

Sister Who's Perspective

Sister Who's Perspective, Issue #103 January 2008, 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

Information overload--it's all around us, pulling our limbs in like a straight-jacket and yet even this cannot contain the economic and political insanity which is gradually destroying our world. When I was a student at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in New York City so many years ago, I learned that the hero or heroine's weakness (especially within the Greek tragedies and comedies we were required to read) was simply a strength that had been over-extended, perhaps even exaggerated to the point of caricature. A more common and concise expression of the same idea is "too much of a good thing."

Yes, information is a good thing and good information is quite essential, but we must also know when to say "enough" and to get on with the real purpose of life on this planet: to simply, fully, wonderfully, deeply, wisely, lovingly, and truly live.

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

Essential Research

As a child within a small farming community, I was well-acquainted with the perception that the known world extended little further than the town limits. Living in Montana a number of years ago, a friend and I concluded, "We have seen the world--and it's bigger than Billings!"

Well, to be more accurate, he and I have seen a number of diverse places. Relatively speaking, we've barely scratched the surface. There is so much more to learn and so many different and fascinating people yet to meet.

I've also seen the world not only through my own eyes and with my own unique perspective, but, by means of friendly conversation, from a dozen other perspectives as well--none of which would be obvious to anyone else I encounter along the way.

As tempting as it is to speak from a well of internal enthusiasm about all that I have seen and felt, a healthy and loving dialogue cannot begin until I have first listened and come to some

understanding of to whom I am speaking. So first, before I report on my physical, spiritual, and intellectual travels, I would like to hear about yours.

You are the greatest source and the most recommendable expert regarding your perception and experience of your life. As much as there may be professionals trained in all sorts of psychological, philosophical, and spiritual perception and interpretation, none of them can know for certain what you have experienced in the way you have experienced it. They may even know what "everyone else" (to what percentage of humanity does that phrase ever actually refer?) has done, but you will always have the freedom to be the exception--to choose a different response, path, or way of seeing and believing, the results of which the "experts" can only guess.

All that being said, you and I must first begin by taking a good look at what has already been done, if for no other reason than that we do not waste time repeating it, but rather find constructive ways to build upon it--to take the individual and collective journey of humanity one significant step further in its growth and development.

I've heard it said and to some extent I understand it to be true that ultimately every artist is simply trying to heal him or herself, but by divine grace the best artists also inadvertently extend healing to the whole of humanity. Their inspiration, creativity, and resources are not restricted to their own boundaries, like the waters of the Dead Sea, but flow outward through time and space to shine a creative light toward every dark corner of human vision and experience.

As that light travels outward, it illuminates new worlds, new people, new languages, and new ideas. In a very real sense, the light is doing research, bringing new information into view and creating perception and understanding where before there was only ignorance.

In the words of a chorus I wrote a couple of years ago for an interfaith gathering, "Light that is love, light that is peace, within and all around--may it shine in you and me!"

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

Optional Contentment

It is the first day of the new year, as I type this. Many (including myself) are hoping and working toward better circumstances and outcomes during this new year than we experienced within the previous one. All around is a mixture of circumstances equally disposed to both tremendous good and terrifying evil. Which it will be, is up to us. Together we can turn the most tragic events into major breakthroughs in the ways we manage our relationships to every other person and thing. It is equally possible, however, to remain broken and fragmented and thereby ensure that only the worst will happen. What makes the difference? Personal choice? Perhaps, but another way of viewing the challenge is to think in terms of contentment.

If we are content to leave the existing economic and political system in place simply because there is some benefit to ourselves and in spite of its oppressive effects upon certain others, that contentment may ultimately destroy us. Such imbalances within societal relationships have never been indefinitely tolerated, but rather are violent in direct proportion to the length of time they have been ignored and left to fester and bleed without appropriate attention.

If we are not content with the existing system but are advocating for a better one, a more positive future may follow, but only if enough others join their voices and actions with our own, in advocating for a wiser and more loving way to structure and maintain our local and global communities and civilizations.

Similarly, I continue to be amazed at how few people can answer the basic question, "How much is enough?" If I don't know how much is enough, how will I know when I get there? Can present and future resources provide a certain standard of living for everyone, what should that standard be, and within which contexts?

In talking with a friend the other day about times of economic and societal depression in times past, he commented that "we were poor but we didn't know we were poor because everyone else was poor too." This had somehow made the corresponding difficult circumstances tolerable. What would make the practice of contentment far more difficult within such circumstances, is if one were surrounded by people who were not poor--who served perhaps unintentionally as a reminder of everything one's own life did not include. If this

disparity were due to something as simple as laziness or industriousness, the resulting circumstances would be tolerable and mostly acceptable, specifically because those who wanted more would know exactly what they had to do to get it. Because this is more often not the case, destructive frustration and envy are more reasonable to expect. As mentioned earlier within this article, the longer the experience of frustration and envy, the greater the violence when these emotions are finally released.

If a consistent practice of contentment is embraced, learning to live with less when less is available and making efficient use of more when more is available, the moment of emotional release can be one of love and community-building; of creating relationships which will eliminate many evils, before they have a chance to even get started. It is important to note, however, that there is a minimum of clothing, food, shelter, and happiness which each person needs. Living below this minimum is not contentment but rather a slow agonizing death.

Being content with the existence of evil is also often described as enabling, which refers to actions, attitudes, words, and so forth which actually allow a problem to continue rather than to fade slowly into non-existence. Curiously, God does give us the option and choice of either tolerating evil actions, attitudes, words, and so forth or of actively casting out the fear which hides somewhere within all such disparities and replacing it with love.

"Perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18). Now, that's something with which I can be content. By the practice of love and the dismissal of fear, contentment becomes a virtue rather than a sign of laziness or unwillingness to "get involved."

By the fact of our existence, we are involved. What remains to be determined is what sort of contribution we will make to positive qualities within ourselves and thereby to positive qualities within the world around us. No matter whether previous generations with which we may or may not have any direct or indirect connection did anything right or everything wrong, everyone has to be somewhere and God has given us the ability today to decide with what circumstances, relational dynamics, and basic principles we will be content--but whether it's this one or that one that we choose, is entirely optional.

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

Prohibited Perseverance

I usually think of perseverance as being a virtuous character quality to have and in some cases the only thing that has gotten me through a fight with especially frustrating and adversarial circumstances--and it is that, but there's more.

Of perhaps equal concern, are those dynamics and components which persevere within our world which need to be prohibited. That some of these things do persist, seems to confirm just how very much in need of healing humanity is. As long as profit of some sort is derived from a dysfunctional relationship or circumstance, however, there will be resistance to the healing which is so desperately needed. We would do well, therefore, to pay attention to what is rewarded and what is punished within our individual and communal relationships. This is one of the reasons why I absolutely refuse to be angry with someone for telling me something I don't like, if he or she has in fact been direct and honest toward me (although I might also prefer that such information be expressed in a calm, clear, and tactful fashion).

At a more basic level, perhaps the primary example of prohibited perseverance is the constancy of change. God, the universe, life, fate, reality--whatever name one wishes to use--seems to have decreed that everything changes; that nothing is allowed to indefinitely remain the same. It's a basic truth of everything around us, of conditions within the natural world, the weather, our minds, our bodies, our governments, our societies, our histories, and even our spirituality. What does not grow and change is in effect dead and even in death various processes of decay will continue the constancy of change. Failing to change is absolutely prohibited as if by some universal law of physics.

"If I have not even begun
to know the soul
of the face
in my mirror,
I have not begun
to truly live."

--*Sister Who*

That being the case, we can nevertheless exert significant influence upon the way or direction in which change will occur. While all-inclusive perseverance (resistance to change) is fundamentally prohibited, persuasion is not. By the contribution of certain loving and constructive efforts, persuasion toward more desirable outcomes is completely possible--it may, however, require all of us working together rather than in opposition to each other, for any such positive thing to happen.

Bringing this down to a personal level and perhaps also a spiritual and/or religious one, a perseverance which is rightly and wisely prohibited by divine decree within virtually every system of religion or spirituality, is the persistence of unforgiveness. In order to move toward positive love, growth, and wisdom, I must allow unforgiveness, bitterness, adversarial attitudes, isolation, and divisiveness within relationships to be prohibited and I must respond constructively to this prohibition. I must instead allow the healing power of love to envelope my life and ultimately my world. I must listen to my enemies' concerns and work with them to resolve their challenges as well as mine. I must believe that no one's needs are sufficiently unimportant that I can ignore them, if in fact I have any ability to be helpful. Only by doing so can I realize wholeness within my world, within my community, and ultimately within myself.

Within the discovery of such wholeness is equally the discovery of the wisdom of this particular prohibition of perseverance and hopefully also a commitment to positive change and growth. Within increasing awareness of both our individuality and our interconnectedness, is the empowerment of life in all of its individual seemingly insignificant moments.

We have each been given a gift of life and also deep within (perhaps largely within the subconscious mind) a soul which is far more than merely the cognitive processes of our brains. What is most prohibited to those who live, when all is said and done, is an ongoing experience of death. That conclusion to life will come whenever the time is right for it to do so. Our concern between now and then is to empower our lives by knowing our souls, to empower our souls by releasing all forms of unforgiveness, and to empower this releasing by an ever greater (and thus ever-changing) embrace of love and wisdom.

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

On a Personal Note

Today is the first day of the rest of the year and after a year and a half supposedly of rest from such effort, it seems it is time once again to get back into physical training, in the event that an opportunity for participation within the second World OutGames in Copenhagen, Denmark, in the summer of 2009 might present itself. As with nearly everything, there is no guarantee that I will make it all the way to that competition, but I will not allow that if such an opportunity should present itself, my excuse for non-participation is that I'm simply not ready. So it's back to exercising two hours per day, six days per week, and making more restrictive dietary choices. In the event that I am successful in making that trip to Denmark, I will of course make an appearance as Sister Who there as well. Who knows what synchronistic collaborations might result? It was, after all, my participation within the 1990 Gay Games in Vancouver, BC, Canada, which sparked the creation of Sister Who in the first place. Goodness, was that really just over seventeen years ago? It's amazing even to me that the unconventional ministerial work of Sister Who has blessed the planet for that long already.

In other news, twenty-seven more episodes of "Sister Who Presents" have been re-edited to include the new introduction and are now available for purchase, either by direct mail or through the website located at www.sisterwho.com, for a cost of \$18 each. Among these re-edited episodes are several which have not previously been cable-cast to the Denver-metro area, as well as some very good interviews with knowledgeable guests. I hope to complete submission of these episodes to Denver Open Media within the next couple of weeks, so that they can be added to the rotation of shows being cablecast throughout Denver, Colorado. I am receiving numerous phone calls, emails, and direct personal comments that viewers are watching and responding positively. Hopefully this will increase visits to the website. Additionally, this means that the production of completely new episodes is the next video-related task and will hopefully begin to occur within the next few months, addressing still more new topics.

God Space meetings continue to be powerfully effective but minimally attended, however, new advertising and promotional possibilities are being investigated and the schedule of meetings has been standardized, by

which I mean that meetings will now be every Sunday night at 7pm. If you will be in the Denver-metro area on a Sunday evening, you are strongly encouraged to drop by and listen for whatever God may wish to express to you. There is no charge, but donations are always welcome.

With regard to audio recordings, I have approximately half of the songs composed and selected for a third CD album of original songs, to be entitled, "Steps Along the Way." Initial response to some of the new songs to be included has been very positive. If for whatever reason you have not purchased either or both of the first two albums, I encourage you to do so today. The lyrics and melodies may brighten and inspire your soul, even as they impart insight to your mind.

On a different subject, please do let me know if you would like (but have not yet received) the free calendar, "Finding Harmony in 2008," featuring photos of quotes of Sister Who. It is free upon request, although donations to help cover related and other ministerial costs are appreciated.

As to further graduate school, I have been officially accepted to Capella University, an accredited online educational institution, pursuing a doctoral degree in non-profit administration, which will be most helpful to the future creation and operation of a genuinely interfaith spiritual retreat and conference center. One tediously slow step at a time, this dream may yet be realized.

Your continued prayers and support are most appreciated as I continue to serve the personal and spiritual growth of others, through the pursuit of this and other activities. Please pray especially that some more recommendable refinancing of my home is soon accomplished, since the particular details of my situation exclude me from the various solutions often being discussed by various news media of late. Perhaps there is even someone out there somewhere who would be willing to purchase the loan or co-sign a refinancing agreement, so that an affordable and sustainable economic situation could be created.

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

Subscription Information:

"Sister Who's Perspective" is a free monthly newsletter. If you have appreciated this newsletter, please consider making a donation to encourage production and distribution to continue. (Please make checks payable to Denver NeVaar and send to the postal address below).

Sister Who, PO Box 593, Westminster, CO 80036

Email: dn@sisterwho.com

Internet website: <http://www.sisterwho.com>