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Solicitude

The Abbots' Letters of Reflection

Listening to Your Life: the Gift of Spiritual Direction

This earthly, time/space journey is the greatest adventure of life. Perhaps one could even say, it is life itself. Although God knew us before he formed us in the womb, we forget who we were created to be when we find ourselves in this horizontal realm.

We are born into families with their own particular bent where we begin to learn how to navigate this territory, almost immediately. We construct a way of being that helps us survive this environment. However, this constructed self or false self, also covers the true beauty of who we are at our core. At some point, we discover our refined and entrenched defense mechanisms no longer serve us well.

No matter how we arrive, we sense there is something more, something greater than we are presently experiencing. Anthony de Mello says that when we try to change ourselves or others, we are actually doing violence. Change happens through the process of surrender. When we put ourselves upon this path, we let go of the outcomes. As Logia 2 tells us, "Seek and you shall find and you shall be in turmoil....."

Why would we want to put ourselves in such a risky and painful place? It is “The awe, the reigning and the rest” which complete Logia 2. I am grateful to the numerous Spiritual Directors who have given me a safe place to continue the process of surrender. Life has presented many opportunities to explore the fruits revealed from other forms of praxis with someone who listens along with me for God’s presence working in my life. My Spiritual Directors have peered into the darkness with me. They have held my life gently as I have moved deeper toward becoming a complete human being.

Psalm 139 tells us we are wondrously made. Wondrously made! Do we know this so well that the love that undergirds this Truth flows through us with each beat of our hearts? Are we able to embody this love? Sometimes it is a circuitous path to reach that liminal place (perhaps many, many times) where the self-defeating messages release us into the experience of God’s ever present acceptance. Period. We are loved unconditionally.

In Frederick Buechner’s, “Listening to your Life,” a book of daily meditations, he quotes from “Godric.”

A Vision ~ March 13.

“One summer day I lay upon the grass. I’d sinned, no matter how, and in sin’s wake there came a kind of drowsy peace so deep I hadn’t even will enough to loathe myself. I had no mind to pray. I scarcely had a mind at all, just eyes to see the greenwood overhead, just flesh to feel the sun.

A light breeze blew from Wear that tossed the trees, and as I lay there watching them, they formed a face of shadows and of leaves. It was a man’s green, leafy face. He gazed at me from high above. And as the branches nodded in the air, he opened up his mouth to speak. No sound came from his lips, but by their shape I knew it was my name.

His was the holiest face I ever saw. My very name turned holy on his tongue. If he had bade me rise and follow to the end of time, I would have gone. If he had bade me die for him, I would have died. When I deserved it least, God gave me most. I think it was the Savior’s face itself I saw.”

~~ Karen Poidevin, Abbot