

thought seems indecent to me.

I remember the time also, when my lifepartner and I escorted a friend who was blind through a large department store because she needed to buy a treetop ornament for her Christmas tree. As we crossed the store, she carrying her white cane, people scattered to either side as if some dangerous creature was approaching. When we reached the appropriate aisle, it was necessary to carefully open the various boxed treetop ornaments so that she could feel them and thereby get a sense of their appearance. As we passed by the checkout counter, the cashier leaned as far back as she could, as if blindness were some sort of dangerous and contagious disease, and refused to utter a single word to explain what was happening to my friend who is blind. I thought the behavior of the cashier and the other people in the store was positively absurd, but I had to concede that unless people who are blind make regular appearances in department stores, customers and employees in such places will never learn how to interact with someone who is blind.

Interactions of all sorts employ a wide variety of diverse languages and vocabularies. Just as when I was first learning the German language in high school, proficiency in any language requires regular (perhaps even daily) practice.

Interactions also require a certain tolerance of what one might call "necessary pain." In spite of how many different colors, sizes, shapes, and fragrances roses may have, the one thing nearly all of them have in common is thorns. In spite of how many different colors, sizes, shapes, and personalities people may have, the one thing all of them have in common is that their lives began through the unavoidably painful process of childbirth.

I may be going out on a limb here, but I suggest to you that the one who is not willing to undergo a certain necessary pain, will never give birth to anything. In being created in God's image, we each have the opportunity to bring some new form or aspect of life into existence at various times during our lives, but there is a certain pain which must be endured if the new life is to come forth. In creating humanity, God's omniscience had to endure the future reality of war, oppression, hatred, and violence in order to create a being capable of expressing divine love and wisdom.

If we do not go forth and demonstrate love and light in spite of the world's hatred and darkness, God's presence will be too absent to begin the healing process which is so desperately needed. According to the biblical account, Jesus ascended bodily into heaven, forty days after rising from the dead. The most obvious message of this, it seems to me, is that if God is to have any incarnation on earth from that point onward, it will be through each one of us or not at all.

This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine.

#### Subscription Information:

"Sister Who's Perspective" is a monthly newsletter available for an annual subscription price of \$25.00 (please make checks payable to Denver NeVaar with the initials SWP on the memo line of the check).

All correspondence may be directed to:

**Sister Who**

**POB 18474**

**Denver, CO 800218-0474**

or email address:

**SisterWho@sisterwho.com**

Sister Who's Web Page:

**<http://www.sisterwho.com>**

Do you know someone who might like to receive a copy of this newsletter?

A single sample copy is free and no "sales pitch" or repetitive offers will follow. Just tell me the address to which I should send a single copy.

Do you know of a publication which might be interested in reprinting any of the text contained within this newsletter?

Please feel free to forward your copy of this newsletter to them and request a free replacement from me.

Thank you for your help in spreading my words to new places and people.

# Sister Who's Perspective

Sister Who's Perspective, Issue #33, March 2002, 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

## The Candle in the Wind is each of Us

The popular song written by Elton John originally referred to Marilyn Monroe (who coincidentally died the day I was born) and was later rewritten to refer to Princess Diana of Wales, but its implications and message are remarkably inclusive and timeless.

I recall a poster I saw many years ago which bore only a close-up photograph of a candle flame and the top of the candle within an otherwise completely dark room and the words, "There is not enough darkness in the entire universe to extinguish the light of a single candle."

As I think I mentioned within an earlier newsletter, the popular children's song, "This Little Light of Mine" is not by its words identified as being a specifically or exclusively Christian song. Its lyrics could just as easily be sung with pagan or any other form of spirituality in mind also. The only thing the song does say, is that the light in question is my own and not someone else's.

Given the sometimes frightening intensity of the darkness, the apathy, and even the insanity within the world around us, I understand very well the temptation to be reclusive. I understand that sometimes I am too tired and worn out to confront the challenges of this darkness and that I therefore need to take some time away to nurture and revive myself, a sort of personal retreat, one might say.

But I also understand just how dark the world would be if I did not choose to return the first moment I am able, to shine my light again into the darkness. Rarely is this action convenient, comfortable, without personal sacrifice of some kind, or even all that emotionally satisfying, but for the sake

of all that is good within the universe, it is essential for me to do so.

I want my light to shine for others to see. Let history not show that I was there, at any specific moment in time and space, and did nothing, as the darker side of humanity sought to control the local and global unfolding of life. As a minister commented to me many years ago, "all that is necessary for the triumph of evil, is for good to do nothing."

Every moment in time is an equal opportunity for both good and bad things to enter into the unfolding of life, just as every moment must be accompanied by physical inhalation and exhalation if a human body is to continue to function. There is no point at which it becomes unimportant to take a healthy breath, except of course the point at which the body is already dead. There is no point at which it becomes unimportant to stand up for justice, freedom, love, the value of each individual life, and the ability to engage in personally nurturing spirituality, except of course the point at which every ideal and entity of our world is dead and therefore without any ability to guide, motivate, or inspire us.

For now at least, I choose to be alive in the fullest sense of that word that I can manage and I plead with each of you to do the same. All that is good within the universe depends upon the shining of each person's light into the surrounding darkness.

Wonderful metaphors, perhaps, but what does this really mean in action? Here it would be very easy to become judgmental and that is definitely not my intention. What I hope to offer at this point is simply a bit of brainstorming, an idea factory, a think tank. Each of us will have other additional ideas which will come to us at different times,

according to how willing we are to act upon such ideas. The important thing is simply to refuse to ignore the opportunities to act, for no better reason than that they are inconvenient or uncomfortable.

For some this may mean some degree of political involvement, that arena which is probably the most detestable to people with creative and/or spiritual minds. Yet the truth remains that if people of good character do not accept the responsibilities of wise government and administration, people of poor character will and the world they will create from those positions of authority will not be worlds in which any of us want to live.

For some, shining one's light into the darkness may mean thankless volunteer activities, anything from working in a soup kitchen for the homeless to picking up garbage along roadways. Obvious and direct rewards or expressions of gratitude may be lacking, but the world in which we live will be inevitably all the more oppressive if positive actions remain undone. I wash my dishes every day, not because I enjoy washing dishes, but rather to avoid having no clean dishes available within my kitchen cupboards and a pile of unsightly dirty dishes filling the kitchen sink. Nobody ever says "thank you" but this does not stop me from washing dishes, washing clothes, vacuuming the floor, or giving the dog a bath from time to time. I do the work necessary to create the world in which I want to live.

For some, the actions of shining light into the darkness may mean involvement in religious administration. If the religious organization my time, energy, and money support, also supports oppression of certain other people groups, I need to be willing to step forward and name that oppression as being evil and inconsistent with the fundamental ideals of my organization's spirituality. I need to be willing to call my religious family back to its fundamental interconnectedness with divine wisdom and love.

For some, the actions of personal

light may involve creating a spark of love and peace within a world torn by excessive and unresolved conflict, setting a different example than the one I observe each day. Specifically, this may mean driving through rush hour traffic in an urban area and refusing to copy the unsafe driving habits of others; refusing to weave in and out of traffic, changing lanes frequently without signaling; refusing to drive at excessive speeds or take unnecessary risks; refusing to be inconsiderate toward other drivers who (like one's self) are simply trying to get to their destinations as quickly as possible.

For some, this personal light will be focused upon interpersonal relationships; setting a better example of how to listen constructively, consider the other's perspective and experience, and find a solution which satisfies all concerns.

Love can find a way through anything, but not without an attitude of persistence and flexibility toward the ever-changing circumstances of Life. So many times, I have set out to accomplish a specific goal, only to discover a higher purpose and a different destination than I had in mind, as I was willing to listen and respond to the evolving and unfolding chain of events and resources presented to me. Everything can be good, but everything will not be what we initially expect.

And that's okay. Really. It's okay. We can be thankful for the beauty and accomplishments we receive, instead of spending the rest of our lives mourning the loss of our myriad of hopes and dreams.

This will reflect our divine heritage, since I'm sure God had many wonderful possibilities in mind during the initial creation of humanity and we have obviously satisfied only a fraction of those possibilities.

But God loves us anyway and we need to do the same--to love ourselves anyway and therefore to continue doing the best we can to shine light and love into a world in which these essential qualities of Life are in short supply.

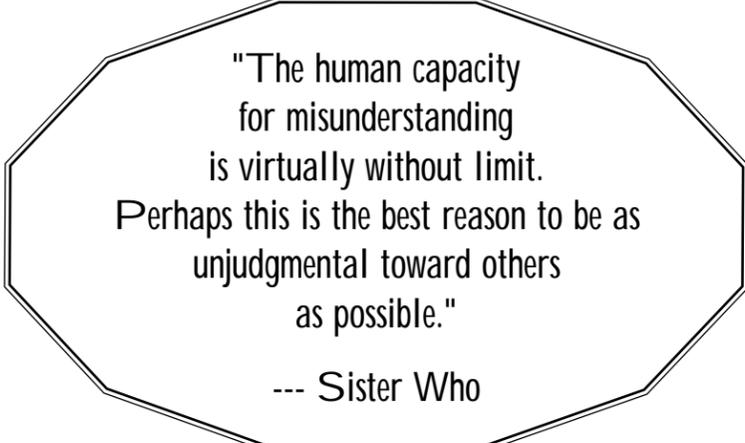
## Anomalous Commonalities

Within the so-called Gay and Lesbian Community, I am surprised to occasionally find myself defending the importance of those who are able, being "out" or publicly known as being what they are (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, or whatever). I do understand that this is a very personal choice which will be decided differently by each unique individual who experiences such social anomalousness and I intend to respect each individual's choice as much as possible.

Some choose to remain "closeted" due to expected negative repercussions within familial or employment relationships. To do this with integrity, to me, means orchestrating one's life so that no one else has to share the responsibility of maintaining whatever degree of secrecy is chosen. Some I have met, attempt to carry on life as if they were not in fact what they truly are, expecting all of their close friends to assist in maintaining the facade--in maintaining the public lie, I would even say, if I'm allowed to call the thing by its real name. The latter case has no integrity. The former case, however, I find to be at least respectable if also disappointing.

The distinction seems to lie right next to questions of hypocrisy, the sin against which the biblical Jesus spoke out more than any other. Closeted Gays who persecute other Gays, I would have to agree, deserve to be "outed," even if it costs them their jobs and families. They seem to think that their own completely fabricated social acceptability will be less questioned if they are the most zealous in attacking the very thing that they are. As written by Shakespeare, I respond, "methinks thou dost protest too much."

But all of this is somewhat beside the



"The human capacity  
for misunderstanding  
is virtually without limit.  
Perhaps this is the best reason to be as  
unjudgmental toward others  
as possible."

--- Sister Who

point. The real issue is not concerned with Gayness in particular but is rather the tip of the iceberg, the current and superficial representation of the deeper, broader, and more timeless struggle for each person to be free to be whoever and whatever he or she finds the self to be. Until Gay people are free to love whomever they wish, raise children responsibly and intelligently if they wish, and celebrate all of the usual rites of passage with the same governmental benefits as others do, there will always be the possibility of the same sort of oppression, discouragement, and limitation being eventually directed at any and every other person. Slavery anywhere within the world allows for the possibility of slavery occurring everywhere within the world.

Similarly, a Latino/Hispanic friend and I were discussing racial relationships and the rapid and mostly uncontrolled growth in numbers of such people within the United States. On one hand we both agreed that Latino/Hispanic people needed to be educated about responsible population growth and that they did not have a good history of helping others in need, beyond themselves.

On the other hand, such education is needed by nearly everyone within the United States and the Latino/Hispanic people have hardly cornered the market on irresponsible. They are simply a current example which could finally make clear to the rest of us just how very important it is to instill a broad world view and the ideals of integration, non-violence, and justice within each and every one of our children.

A more immediate reason for each of us to be "out" about who and what we are, what we believe and how we feel, is so that the world will not forget the things which can only be seen and understood from our particular perspective.

I was not particularly conscious of disability-related issues until I had friends who were blind, quadriplegic, and so forth. Now, I do not fail to consider how someone in a wheelchair could enter, when gazing at a church, an apartment building, or a house. Some of the houses in which I have lived in the past, were such that my quadriplegic friend could not be invited to dinner there. Could I actually hold a dinner party and send out invitations bluntly stating, "wheelchairs not welcome" and still be able to look at myself in the mirror each morning while shaving and brushing my teeth? The very