

Sister Who's Perspective

Sister Who's Perspective, Issue #74, August 2005, copyright

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

Passively as being drawn toward and being driven away, and actively as reaching toward and pushing away, many things "stir the pot" of our lives, creating the sort of oscillation and vibration one finds within every atom of material reality. As much as a little stability, coasting, or even boredom might seem preferable at times when all of this vibration and movement make us weary or so worried that we have trouble sleeping at night, such changes are an inherent part of being fully alive, of knowing (to cite Thornton Wilder's point of discussion in the final act of the play, "Our Town") that we live, while we do. This issue of "Sister Who's Perspective" explores ways of viewing and understanding motive forces within our lives and world.

Drawn Toward

I first encountered the notion of giving someone money "to keep you honest" within the movie, "Beaches," but it was similar to what I'd read years before in the biblical book of Proverbs: "...give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say 'Who is the Lord?' or I may steal, and so dishonor the name of my God."

Providing legitimate ways by which everyone can meet his or her needs, does seem to prevent numerous misdeeds from ever getting started. If in fact legitimate ways to meet needs were provided, this availability would strongly suggest that those who continue to reach for more are motivated by greed, laziness, or some other sort of psychological dysfunction. On a side note, I've often wondered if laziness is no more than an indication that the particular person has not yet found his or her passion, the activity or interest which inspires and motivates that person in ways that nothing else can. Beyond mere survival of the body, however, there is a mind, a heart, and a soul which also need to be nurtured.

With regard to giving to others, more than just "to keep you honest," I would like to give that

which effectively exists to keep your soul alive, your spirit strong, and your dreams moving toward reality. No one pursuing a passion or a beautiful dream ever has to wonder whether or not life is worth living. The only time that question arises, is when a person somehow loses sight of the passion or beautiful dream for which he or she was originally created.

The reason I have grouped this discussion under the heading of "drawn toward" is that I believe and continue to find evidence within those I meet, that a longing of some sort or another exists within each and every person--a longing which if positively expressed would be a benefit both to that person and to the world around him or her. More often than not, the person is too occupied with survival issues to adequately pursue his or her God-given passion.

Similarly, when asked why they do what they do, artists frequently respond "because I have to"--which is why I sometimes refer to "the creative compulsion" which seems to live within every artist of every description. So what happens when the artist can't but still feels that inner creative compulsion. What effect does that internal pressure have then?

Ideally, the pressure increases until it finds an appropriate and healthy outlet. In most cases, an outlet is ultimately found, but the greater the pressure, the more likely that the outlet will also involve a degree of significant change (I.e. new careers, relationships, moving to another house, city, state, or even country).

It is hardly a natural reaction, but is nevertheless advisable not to immediately presume that the change is adversarial. Giving birth to new forms of life is inherently painful, but (in most cases) the potential rewards far outweigh the costs involved.

This is what draws us: the hope of something better, the yearnings of some deep and perhaps even subconscious part of ourselves, and most especially the beauty within us resonating with the beauty around us.

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

Driven Away

I once commented that I didn't mind my troubles so much when I realized that they are frequently a form of divine guidance. Of late I have needed to extend this possibility to include my reactions within group situations.

Having grown up within an American subculture within which the "eleventh commandment" was "thou shalt be polite at all costs (and the word "all" was very much what was meant), I all too often have a tendency to apologize for actions and statements which make others uncomfortable. A problem with this, of course, is that messengers with difficult messages still need to deliver those messages to their intended recipients. It is rather alarming to imagine individuals acting as censors at a local post office, discarding all unpleasant news rather than delivering it. Bills marked "past due" and virtually all correspondence originating from the Internal Revenue Service would of course be shredded first--which would be fine until the phone, electricity, and plumbing stopped working.

All of which is to say that our world does include a significant amount of bad news which must be delivered every day. Similarly, each of us has the challenge of confronting situations and circumstances which need to be resolved and healed rather than simply locked away from view. Dealing with such things is never easy, but it is necessary and best to do so.

Within certain recent experiences, it has been suggested that certain emotional outbursts served the constructive purpose of being a sort of "wake up" call to administrators involved. It remains to be seen, whether or not a constructive response will be given, but a message has nevertheless been delivered. Numerous times throughout human history, this has also been the case. A particular incident has alarmed and awakened the general populace to a problem which has long needed a resolution. In some cases, a constructive response finally occurred and a bit of the healing of humanity was accomplished. In many more cases, unfortunately, people quickly went back to life as usual, no matter how disastrous the consequences of doing so ultimately proved to be.

With regard to more obvious and material challenges, I had hoped to report the successful attainment of two more summits, attempted last week. Unfortunately Murphy's law was out in full

force. Since the particular mountains were four hour's drive from the Denver-metro area, I opted to camp out the night before in an area nearby. Because it rained for hours, I finally gave up waiting and put up a dome tent in the rain, thereby drenching my jacket and shoes beyond usefulness for the rest of the trip. How well did it go? I was just about ready to start checking every tree and bush for hidden cameras, not wanting to believe that anything could naturally be this difficult.

The private camp site next to the stream turned out to be ten feet from a churning white-water river loud enough to discourage sleep and mask the sound of my wind-up alarm clock. When I finally woke two and a half hours late, I decided to proceed anyway, hoping that some particularly meaningful conversation would redeem the otherwise mostly disastrous trip.

After leaving the campsite, I discovered that the trail head had been moved but no signs indicated the new location. After another hour of searching, I found the trail head and started up the mountain, trying to make sense of it all.

When after many exhausting miles I neared the summit, storm clouds discouraged any more progress in that direction. Thanks to the weather, almost no trailside conversation occurred.

The other frustrations would have been forgotten, had the storm clouds not driven me away just when I was so very close to reaching the summit. If either the alarm clock had succeeded in waking me or the new location of the trail head had been marked, I would have succeeded.

So was this failed hike an experience of adversarial circumstances or of (for whatever reason) being divinely guided to reach the summit on another day? Only God knows but the more empowering understanding is obvious. Past experience suggests that many more things make sense years later, than ever make sense at the time. I believe, however, that we are each called to make belief and interpretative choices that strengthen rather than weaken our relationship with the Divine (and consequently our relationships with each other). Choices which strengthen are consistently based upon truth, honesty, and love. Choices which weaken are consistently based upon fear and judgment.

Whether a mountain hike or a ministerial opportunity, however, the most important thing is still to show up and to be willing to participate.

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

Reaching Toward

It's been suggested a number of times over the years, that ideally we should each be engaged in the activity (or activities) about which we feel passionate; that thing that we would each do, whether or not we ever got paid for it, simply because we love to do it, we are most alive when we do it, or we find the greatest sense of personal fulfillment therein.

For me, this activity is being Sister Who and I have therefore occasionally even described it as the reason for which I was born. In any case, the highlight of each month is the composition and distribution of this newsletter, as well as any and all appearances or events in which I am able to participate as Sister Who.

I do struggle at times, however, with the personal cost of this work. On a purely financial level, I am spending approximately thirty dollars each month (which I think is a low estimate) for postage, paper, and ink cartridges for my computer printer, so that those without Internet access can still receive the newsletter. Nevertheless, I know that I would (and will) continue to do so as long as I'm able, because it really is integral to the truest part of myself and therefore the greatest contribution I have to make to any available community.

There are a great number of other activities also which will be undertaken when the financial or material resources become available. One of these is the construction of a chapel-looking tent measuring approximately ten by ten feet. This would be used at seasonal and regional

*"It's never
the wrong time
for a good fresh look
in the mirror
of life experiences,
to reacquaint ourselves
with the person
we see there."*

--Sister Who

conferences, fairs, and public celebrations to allow me to connect with an ever increasing audience and to offer pictures, calendars, CD recordings of songs, and other items for sale, to raise funds toward the possibility of full-time ministry at some point in the future. Within the next few weeks, I hope to contact a local tent-making company and present a small model of what I have in mind, in order to get a specific price quote for the tent just described. My initial investigation suggests the price will range between two and three thousand dollars.

One exciting update is that I am preparing to record two CDs of songs (twenty-three composed by myself and three composed by my good friend Rita Rae) on August 20.

Perhaps what I am really reaching toward by all of this activity, is the possession and expression of my own soul--which sounds superficially rather selfish, but is less so when one considers how interconnected every aspect of life and the world is. Additionally, it is as true now as it ever was, that the reason Sister Who exists is to nurture the personal and spiritual growth of others.

In ways that humanity is still struggling to understand, I suspect that every urge to create, evolve, express, and reach toward a beautiful way of being, is inspired by God. Have I understood and correctly expressed such creative urges within myself? For the answer to this question, I often look to the community of humanity around me, which is why failing to receive constructive response can be a bit unsettling. I want to know either that I have succeeded in doing my job correctly or how I can do better. I also want to know that in some sense, not only am I doing the job correctly, but also that God approves and is active in what I am doing. It is very encouraging, therefore, when I get a bit of positive feedback.

While assisting with a Pridefest celebration recently, a young woman approached me to thank me for my television shows and commented, "I've been watching you on TV all my life!" Considering that the first cable-casting of the first episode of "Sister Who Presents..." occurred in November of 1992 and that the show was cable-cast weekly for over twelve years, this was quite possible.

The related potential celebration is that I hope to be back in active production of my TV show within the next two months and to offer DVD recordings of these and older shows as well. Perhaps all sorts of dreams will finally come true.

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

Pushing Away

No matter how mature and evolved certain examples of humanity become, we must all continue to contend with an abundance of bigotry, sexism, and deceitfulness. The manipulative games adults play with each other are reprehensible and show no signs of stopping any time soon.

So what am I trying to accomplish if, for example, I cannot rid the world of homophobia? Railing at various administrations hardly seems effective. Education and encouraging a more global perspective on human relations are helpful, but in our age of mass production seem too minimally effective and slow, to be taken seriously.

What about racism? That's certainly a societal bandwagon onto which many want to jump, to satisfy their consciences that they really are working to make the world a better place.

In many cases, in attempting to jump on the bandwagon, most people simply miss the boat altogether. It is not so much a question of what the characteristics of a particular example are, but rather what this example has in common with others. If we target a root cause, we eliminate the need to endlessly prune away branches.

I'm not sure what word to use--racism? This is not a good word. The struggles are rarely about race. The term "people of color" is very offensive because it implies the existence of people without color (which would make the person invisible) and is often used to refer to anyone who isn't white, but white is a color also.

All of which is irrelevant. The real concern is civil rights and public behaviors, not skin colors. Additionally, if bad behavior is associated with a particular skin color, being blind to the same bad behavior within other groups is encouraged.

In an attempt to refocus the public dialogue and push away the ineffective arguing, I suggest that every such situation struggles with questions of the power of one group of people over another. Three things (none of which are race or skin color) cover nearly every example. These qualities are not, however, grounds for condemning any specific group. Rather they are a challenge to speak and act from the best sense of who and what we are, instead of the worst.

The first is majority versus minority population--one group simply outnumbers the other, a circumstance which in a myriad of forms has occurred within nearly community, country,

and people since the beginning of time.

The second is economics--one has more money or economic resources than the other and thus more ability to develop, improve, and expand one's self and the items or areas subject to one's influence. Of the three, I suggest this one is used as a tool of oppression more often than any other.

The third is knowledge--one has more technology, intellectual development, or information which somehow offers a strategic advantage over the other. Negatively, this is what allowed armies with elephants to defeat those with only horses. Positively, this has allowed some motivated and persistent individuals to escape impoverished living conditions.

None of which means the end of homophobic individuals, organizations, communities, and laws. An important distinction must be noted at this point, that the public dialogue around such issues employs broad generalizations for the sake of conversation, none of which are precisely embodied by a particular individual. Blaming any particular individual for broad societal trends over which the individual has no direct control only serves to diminish constructive communication.

So the world will most likely continue to include people who oppress others in ways that are simply not intelligent--not intelligent, that is, if one wishes to receive and integrate each and every individual's best contribution.

We do not bring out the best in others by dominating them, disrespecting them, excluding them, or ignoring them. If we want to bring out the best in others, we must love them. Without playground seesaw dynamics (the idea that someone has to go down in order for the other to go up), without double-standards, without turning a blind eye to someone's need, we must realize anew each and every morning, that humanity is a vast interconnected family and that doing any sort of violence to someone else is doing it to ourselves.

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

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