

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

At the heart of each moment of life is the complex phenomenon of relationship, in a myriad of diverse forms corresponding to the diversity of participants and of ever-changing circumstances. The possibilities of relationship are even greater, if or when one considers what lies beyond the reach of the five basic physical senses.

Within this month's newsletter, my goal has been to provide some food for thought with genuinely empowering substance. Life is too short to waste time being superficial and trivial, leaving us to later regret neglected opportunities. Within drinking deeply of life's meanings and possibilities, there is available a great amount of joy and passion for those willing to explore the depths of their own experiences. Anyone can live length of his or her physical life; to be an extraordinary person is to live one's depths also.

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

Projection

Because we are each born into a specific social and familial context, environmental influences confront us throughout our lives. Within each encounter, is a contribution to our understandings of the word "normal." A broader understanding requires that we learn to see through others' eyes, minds, and hearts also, by withholding judgment of whose way is better, worse, right, or wrong. What works for one person, rarely works the same way for any other person. Whether or not everyone is doing the same thing, what matters is finding something that works for one's self. The challenge which follows, however, is defending one's choices against the verbal assaults of others. There is often an endless supply of well-intentioned voices, who are absolutely convinced that their particular way is most right, recommendable, and do-able. Furthermore, they believe that you should do as they would, if they were faced with your circumstances and challenges. The truth, however, is that you are the one who will have to live with the

good or bad consequences that your choices and actions produce.

Projection occurs when the distinction between one's self and others is overlooked or ignored and persons are blamed or penalized for things they did not actually do. Others may even be so convinced of the rightness of their recommendations that they fail to notice when you do things in other ways. When this occurs, you will be rewarded, blamed, or punished for things you didn't do.

The corollary to this is when we inadvertently and unconsciously project our expectations and definitions upon others, blaming or punishing them for actions or choices they never actually did. By returning to a peaceful, loving, and more objective state of mind, we invite ourselves to see the truth of others, ourselves, and our relationships.

Combatting projection, therefore, requires a sort of letting go of not only one's expectations—positive, negative, or otherwise—but also allowing others to be whomever and whatever they find themselves to be, of allowing others and ourselves to have whatever needs, aspirations, or characteristics each person has and of allowing the transcendent wisdom of God to create within each person a unique approach to life, individuality, and relationship.

In its positive form, projection may be an invitation to be better than we have ever actually been. This was depicted within the movie, "Straight Talk," starring Dolly Parton, within which a radio station needed someone to respond to listeners' questions and invited Dolly to be that person. In its negative form, however, projection creates a wall between ourselves and the specific truth that can finally set us free. This is sometimes one of the influences used to recreate within children the negative addictions of their parents, such as alcoholism or abuse. Regardless of particular religion, personal experience, or family history, however, truth still has the power to set us free.

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

Interpretation

Communication is inseparable from relationship, language, and interpretation. From the first moment two persons find their lives overlapping in any way whatsoever, relationship is present. Whether it is a language of silence, of words, of gestures, or of symbols, the awareness of each others' presence immediately begins to include thoughts, interpretations, and ideas.

Is it safe to be near this person? What does this person want from me? What can I gain from or give to this person? All of these questions—and more—flash through our minds, sometimes without we ourselves even realizing it.

All of these questions, however, also involve interpretation. If the other person provides any answer or information, we must then decide whether the other is being open and honest or whether something is being hidden or misrepresented. We may even question how well we know ourselves; whether we are imagining a danger that is not real because of the truth of the person which we have not yet discovered. We may, for example, be struggling with a question of how to repair a broken vehicle and not realize that we're standing next to an auto mechanic. We may be searching for a particular item within a store and not realize that the person standing next to us is another customer and not a store employee who would know where to find the item. Why would we make such a mistake? Perhaps because the clothing which they are wearing is similar to that which is worn by store employees. The similarity encourages an interpretation, but, in this case, an erroneous one.

Many erroneous interpretations accompany the perception of threats. "If this happens, that means that such and such will follow." Perhaps, but not necessarily. Specifically because the future is unformed and many persons and forces shape each moment, the outcome of any situation may still be changed. A more complete statement, therefore, would be "if this happens, that means that such and such will follow—unless some other circumstance or person intervenes." Logically, the next question within such situations is, "Who or what has the ability to intervene?" At that point, one could also ask, "what would persuade that person or circumstance to positively intervene?"

This too is an interpretation, generally relying upon how well we know how the particular person or circumstance has previously behaved

and what (if anything) has changed the way I could expect that person or circumstance to behave. We are each growing and changing throughout our lives, whether or not we realize it. This is one of the reasons that community is so important: so that others can help us to see those parts of ourselves which we ourselves cannot see.

Closely allied with interpretation, therefore, is the element of trust. As essential as trust is to the functioning of any human society, however, it is not automatic and will not happen unless we nurture, require, and practice it within all of our relationships. I was recently confronted with someone who did not trust me and consequently demanded to see identification before proceeding with an exchange of trivial importance. In retrospect, I wish that I had simply said, "no."

A fundamental principle of the United States Constitution is that one is "innocent until proven guilty," but this will only be true if we consistently require its practice within our relationships. By surrendering a look at my personal identification, I enabled the problem of an increasingly suspicious and paranoid society within which people fail to trust each other. Had I instead insisted that I be regarded as a trustworthy person, that trust be an active element within our brief exchange, and that my personal boundaries also be respected, I would have encouraged a society of mutual trust.

The maintenance of the principles according to which local and national societies operate, is the responsibility of each and every one of its citizens. Neglecting such maintenance will only produce a society which operates by other (probably more undesirable) principles. When less desirable principles of relationship and interpretation are allowed to stand, we all lose.

What do we lose? Opportunities for future collaboration, a world in which to live that is generally characterized by love, and the freedom to be whomever and whatever we find ourselves to be, in the best possible way. The value of these cannot be measured by any capitalistic system, preoccupied with mere profit and loss. Recovering from the loss of ourselves and our relationships is much more difficult than any momentary inconvenience of their maintenance along the way.

Ultimately at stake within questions of interpretation is the ability to see each other and to see ourselves. In failing to see, we become blind. In successfully seeing, we are more fully alive.

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

Comprehension

Life has often been described as a circle or as a circular path, including the idea that birth is a particular point along that path and that death is a point at which the circle is in some sense once again closed to all further development. During the time in between birth and death is the opportunity to enlarge the circle, sometimes far beyond the size or scope typical of other people's lives, even within one's own family or local community. Within comprehension of any particular thing, is the invitation to look at a matter from all sides; to know its length, breadth, height, depth, and constitutive substance.

We might measure a cube for example and say that it is three inches wide, four inches tall, six inches deep, and that because the cube is made of steel and filled with sand, a certain measurement of weight is present also. To fully comprehend the cube, however, we would also need to ask its function or purpose. Perhaps it is a paperweight, quite beneficial to securing a pile of papers on my desk which would otherwise be scattered by the breeze coming in through a nearby open window.

Comprehension therefore includes the need to consider relevant relationships and may inspire certain actions. I may close the window because it is raining, cold, or too windy outside. I may open the window because it is too warm inside. I may momentarily move the paperweight so that I can read and respond to the letter which is on top of the pile of papers which are being secured.

If I wish to comprehend a person, the challenge is much greater, specifically because of how very multi-dimensional any person can be. Unlike the cube, there are far more than four dimensions to explore and to measure.

One of those dimensions is that an initial negative response does not necessarily indicate failure. If I recommend a response to a problem and the answer which I receive is simply "no," I

*"Failure is the moment
when a door of opportunity
opens behind us while we
are distracted by the door
which has closed in front of us."*

-- Sister Who

can then ask what it is about my recommendation which is disagreeable. Perhaps my recommendation could be modified and improved in some way, by the integration of the other person's wisdom, understanding, and insight.

Sometimes failure doesn't mean "no." Sometimes failure simply means "look in another direction." Comprehension is the ability to take that broader look at the characteristics and dynamics of a particular challenge and find alternative possibilities. When a particular system is not working as effectively as one would like, when it is in a sense failing, that failure can be integrated with greater comprehension and interpreted as a need to either modify the current system or create a brand-new one.

One thing which comprehension cannot tolerate, however, is blindly rejecting invitations to change. The primary work of comprehension is the constructive integration of new information. One of the primary tools of comprehension is discernment. Without discernment, one can never be sure whether a particular door of opportunity will lead to empowerment or disaster. Those who fail to develop skills of discernment, are consequently often people with less ability to constructively change and adapt, as the world around them changes, ever renewing and reinventing itself in frequently unpredictable ways.

To comprehend a green lawn during summer months, one must look below the surface toward an understanding of why the lawn is green and what allows it to remain so. To comprehend one's experience of success or failure within various moments of life, one must look below the surface, to engage in deep self-reflection, and to determine what is needed. To comprehend a loving relationship, one must look deeply within the other person as well as within one's self, to constructively integrate the characteristics, needs, aspirations, and abilities of each person involved.

Comprehension is not a destination or a state of being at which we arrive, however, but rather a dynamic activity of relationship that shapes how we grow and relate to others. By definition, that which is truly God is beyond the reach of complete comprehension by any human mind. The reward of comprehending as much as we can and continuing to expand our comprehension as much as we're able, however, is an ever-larger circle in which to live.

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

Collaboration

At its simplest, collaboration is people helping people. Within every environmental or societal disaster, are profound moments when we briefly remember that all we really have is each other; that if we hoard possessions (even food) we wind up with nothing, but that if we value and nurture relationships we form a survival team.

The blessing of faith within such instances is that we also collaborate with unseen spiritual persons who are sometimes able to make the positive difference within a particular outcome. Although often unpredictable, the frequency of perhaps miraculous coincidences and shifts in the circumstances and events of many people's lives is undeniable.

Will relationships between material/physical and spiritual persons ever become completely predictable? I very much doubt it, considering how uncertain and subject to change even basic relationships with other human beings can be. For those without physical bodies who are not subject to limitations of time and space, the experience of life is so different that it is amazing that relationships of love with humanity exist at all.

Collaboration is love in action, empowering the lives of others and simultaneously of one's self, sometimes even without knowing in advance what the possibilities and ultimate outcome will be. The old adage states that "two heads are better than one." In dialogue with others, I have often found a greater wisdom than I could ever generate all on my own. In prayer, this "dialogue with others" includes talking with God. My occasional frustration in this area, however, is that God often does not reveal all of the information I would really like to have, in advance or even at the time that a particular challenge is occurring.

Perhaps there is something about not knowing that is also an important part of my soul's growth. It does sometimes seem so. The essential part of collaboration left to me within such moments, is to have sufficient faith and trust to still show up. As one author has observed, "life is not a rehearsal."

Whatever we wish to say, do, or remember, now is the time. Whatever we wish to be, become, or bestow, now is the time. Whatever love we wish to impart to the universe and to those willing to share moments with us, now is the time.

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

On a Personal Note

I continue to entertain thoughts of taking a break from video production for the rest of the hot summer months so that I can be more available to other things, but continued opportunities to interview amazing guests have kept production going at an astonishing pace—twelve new episodes within the month of June alone.

Considering the brevity of the summer months at high elevations in Colorado, there is also the challenge of more hikes to the summits of the highest mountains here. In only a couple more days, my plans include an attempt to visit the summit of Mount Antero, as usual, in full ritual garb and makeup. What may happen or whom I may encounter along the trail, only God knows, but it would be unusual if there was no special encounter at all.

I am continuing with redevelopment of the meditation garden and further development of the ministry of "God Space Sanctuary" which will nurture spirituality without dogma or discrimination.

A significant accomplishment of the past four weeks is the creation of a concrete ramp to the front door. Persons who use wheelchairs and other mobility-assisting devices now have access to the ministerial resources available here and can be included within all future God Space Sanctuary events (as well as having opportunity to be guests within future episodes of "Sister Who Presents").

Financial resources remain relatively scarce, but progress in many areas seems unconcerned and continues to occur. I generally shrug and show up whenever possible, to do whatever I can.

Preparations continue for participation in the bodybuilding competition of the Gay Games in Cologne, Germany, during the first week of August, during which I am grateful for the hospitality of a gay couple in the city of Bonn.

Thus my service to life, love, wisdom, and the personal/spiritual growth of others continues.

Blessings, love, and peace be with you now and always, *Sister Who*

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