

# *Sister Who's Perspective*

*Sister Who's Perspective, Issue #101 November 2007, 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

Essential to the orbit of every planetary body are both gravitational and centrifugal forces in perfect balance. Similarly, there are many things within our lives that also ask to be kept in balance and which also do not need to be viewed as having a relationship of being adversaries or enemies. Even if such things are occasionally viewed as enemies, time has proven again and again that much can be learned from one's enemies, if one's eyes and ears remain open and wise contemplation is also employed.

Within this month's newsletter are some paradoxes, opposites, and collaborative relationships to consider, but, as always, only you can determine what application any of this newsletter's contents have within your life. I do pray, in any and every case, that what I have written here will be helpful to your personal insight, growth, and life experience.

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

## The Punishment of Rewards

When I first read about systems of relationships, I came upon the term "enabler," which refers to someone who in spite of having the best of intentions, nevertheless collaborates in the maintenance of an oppressive system or situation. The point, however, was not to attack those who might be enablers, but rather to search for ways to discontinue enabling actions. As with most resolutions, the first step is learning to love one another enough to want the oppression stopped. A primary obstacle, however, is when oppressive systems reward those who have the ability to oppose them, for not doing so.

Because I believe that "we are all in this together," it is very important to me that everyone have legitimate ways to satisfy needs, which includes the availability of affordable housing. When those with funds to secure better housing than is needed do so, they enable real estate and lending institutions to make life more difficult for

those with more limited resources. When landlords charge as much as possible for their properties, without any consideration for the wages and income capabilities of their renters, they enable an increase in the cost of living that denies basic essentials to even more people. When we welcome excess into our lives and call ourselves rich without any consideration for those who do not even have enough, we sever our interconnectedness with the health and well-being of the rest of humanity. Instead of welcoming the opportunity to support, educate, and empower other children of God, just as we ourselves were at other times in life supported, educated, and empowered, we betray the human family of which we are all a part.

In order for peace on earth and the all-encompassing love which can heal all of our wounds, to ever become a reality, there will have to be days when we collectively say "NO!" to economic systems which reward greed and punish generosity. In order for each and every person to feel valued and respected, they will need to have a voice which others are willing to hear, to identify the generosity which is genuinely helpful to them. Giving people what they don't need only adds to their burdens and struggles. This sort of giving is not in truth generosity but rather nothing more than ego gratification. God has given us the ability to do better than that.

Only when we all stand together and adamantly and persistently declare that we will not accept higher housing costs, the absence of a living wage, or the oppression of any member of our communities, will our societal institutions begin to listen and to value life in all of its diversity more than mere profit. When we finally do so, however, there will no longer be punishment parasitically attached to our rewards. Rather, the empowerment of individuals and communities will bless our own as well as every other generation yet to come.

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

## The Rewards of Punishment

Do I seek to be punished? No. Such experiences seem to need no help in finding me all on their own. In order to demonstrate the sort of person I am, however, I strive to be very mindful of my response--for example, searching for the good within even the most unlikely circumstances and events. I think it must be terribly frustrating to my adversaries to experience consistent failure when every negative thing thrown into my path is not enough to make me give up and quit.

At a recent gathering at someone's home, I was a bit surprised that the well-educated and affluent people present had so little understanding of interpersonal dynamics and the integration of diversity. I wondered on the way home whether financial wealth is not more often given to those who cannot survive without it.

Certainly my life is not the most extreme example of the pain and difficulty over which a human being can triumph. Nevertheless, there is a great deal of determination and ingenuity which have been forged specifically within those experiences of my life which were most difficult. Many whom I've met who have not experienced such adversarial circumstances, often surprise me with how little difficulty they are able to tolerate.

It is important to note, however, in discussing the rewards of punishment, that not all punishment which is allowed by God and by other people is in fact just. I suppose I can forgive God for allowing such, when I consider that the Divine is able to see beyond the present moment and thereby see the opportunities for growth which will only become possible if the particular present moment is allowed and perhaps even embraced. By unjust punishment which is allowed by other people, however, I find I am outraged.

We cannot reliably see what opportunities for growth the experience of unjust punishment will bring. More importantly, we sever our interpersonal connections and strangle our love into silence, if we are concerned only for our own comfort and not for the well-being of the other.

Sometimes, however, we must witness an unjust punishment which we cannot prevent. I suggest that the only reason we recognize the unjustness of the punishment, is because of some spark of unconditional love within us, some tiny piece of God calling us to be healers and ministers within that very troubled moment.

The reward of such unjust punishment within such moments, is the opportunity for love to

blossom in ways it otherwise could not. Just as diamonds are displayed upon black velvet in order to be most clearly seen, just as hundreds if not thousands of people were crippled and diseased so that Jesus would have people to heal during his brief earthly ministry, the healing and transforming power of love must have opportunities as well--and they rarely occur when everything is going right.

I recently stumbled onto a quote attributed to Marilyn Monroe, while going to a job interview for a teaching position for which I was not selected, "If you can't handle me at my worst, you don't deserve me at my best." True commitment between spouses, lovers, and friends is not to be found within those moments when everything feels good, but rather when remaining committed is unpleasant, inconvenient, uncomfortable, and perhaps even painful. Yet in retrospect, years upon years of shared memories are an absolutely priceless treasure.

At other times, we must choose between one punishment and another, whether to remain within a limiting and self-sabotaging situation or to remove ourselves in order to get out of the way of constructive changes which are genuinely needed. Although empowered life which follows may be our reward, the memory of the punishment will discourage us from ever taking that reward for granted. This is part of what I meant when I once said to a friend, "I do not wish to live only my life's length and breadth; I also wish to live its depth."

In living this depth, I trust that I am being the light which God intended for me to be. Whether anyone else will see this light as a reward or remain lost within their experiences of punishment, is that part of life which lies within their hands but beyond the reach of my own.

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

***"I do not display my greatest  
creativity and beauty  
because someone is looking at me;  
I do so simply because, by God's grace,  
I find it within myself to do so  
and it seems like the best way to say  
thank you."***

--Sister Who

## When Too Much is Not Enough

In reading various articles about people's relationships with food, I have often stumbled across some form of recognition that such individuals are indeed hungry, but not for food. Because their need is not for physical nourishment, food cannot satisfy.

When Saint Francis of Assisi wandered into the broken down chapel at San Damiano and was directed to "rebuild my church," it took him a while to understand that the construction of a literally incomprehensible number of churches would not satisfy the command. God had been referring to a spiritual church, built eternally within the hearts and souls of people whom Saint Francis would meet throughout the rest of his life.

During my early teenage years, I often heard ministers speak of a "God-shaped hole within every human soul." What they perhaps did not understand but which I have observed in the years since, is how many different shapes this hole has within the diversity of humanity. For some God has been perceived as having more commonality with either feminine or masculine forms. For others God was both. For still others God was neither. The point, in every case, was simply that only God could fill the hole.

The world includes many people striving for more income, bigger houses, more expensive cars, and more luxurious ways of life, who are never satisfied. This is the enslavement which might be greed but also might be that peculiar inner hunger to fill the hole in the soul. Until each person recognizes for what the hole is asking, however, no accumulation, addiction, substance, or distraction will ever be enough; the hunger will remain and become a form of enslavement.

This is the freedom which comes from modesty: giving each need exactly what it needs in the amount that it needs at the time that it needs. If the hunger within is for God, a time of prayer is more appropriate than a plate of food. If the hunger is for community, giving one's time to another is more appropriate than sitting alone in a bar, drinking alcoholic beverages in order to forget. If the hunger within is a restlessness which longs for new horizons, then forms of self-development such as reading books with new ideas, learning a new artistic skill or a foreign language, or visiting a new place and truly listening and learning from the people there, are possible ways to constructively and effectively respond.

Because we too often incorrectly respond to needs, our world has become a complex societal construction within which when a particular need receives an ineffective response, other equally ineffective responses are created to deal with the unpleasant repercussions, all of which are trying to tell us that the original response is not the correct and effective one. A literal example of this is when a doctor first prescribes one medicine for a particular condition, but then must additionally prescribe numerous other medicines to counteract the side-effects of the first. We may not yet have discovered the cure for the original problem, but this scenario makes it clear that the answer we have found is not the right one.

In trying to make sense of life, the one conclusion which has persistently remained for me within virtually every circumstance, is that the primary purpose of life is to serve the growth of the soul. If this conclusion is indeed correct, I find I must accept a great many other things which because of the intensity of my experience are most uncomfortable--mostly because I am standing too close to my own experience to have the philosophical detachment that simple acceptance of the above conclusion requires.

Considering how much struggle is required to get into this life in the first place, I'm not sure why anyone would expect the rest of life to be much easier, but it does seem that far too much of modern struggle is aimed at reducing the amount of struggle life generally includes. Perhaps this is again an example of too much being not enough. Too much struggle throughout our world seems to have shifted struggles from one area to another, but not to have actually reduced the amount of struggle to any significant degree. If we have reduced anything, it seems to be only our awareness of the struggles which remain.

If, on the other hand, we could determine and accept the modest amount of struggle which is appropriate and effective to the living of life, we might just find a balance and a harmony which would not only open a bridge between our souls and God, but also open bridges of collaboration and understanding between ourselves and every other person and creature with whom we share this planet. We might also develop both greater self-awareness and greater awareness of the life-experiences of others--how different we are and yet not so much that no commonalities remain.

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

## When Not Enough is Too Much

History is filled with stories of individuals who chose to end their lives when something for which they longed was not available; when not having enough was too much to bear. Could their communities have been more responsive and thereby prolonged their lives? Perhaps. Perhaps not. Either way, their sacrifice stands as a final exclamation point to the rest of humanity, pointing to issues which it is most important to address.

Similarly, when for whatever reason someone dies, not enough of that person's presence seems to be too much to bear and a time of mourning is what can empower us to adapt to the resulting new life context. When such mourning is not allowed or when the mourning that is done is not enough, other problems follow, proving once again that not enough is too much to bear. As much as I mourn the absence of friends, I find that I must also mourn the loss of every good thing they would have otherwise contributed to life.

What is this mysterious healing power that dresses itself in robes of mourning, that sort of "going within" which allows us to honestly face and discover ourselves, our remaining relationships, and the consequent constellation of future possibilities? Why is this deep and superficially troubling state so shunned by our world, considering its curative effects when honestly engaged? Why is it so essential within so many societal contexts to insist that "everything is fine"?

I joked with a friend recently that I was thinking of having a bumper-sticker made for car, imprinted with the words, "I respectfully decline to support your delusion that everything is fine" and he immediately responded that he wanted a copy too, if I did so. We laughed together about it, but I recognized that it was an indication that for us, not enough honesty within interpersonal and societal relationships, was too much to bear.

If we want the blessings of honesty, we must begin rewarding honesty and discouraging its absence. If deception accomplishes economic, vocational, or political success, the blessings of honesty and love will not follow. If selfish greed supports self-indulgent lifestyles, the blessings of community will not follow. If isolation and negation of individuality within community is too much, then life that is worth living will be that of which there is not enough.

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

## On a Personal Note

Another intense month has passed. My efforts to generate income by whatever means have been marginally successful, but for one more month (with the help of friends) I have survived.

More importantly, next year's desktop calendar, "Finding Harmony in 2008," is now available. The calendar is free, but due to limited funds must be specifically requested. Please let me know by whatever means, if you would like to receive one (or more) and to what address you would like it sent.

In the midst of all of the above, however, the suggestion (perhaps also the inspiration) has come up, of opening my home to other spiritual seekers, creating what is being called, "God Space." To quote from the brochure I have created, "God Space is a response to the fact that for many, institutions of religion no longer meet spiritual needs but that a hunger for the Divine--for something or someone greater--still remains. What is therefore needed, is a place in which this need can be addressed in whatever peaceful and mutually respectful ways are individually or communally effective."

Since I don't believe in coincidences, I was astonished when within forty-eight hours of accepting this possibility, I heard of someone giving away church pews. When I received the two pews still available, it was positively spooky that they were precisely the right size for my living room--to within four inches. Initially, they seemed so large that I could not imagine how they would even fit. Perhaps some part of me is still wondering how providing God Space for spiritual seekers could fit within my small home at all.

It does seem, in any case, that the time has come to go forward, even if I have no particular precedent to follow and no generous amount of funding to equip the work to be done. Hm, details about which God never seems to worry.

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, MTS, and send to the postal address below).

Sister Who, PO Box 593, Westminster, CO 80036

Email: [dn@sisterwho.com](mailto:dn@sisterwho.com)

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