

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

Mirrors all around us are too often unrecognized. Because they surround us, we cannot escape them. Even in blindness (literal or figurative, imposed by circumstances or by self), the world continues to reflect huge volumes of information into our perception, thereby asking us to consider unnoticed or misunderstood things.

We may view mirrors as adversaries and flee from life as the man in the movie, "Matrix" who was eager to exchange reality for something artificial but more perfectly pleasant. We may also view mirrors as upward spirals or steps, inviting movement toward a greater heaven than we'd ever imagined we could reach. I believe we can reach it and that God will be there waiting to embrace us when we do.

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

Facing the Mirror

Sometimes the mirror tells me that I'm doing better than I thought. At other times, I see details which may grow into problems, if I fail to respond. Sometimes I am so thrilled with a prevailing beauty or dismayed by a prevailing gloom that I miss the most basic truth mirrors can tell: all is a mixture of desirable and undesirable qualities, with which I must come to terms.

By definition, God is the best that can be. As creations of God, we share that potential but are engaged in a rather lengthy growth process. That the path is long, however, does not make it unworthy. All of which is simply to say that the first challenge of any mirror is simply to honestly face it without resisting what it may have to teach.

It has been well-established by science that expectation is a significant variable within the study of perception. If we think or believe that something is true, we suddenly begin to notice all sorts of ways in which our beliefs are confirmed within the world around us. Similarly, if we do not believe something is true, a very forceful presentation will be required to wake us up to any contrary truth we encounter.

Facing the mirror is perhaps like a form of meditation; a practice by which we momentarily deliberately set aside our opinions, definitions, and expectations and neutrally ask "what is it?" and truly listen to whatever answer comes. Only after we have honestly embraced whatever it is, can we then decide what our relationship to it will be.

This is much more difficult to do than the previous paragraph was for me to compose. Often I find myself in argument, in an adversarial relationship, to what the particular thing is. I do not want it to be what it is. I want it to be different or (in my opinion) better. Nevertheless, I cannot make a constructive change without respecting the inherent qualities of the material, person, or thing with which I am working. Any such attempt would result only in greater wounding.

Until I know what I am, I cannot intentionally become anything else. Mirrors are simply tools by which positive constructive intention can be applied, without which all healing or constructive development will be an accident at best.

Life is too short to leave essentials such as the healing of brokenness within individual and collective humanity to chance. None of us has an infinite amount of time to leave the world a better place than we found it. In many times and places, the mirror has been faced and found to be broken. The sharp edges cut our fingers if we touch them too carelessly. Yet life requires the healing of the mirror and the healing of ourselves if a greater than merely physical death is to be avoided and a greater than merely sexual love is to be realized.

Because God exists and in fact created mirrors to help us in this diverse task of healing, the work before us is far from impossible. By smiles of genuine love and active compassion, the cracks and broken edges can once again be fused to reflect the light and beauty of which we would otherwise be completely unaware.

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

Misplacing the Mirror

In mathematics and science classes many years ago, I learned about angles, that a beam of light contacting a mirror at a specific angle will be reflected away at exactly the same angle. The helpfulness in this is that I can calculate where the object I see in the mirror is located.

If the mirror is misplaced, however, a particular object may be as good as non-existent and my understanding of my environment and its potentialities equally limited. Similarly, my car has mirrors on both sides so that I can see both corners of the back bumper while sitting in the driver's seat. If the mirrors are incorrectly aimed while backing out of my driveway, serious damage could result from a collision with something I didn't even know was there.

No negative or deliberate intention is implied. Rather, when something has been misplaced, it is often also described as temporarily lost. Even a temporary loss of vision is treated as a medical emergency. A temporary loss of a mirror is only slightly less serious. In both cases, degrees of blindness are very real.

The use of mirrors within the field of medicine has often allowed doctors to make accurate diagnoses and prescribe effective medical responses. Without such uses of mirrors, physical life for many individuals would be limited or perhaps even terminated.

Because we live in the midst of many forms of tension, perception is essential to the best possible outcomes. Moving through traffic in my car without mirrors invites innumerable collisions to occur, specifically because there is a sort of tension between myself and other drivers. Ideally, we must operate our vehicles in a manner by which we will all safely arrive at our chosen destinations. If my mirrors have been misplaced, I will not be able to perceive or respond to the proximity of other drivers' vehicles and catastrophic brokenness may be the result.

If mirrors are so essential within challenges we take very seriously, why do we devalue their use, carelessly misplace them, and fail to maintain them within moments in which the stakes are not so high? Are we less concerned with their positive effects upon our lives? Are they less valuable, simply because we do not expect to lose anything important by our neglect of them? Why do we presumptuously suppose that they do not require any maintenance or protection in order to remain

available for those moments when suddenly and unexpectedly we risk temporarily or permanently losing something very precious to us?

We are all each others' mirrors, helping each other to see ourselves, if we are willing to listen and to engage in constructive dialogue. I maintain the mirror in my bathroom because of my daily dependence upon it for shaving, brushing my teeth, and so forth, I do my best to maintain certain friendships and societal associations because they help me to know the condition of aspects and elements of my life. It has often been said "it takes a village to raise a child," but I suggest it also takes a village to keep an adult honest and alive.

Have we misplaced our mirrors? Are we unconcerned with being a village for each other to keep ourselves honest and alive? Is life too busy for us to return phone calls or write letters to those who help us to remain honest and alive? If so, then life is quite simply too busy to keep us alive in any true sense of that word.

We cannot all be Atlas, holding up the world. That task requires all of us working together, noticing by the mirrors we are for each other, the unique qualities each of us brings to the collective task. That the world must be supported goes without saying. That this cannot be done by any particular individual, group, organization, or entity is fairly obvious also.

If we need a reason to pursue peaceful, collaborative, mutually supportive, and completely inclusive local and global communities, perhaps the recognition of our intertwined fates is among the best. The struggle for survival is not a thing of the past but rather has merely escaped many people's attention and understanding. Some still struggle for basic necessities. Many are without adequate medical care and don't qualify for assistance programs. Communities which do not respond to the needs and perceptions of individuals within their midst, have every necessary reason to re-evaluate and call to awareness what kind of community they are.

Beyond their needs, however, people in need have much to teach us about life, about love, and about God. To be unresponsive when God has given us the resources to respond, is to misplace and neglect the mirror which God has placed within that person, which might be helpful at least and essential at most, to the unfolding of our own lives and relationships.

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

Displacing the Mirror

I'm not certain who said it first, but I recall hearing the phrase years ago, "I've made up my mind so don't confuse me with the facts."

Initially amusing, the response is also a little disheartening because it identifies a choice toward blindness and denial and away from knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. Similarly, displacing the mirror is a suggestion that not only is the mirror not where we can see it, but additionally that it has been intentionally removed because of how much we did not wish to receive what the mirror attempted to communicate.

Because we are so surrounded by so many diverse forms of mirrors, however, displacing a mirror generally requires that we also fill that space with something else. Many are the things the inventiveness of humanity has created, to provide an alternative (if also ultimately unhealthy) focus.

What are the requirements of a mirror substitute? First of all, the counterfeit which inspires positive emotions but shields us from the uncomfortable emotions associated with the mirror's request that we learn and grow in some way, may be an acceptable temporary alternative.

Next, the substitute must consume our time, energy, and resources sufficiently that there is little to no opportunity for a genuine mirror to get a word

***"The God-given tree
which is my life
grows unbidden
and relentlessly
by the accumulation
of memories and experiences
and the passage of time.
It remains my task, however,
to select the ornaments
and the crowning symbol
by which the tree
can be clothed in beauty."***

--Sister Who

in edgewise. If that were to happen, the substitute might be replaced with a genuine mirror and other life changes might follow.

What is perhaps more important to consider, however, are the ways in which mirrors have already been displaced and we are paying a high price for living according to false reflections of value, relationship, and potential accomplishment.

For example, a compliment from someone well-acquainted with a student might point toward an academic or career path well worth pursuing, while a traditional expectation that a student will give up all personal dreams in order to continue the family business would leave the student with a hole in her or his soul, because it was God who put the alternative beautiful dream there in the first place.

Similarly, an ambitious school career counseling office may recommend a lucrative career in spite of a student's passion for a creative trade practiced by various members of the student's family for several generations.

I like to think God knows best and has planted within each and every human heart, a very specific longing which is essential to the holistic individual and collective healing of humanity. Unfortunately many of these healers are so saturated in adversarial experiences, that they may not even remember what God sent them here to do, leaving the healing work undone and the world struggling with myriad forms of brokenness.

I am reminded once again of my favorite scene in the movie, "Christmas Eve," starring Loretta Young and Trevor Howard. The wealthy businessman remarks to his mother, "You can't change the world" to which she responds "But that's such a poor excuse for doing nothing."

Perhaps if we could begin to constructively deal with displaced mirrors, we could in fact change the world--one person at a time. Perhaps we need to start with God's mirror which says that the world can in fact be changed and healed, rather than the myth that this is impossible.

Yet genuine mirrors do not promise that everything is possible. Rather, they help us to find ways and alternatives by which everything becomes possible. There are some things I myself will never be able to do, but God continues to provide people, resources, and means, by which all good things can nevertheless be done. This too is an expression of divine love.

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

Embracing the Mirror

Having seen and accepted what I perceive within any particular mirror (which is no small feat), I am yet left with the challenge embracing, of loving, and of nurturing this new understanding and all that is related to it. No good is accomplished by endlessly gazing into a mirror; rather the accomplishment of anything good comes from a constructive and active response.

Embracing the mirror requires me to draw this perception into the very heart of myself and to act from that place and that new understanding in a way that I would not have previously acted. In this sense, the mirror having not even twitched from the place where it hangs upon the wall, has effected a change in me, making me into someone different and perhaps in some way more than I was before.

In this interactive sense, we may find mirrors within each other, within self-reflection, within times of prayer or meditation, within worship services, within otherwise innocent and unassuming conversations, and within theatrical observances of every kind.

I have a small clock which has been built inside of a jewelry box on the lid of which is a quotation I composed a number of years ago: "Life can only be measured but never contained by Time." I am reminded by this mirror of my finite life span, to make each moment both precious and transcendent: precious by infusing each moment with as much love and wisdom as I can; transcendent by leaving behind a record, a positive effect upon the life of another, or a new perspective upon which others will build, which echo outward far beyond the limit of my physical existence, so that I will ultimately leave the world a better place than I found it.

This is perhaps among the greatest gifts we can give to each other as well as to ourselves--to be certain we will one day leave this world better than we found it, to forego self-indulgent lives and live for something greater than ourselves, and to be ones who demonstrate once again the divine wish of peace on earth and good will toward all.

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

**Happy Holidays,
Everyone!**

On a Personal Note

On break? Only in the sense that my graduate school classes do not meet again until January. Although my schedule is now very flexible, church work and creative projects keep me running from dawn to dusk and beyond.

It is my earnest hope that after literally decades of waiting, I will be able to report in the next newsletter, the successful creation of an album of twenty-one songs (if they all fit within the seventy-three minute time limit that a CD holds). It amazes me to recognize that I am the author of each and every one of those songs, but the true value of the songs is of course in the blessing they are to the hearts, minds, and lives of others. It is a privilege and an honor (and an awful lot of hard work) that brings me great joy as well, to serve God and humanity by expressing my creativity.

Hopefully not far behind this will be completion of the necessary set pieces for the new introduction for the ongoing television series, "Sister Who Presents...", followed of course by new episodes of that show and hopefully by introduction into new television markets.

As I bring production of this newsletter to a close, the 2006 Sister Who calendar is in the process of being printed and assembled and I sincerely hope to have a copy sent to each of you by postal mail before Christmas. If you suspect that I might not have your current postal mailing address, please send that to me at your earliest convenience since the calendars require slightly more postage and I will be sending these by postal mail to everyone who receives this newsletter, including those who would otherwise receive the newsletter electronically.

Finally, it is amazing to me that I am presently passing the halfway mark, toward an academic degree of Master of Arts in Specialized Ministry. Hopefully this will open many new and wonderful doors of opportunity and provision when I complete the degree in November of 2006.

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

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