

THE PULSE OF SPIRIT



NAMING WHO AND WHAT WE LOVE

16 NOVEMBER 2009

This morning we are addressing how we name the sacred. In Western culture, a certain prejudice and bias about naming the sacred has developed. You might say that it is for good reason. The priesthoods of the world who have used names for God have not always done so responsibly, and in many ways they have mischaracterized the divine. They have attributed to the divine many of the awful things of human character. So it is not surprising that people who worship such a God would themselves do terrible things, and it's not surprising that the God they have presented would be rejected.

While the reality of God is infinite, the God of religion as it's been presented is all too often a God of the finite, a God of the limited and limiting. Worshiping such a God, instead of being set free, all too often people find that they are put more firmly in the prison of their own false belief.

So it wouldn't be surprising that prejudice and bias develop in the hearts and minds of people with respect to naming God. And by the way, the word *God* itself is a name. It seems that the choice is to either accept the names of God and the characterization of God that other people, I suppose particularly the clergies of the world, offer, or to reject any naming of God, or any naming of the sacred.

I want to make conscious the possibility of another approach. Every person has the opportunity to name what is sacred to them for themselves. This does not have to be just a one-time event. We can learn to name what is sacred to us with increasing clarity. In doing so, we may find that we are drawn into closer relationship with what we have named. Like any relationship, we have the opportunity to get to know who and what we are relating to better and better over time, and therefore to name it in different ways.

I came across the book *One Hundred Names of God*, by Torkom Saraydarian. I'd like to share some of his writing because I think it has the possibility of opening up an opportunity for us.

I want to start by saying that I think he has a male bias in his names, so apologies to the women in the room. I believe there are wonderful feminine names for God. So you'll see that with this first one. The first one is "the King."

"He is *the King*. This is the assumption that he is the *only One*. There is no second, no third, no fourth—only one God—nothing else. He is organized in such a way that this whole created Universe is functioning under His command. This is our understanding, but is it true? Maybe there is something else that we will discover when we 'grow,' but it looks like that now."

I love how he's left room so that our understanding of what we worship can grow over time.

"The Peace: God is *the Peace*. This is another name given in the Koran and Sufi literature. He is the Peace—*Absolute Bliss, Harmony*. The Peace. Can you imagine? Think about it! We say that when a person has peace, he has some contact with *Him*. These names are signs that you have contact with *Him*.

"If you strive to be a peaceful person, you will understand Him better. If you try to be a king of your own 'kingdom,' you will be closer to understanding what He is. If you become compassionate, you will understand Who He is. If you are merciful, you will have a little idea of What He is. By cultivating these virtues within ourselves, we open telephone lines to *That Infinite Presence*. Peace—think about peace!

"*The Faithful* We say, 'I know what faithfulness is.' Do you really? It is so difficult to find a faithful person. *Faithful* means He never forsakes you, no matter what happens. He never betrays you. 'To God we belong and to Him is our return.' (The Koran)

"Faithfulness means you live in Him, you think in Him, you feel in Him, you act in Him. He is your Innermost Self.

"*The Opener*. This is very mysterious. I was asking, 'What does He open?' He opens the gates and windows that lead you to Himself.

"Opener. The mind is open now. Wow! For example, people create a mess by attaching to this person, to that person, to that religion, to that faith. When they are opened, they understand. To

be *opened* means the destruction of all crystallizations, prejudices, and superstitions built day and night in our minds, that we are the ‘only way to fly.’

“He opens the bars of our minds, emotions, and habits and releases us toward His freedom. He gives freedom to your Spirit [The Opener].

“*The Exalter*. He exalts you. To be exalted means to feel, deeper and deeper, that you are immortal, you are everlasting, you are a jewel, you are very precious, you are His son, His daughter, you are His friend, you are His co-worker, you are His companion. The Exalter! And whoever gets closer to God is exalted. How? As you go closer to Him, you resign from the most stupid things with which you were identified. You leave them behind, and behind, and behind. As you leave behind your failures, stupidities, insanities, obnoxious things, attachments, you become exalted, exalted, exalted, exalted. Do you see how beautiful it is?

“How can you exalt others? In reality, you cannot *do* anything but *be something and influence their life*. *That is all*. If you are exalted, you do not need any plan, any structure, any blueprint to make people exalted because your *presence* is enough for them.”

As you might guess, there are many more. When we speak of God, who is the God that we worship? Is it the God of religion—or the God of whatever philosophy or spiritual path—the God of the Catholic religion, the Buddhist path, or even the Emissary path? If it is the one true God, it is the inner nature of all creation, the inner nature of all things, the inner nature of all people, all circumstances, all of being. I don’t think we’re interested in worshipping the God of religion, even though people involved in a religion may have an experience of the one true God. But if we’re talking about the real thing, it is not ultimately about the teachings and practices of people. It’s about the reality of divinity.

The words in common use in the English language include *divinity*, *God* and *Lord*. But the critical factor for each of us is the name that we use for ourselves. Ultimately it’s hard to have a relationship with something that you won’t name. I guess we would be left with “Hey you!”

So what is your name, my name, for what we worship? My Lord, my King, my Friend, my Master, my Beloved, my God, the One I serve, the One, the One I live for, Lord of Love, Lord of Truth, Lord of Life—the one whom, at the same time, I kneel before and love as a friend.

The most powerful factor in a person’s life is the way they relate to what they cannot see. This is our worship relationship, our relationship with what is most sacred to us. It is a relationship worth

cultivating. Like most relationships, it takes care and attention. It takes time so that a person's relationship with what they worship can deepen, so they can own that relationship for themselves. If a person takes their own responsibility for that relationship they are not relying on anyone else to create it for them.

We could protest the way the priesthoods of the world have tended to intervene between people and God in a false way, and have used that relationship for their own advantage and for power and control. But who conceded the relationship to someone else in the first place? It's ultimately not the fault of anyone else or any religion if we ourselves haven't owned and developed our own relationship with the sacred. For each of us, that is our responsibility. While a person's parents or church may assist, certainly there comes a time in a person's life when they say, "This is *my* relationship that *I'm* responsible for." And if the relationship is thin with my own Maker, with my own Source, I have something to do about that.

If I take personal responsibility for my worship relationship, I have the opportunity to be a true priest or priestess for others—not telling them that they can only connect to God through me, but in sharing my own experience so I can assist others to open the doors and windows of their own being. We each have the capacity to assist people if we have opened ourselves.

I'd like to close by reading something I wrote yesterday in our Life Destiny Immersion program. It is written as a story, as if it were in the past. But truly, it is reality in my experience. In the story, this valley and the people in it are a symbol for people around the world who know their own relationship with the Infinite, and who share that in the world.

"Into that sacred valley, in that day, the people of the world came, family after family, company after company, to find the healing vibration that rung in the air between the pine-covered hills and the red sandstone rock. Through what they experienced there, each found their own wholeness, and their own place in the family of man. And each found their own unique and private relationship with the king and queen of this magical land.

"Those who greeted and hosted all who came shared in sacred, daily ritual themselves, in right relationship with the land, and the inhabitants of all the kingdoms of the valley. They danced by their sacred fires. They sang and played pipes and horns and drums in the amphitheatre among the granite rocks. They worshipped in the holy temple. Most of all, they loved one another, and each one came to any other among them to serve them when they were in need.

“Those who visited the sacred valley left their gifts. For some silver, some gold. For some, they left their songs.

“It was in those days that the earth and her peoples were healed. Old hurts were cast off. Life-threatening ways of being on the earth and with other people were dissolved, along with the lies behind them. A new way, in harmony with all that is, was found. Few knew that the radiance of this sacred, little valley had shown the way. But the people of the valley didn’t care. They knew what they had done.”

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