



Monastic Musings

Living in and Practicing the Presence of God

Fall 2016

Happy Fall

by: Right Reverend Barb Martzall

Fall has arrived per the calendar. At first here we thought that Fall was cut really short and winter was here but then saddened that the middle of October suddenly has a week of summer again. For all the little creatures that make our yard their home, it gave them a little longer to gather their winter food and also to build their nests stronger and warmer. We have had the pleasure to watch lots of babies this summer. The bird, squirrel, chipmunk, and groundhog families all grew larger this year. Now the leaves are changing their colors to paint the yards and hills with such beauty! Personally I am enjoying nature even more given all the mess concerning the politics here in the US. I have reached a point I just hate looking at the newspaper, watch TV or even surf the internet.

Never a Bystander

by: Fr. Ron Lathi

In the United States the election cycle (many would say circus) is drawing to a close. Rather than serving as a means of drawing us closer, our people seem more divided, more contentious and hate-filled every day. For many of us, our bewilderment at the state of our country leads to a sense of isolation...let me just pull the covers up over my head and wait for "it" to be over. But there is no "it" to be over. The "it" is life.

The holocaust historian Yehuda Bauer is quoted as saying "You shall never be a victim. You shall never be a perpetrator. But above all, you shall never, but never, be a bystander". As people of faith we do not have the luxury of simply witnessing the world around us. Why? Because our faiths, whatever that faith tradition is, mandate our involvement in bettering our world. In Judaism, the concept of Tikkun Olam (repairing the world) is central to living a Torah-focused life. In Christianity, Jesus taught on many occasions our responsibility to help the poor, the infirm, the cast outs, etc. Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Daoism, all of these faiths push their adherents to promote peace, health and wholeness in our world. The ancient, earth-based faiths (Native American, Heathen, Wiccan, etc.) emphasized ritual efforts to maintain balance and continuity in the natural rhythm of the world, while living in the natural world with as little impact as possible.

So what do individuals do to not be a bystander, but be active in promoting "world-healing"? Beyond the more obvious involvements in social programs like shelters or food programs, or becoming involved in movements to promote education on specific topics which fight for human rights or human or environmental betterment, it can be as simple as correcting a co-worker's uninformed views of "other". Perhaps one could attend worship with a group of whom one has no experience or knowledge – especially if the faith tradition has seemed strange or off-putting.

And, as a person of faith, one can turn to our spiritual traditions of prayer/ritual to seek balance and healing in our world. In the U.S., most of us have the power of voting to elect those individuals we believe will work for the greatest common good. Whatever one does, no matter how seemingly small or insignificant, is one more thing that uplifts and which fights against those actions that seek to put down, tear apart and harm.



Interconnectedness – All Life Is One
by Rev. Mother Myrella LeClair

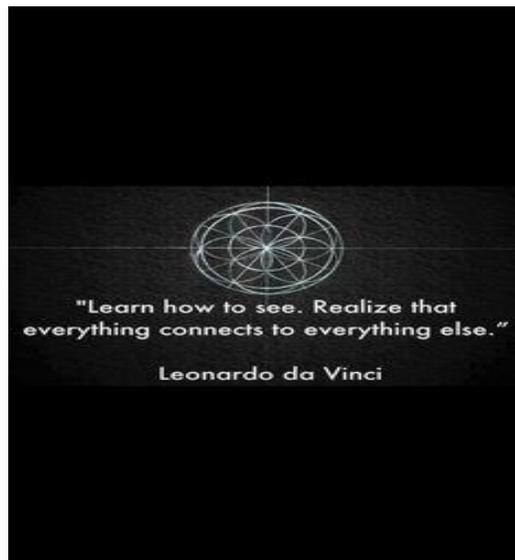


It's a beautiful early Fall morning – slightly foggy with the sun's rays shining through and embracing the trees, the ground and all of the flora and fauna. I can sense my spirit leaping toward that light and for that brief moment, I truly understand the "interconnectedness" of all of life. The sun is a symbol of the Creator reaching out to all of creation. We all exist together within this Light of God. In that instant of awareness, I am at peace and understand that every living thing is a point of light and collectively, we are that sunbeam. No one point of light is any shinier than another. All creations are interconnected and equal.... None are superior or inferior. There are no divisions of ANY kind – no nations, no worlds, no species, no bodies, only spirits. No hatred – only Love. My spirit understands that this sacred instant is a vision of the nature of our **true reality!** This glimpse of awareness ends when I hear the trash hauler banging the dumpster at the apartments next door.

So, then I make the mistake of perusing various news articles on the internet about the U.S. presidential election, allowing my ego-driven mind to become angry and to forget/dismiss all of what my spirit just taught me about the nature of our true reality. However, I suddenly realize that nothing happens by chance...the banging of the dumpster has a purpose: it is to remind me to deposit my ego-driven thoughts into my mental dumpster, to let the Light shine into my heart, and to not pick up my "trash" at a later time. That requires vigilance because more often than not, our ego-minds will only perceive the clouds, refusing to recognize that the Light of the Creator always envelops all of creation.



To focus our thoughts on interconnectedness, following are some quotes for us to mediate upon:



All things are linked with one another, and this oneness is sacred; there is nothing that is not interconnected with everything else. For things are interdependent, and they combine to form this universal order. There is only one universe made up of all things, and one creator who pervades them; there is one substance and one law, namely, common reason in all thinking creatures, and all truth is one--if, as we believe, there is only one path of perfection for all beings who share the same mind.
(Marcus Aurelius)

If you wish to know the Divine, feel the wind on your face and the warm sun on your hand.
(Buddha)

Namaste! (My soul honors your soul. I honor the place in you where the entire universe resides. I honor the light, love, truth, beauty and peace within you because it is also within me. In sharing these things we are united, we are the same, we are one.)

May you arise in glory and allow the Light within you to shine upon the world today and every day.

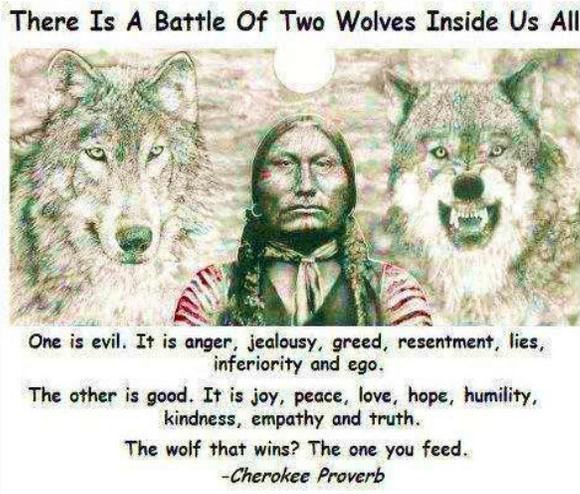
Blending Your Spiritualities

by: Right Reverend Barb Martzall

The other day, one of my monastics asked me about my connection to my Native American Spirituality. In many ways that is a loaded question given that I am a bishop within a Christian Church and also hold within myself Cherokee blood from my Great-Grandmother. It thus can cause a person confusion about how one can find a way to make both work together. Here I share my short answer to my monastic. Please know that I have not gone into great detail as that would take many hours to truly explain.

You asked about my connection to my Native American Ancestry. As a small child I was not told of my ancestry. But as I became very interested in the genealogy of the family, I learned about my heritage. For me it was the answer to why I was always drawn to Mother Nature and rebelled frequently with the teachings of the Christian church. I have always been the type of person who would “escape” into nature to seek solace and peace. I could not find that within the Christian churches I attended as a child. As I got out on my own, I found myself drawn more and more to my ancestry, but knew that I could not fully participate given I could not prove my great-grandmother’s heritage. Only lately I have come to understand why it could not be proven. But that did not mean I did not learn everything I could and ask all of the questions that I could from those who were willing to teach me.

For me my Native Ancestry is the basis of my personal belief system on which then the Christian belief system is placed. When the two do not “match” which is frequent, the Native spirituality wins out! What so many people do not realize is that there is not just one Native American Spirituality. The spirituality is built upon the Tribe, Clan, and family that you belong too. Yes, there are some basic understandings among the different tribes but the actual practices/rituals and prayers depend on the Clan and family that you are a part of. We all believe in a higher being that is



our Creator. The Creator often takes the form of a woman given that in Native American lives, the woman is the person who holds the lineage for ancestry and family ties. Mother Nature (all of earth) becomes important to us as we realize that without all that is proved to us by Mother Nature, we could not live. We are always in tune with the “soul/spirit” of any being who we come into contact with. This includes not only humans, but animals and even plants and the elements of wind, fire, water and earth. We also realize that there are many spiritual beings

that normally remain unseen but who influence each of us in a unique manner. If we allow ourselves, we can “see” them and communicate and even work with them in this realm. Yes, we have certain things within nature that are very “special” to us like birds, animals, trees, stones, etc. We believe that everything here on earth is here for a purpose and we must learn to live in harmony with them. Without them, we would not have our lives and our health. For me, even though I am a Christian minister (follower of Jesus), I still personally hang on to my spiritual ancestry. It is a great part of my personal spiritual walk. When I am within a group of Christians, I will “teach the party line” as I don’t want to confuse others. But if someone comes to me with questions or concerns and it may deal in the area of spirituality questioning, I will be willing to share with them. Maybe that is why I find it so easy to allow those around me the space to “search and learn and experience” their own spirituality. One of my religious friends used to tease me that I was willing to let people walk way out on the spiritual tree limb without throwing them the “required” Christian teachings. That is was not something normal of a priest/monastic or especially of a bishop, my friend would say. My spirituality does not fit into a box and thus why should everyone else’s. Yes, I am careful not to fall into the muck that can be setup by the evil spirits or the Devil, but I do allow for the full exploration of spirituality. In the process one gains a good understanding of the connectedness of our beings with that of all of Mother Nature. Remember Pan? Well, the ideas/teachings of Pan are all part of the Native spirituality. Life is a circle and we need to be aware of the part we play in that circle!

So you see, one can find a way to hold different basic spiritual teachings together and in the process, if you allow it, it will make you even stronger!



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