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## The Dance

I share these thoughts not from a perspective as an Abbott and certainly not as wisdom or a teaching. I am striving to use all my tools to understand how to become intentional as a Monk.

Recently, I started a review of my Rule of Life established during the formation of OOOW. I admit I cannot find the original rule, but I realize how much it must have changed. I also am engaged in doing a life review for Forest Dwellers and these two tasks have merged. I reflected how I arrived at the point of life's creation and where I am today.

Early in our marriage I knew Karen loved to dance but I was a guy with the proverbial 2 left feet and that's being gentle. We bought an LP record of dance that came with a fold out of steps to place on the floor for different dances. Fox trot and maybe the waltz was smooth and easy but then there was the Cha-Cha. All went well until I tried to lift Karen and spin... her landing was softer than mine since I was on the bottom. This lesson became more important than just Dance as we learned about the rhythms of marriage and life ...when you fall, get up and dance again. There are times of joy and celebration and times of challenge and each requires a different mode of rhythm and coordination.

We had a totally different experience of dance when we first arrived in Texas in 1978. Our son came home from High School one day and said "Texans dance crazy". He said, "They jump around holding hands and then holler "Bull Shit!!"... our first introduction to The Cotton Eye Joe. We soon took some classes in CW dance that was nothing like what we knew but with a company band at our back we learned and danced across Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas and New Mexico. Yes, dancing offered many lessons in life especially with the changing moods of CW Music.

Little did I recognize that my childhood and young adult understanding of Christianity needed as much attention and effort as my meager Dance skills. The seismic shift occurred when I followed Karen to enroll in a course in Christian Spirituality at the Anglican School in Dallas. Rev. Lynn Bauman was a big challenge, but equally daunting was my first selected reading of *Original Blessing* by Matthew Fox. I liked half of what I read but hated the challenge of the other half. This was just the beginning and Lynn led me through *Original Blessing* and challenged me to see Christianity offered more than I could imagine. A new Dance started with new ways to

experience "life itself ". I now know I stand in a stream of Wisdom from Yeshua and this same stream carries the blessing of Abrahamic, Buddhist, Hindu, Tao, Druid and many other traditions. I now carry them all on a Christian foundation, often inseparable from the other traditions. Now the Dance has fewer prescribed steps and I must create the moves when life is in harmony, but especially when life is in discord.

A couple other dance lessons have occurred over the years:

Karen and I attended a mass in York Cathedral, York, England, complete with traditional Boys Choir; ancient and regal. Centuries of Liturgy and song played out as both fresh and enduring. Later that night strolling along the city wall we caught music riding on the evening breeze. A gathering spot, maybe a party? No, within the shadow of York Cathedral is the parish St Martens in the Belfry. Bruce Springsteen music drew us through open doors into a celebration like we had never experienced inside a church. People squeezed together to offer us space in the pew just as it was time for the passing of the peace. A peace sharing, unlike any other, while an angel like person danced and leapt in the aisle like she was floating on air. A dance of joy and celebration to remember. We finished the day knowing both experiences were important: however, the joy of St Martens echoed more deeply in my heart.

Years later, at Shalem Institute of Spiritual Formation, during a two-year course in Spiritual Direction, Rev. Tilden Edwards introduced and led a meditation with body prayer. After the initial lesson, we all began to participate. I noticed Tilden had moved beyond his lesson as he leapt and danced his way around the room almost oblivious to his students. He created new moves for an old dance. Perhaps he had connected with Rumi and his dervish dance/prayer. Taking his lead, I have added body prayer with dance to my own spiritual practices.

How many wedding ceremonies are followed by a party and a dance?

Numerous celebrations often spur party and dance but rarely during church or prayer. Could we be missing something?

Now back to Matthew Fox. He has a history of coloring outside the lines, especially those lines set down by the Church. He is at it again, orchestrating a Cosmic Mass here in San Antonio at the Oblate center: no pews, a large open room for dancing, music and lighting to stir the ecstatic heart. We move, we dance and give thanks for this sacred earth while acknowledging the great danger and harm occurring to our Mother Earth that is the grounding of life itself.

I now know some of the changes that must take place in my revised Rule. I can call a friend, listen to my children, support brother and sister monks in new ways, spend time with a spiritual director, and help create an atmosphere of hope and blessing within the OOOW. I pray we may dance together, no matter the stage or place. Let us Dance in the light or the storms simply because we must!

Now I think I may find time to sink my toes into the sand, inhale the aroma of salt and seaweed, turn on some Jimmy buffet music, dance with a margarita in my hand and sing to life itself.

May you too find the Blessings offered as joy or sorrow and give thanks for all.

~~ Abbot Ron Poidevin(Monk)