings.

No matter what (or for how long) the past has been, the present and future have every opportunity to be something different, to be something better.

This is why I strive to always see Faith and Hope as two whose friendship has been long and enduring, who once again join hands and march bravely forward, no matter how steep the path up the mountain may be. As long as life continues, no other choice makes much sense.

The past year or so has been filled with an amazing volume of doors of opportunity being closed to the work of Sister Who. Time and time again, I offer or perhaps even request to be included and am told that not only am I not wanted, but to go away.

Rejection is a source of much self-doubt and confusion, especially since my work has focused upon drawing out the treasures the Divine has hidden within each individual. Is the work of Sister Who over? The response I receive within moments of deep prayer is an emphatic, "No!"

"But no one seems to want to listen," I exaggerate and complain.

"So give me an excuse I haven't heard before," the Divine responds and I am reminded of something I said to a dear friend quite some time ago, who is a brilliant musician and songwriter living within a geographical area which seems to have minimal appreciation for such things.

As difficult as it is for a musician to live among "unmusical" people, it is where a musician is most needed.

Similarly, as difficult as it is for an honest person to live among dishonest people, it is where an honest person is most needed. The same could be said of artistic people, imaginative people, spiritual people, and so on. It is imperative that such persons go on being whoever and whatever, they find themselves to be.

When I am standing too close to the experience of my own present moment, I become more alarmed by challenges that I see, than may be warranted within a broader perspective. In reaching for a broader perspective, from which I can draw strength and by which I can make wiser choices, I occasionally step back

to consider what the present time looks like within the broader perspective of human history.

From that perspective, it seems that (among other things) the present time is obsessed with money, willing to sacrifice the right brain for the supposed survival of the left (not realizing how interdependent the two halves of the brain are), and in that well-educated and intelligent people are choosing to have fewer children while people of less intelligence and maturity continue to exercise almost no reproductive responsibility, the human race is evolving toward a less-intelligent form.

All of which suggests the onset of what one might call the second "dark ages."

Is this good or bad? Probably neither, but it may be a phase of development which is relatively unavoidable.

Reflecting upon the "dark ages" of the past, I understand its duration to be perhaps three to five hundred years, followed by one of the most incredible times of flowering of human thought and creativity, and that it was generously sprinkled with extremely anomalous individuals.

The flowering is the chief reason for us to remain undiscouraged, but would most likely not have occurred without the seeds scattered by those anomalous individuals, who generally did not live long enough to see the flowering. Who can imagine the Renaissance without Leonardo Da Vinci or Gallileo, for example? Yet they were long gone when that time of revival of the human spirit reached its height.

The challenge to us within the current era, therefore, is to scatter the seeds of our thoughts, words, and lives as far and as wide as possible. If we are entering the second dark ages, we are given the privilege of seeding the second Renaissance, though we will possibly not live long enough to see the great flowering which will follow.

Whether or not we see that flowering, whether or not anyone will listen, and whether or not anyone will open the door of opportunity to us, the mere fact that we exist as we do within this time and historical junction, is all the divine commission we need, to persist in being the stars in the night which history may or may not remember us as being. More concisely put, we can each be a Leonardo Da Vinci or a Gallileo for a future Renaissance. As servants of divine life and light and love, we can scatter the seeds which are more essential to the future than we will probably ever know. May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

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