

# COMMUNION AVOIDANCE

THE PULSE OF SPIRIT

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I had a remarkable experience yesterday. I went with friends to give a talk on sustainable community to a permaculture learning festival at the Turtle Island Ecology Center. It was out in Pierce, Colorado, on the plains, east of Fort Collins. A spring snowstorm was coming through Colorado, so the attendance was low. A cold wind was whipping through, so the participants that were left were huddled in a military tent.

The leader of the festival checked to see if the marijuana smoke had cleared the tent and asked me to go in and give my talk. It was a scene: sleeping bags, matted hair, and young people strewn about. *What fun!*

After some chitchat, I stood up and gave my talk. I let them know that I was the kind of person who showed up for his commitments, even if there was a threat of snow. I had a chance to talk about Sunrise Ranch and about my own life mission. I expressed my support for the vision they were following and I

invited them to collaborate with us at Sunrise Ranch. I shared the idea that sustainable *human* culture is necessary for truly sustainable agriculture.

I was aware of the flow of feeling current as I was speaking. I realized that it was going well because I meant every word I said. I was saying the right things—what might be appropriate on such an occasion. But it was also what I truly believe, what my life is committed to, what my heart is all about. I really did wish them well, and I really was glad for their efforts and really do hope that one day they get to visit Sunrise Ranch and that in some way Sunrise Ranch can be a point of inspiration for them. I hope Sunrise Ranch can be a greenhouse, not only for the tomatoes and lettuce we will be raising there but for people who are growing into a new understanding.

In the middle of the somewhat unusual and amusing circumstances, I was sharing a

genuine communion with people. What I've found is that if we really show up—not just physically but with conscious awareness and with a full heart—we have something to share.

The word *communion* is from Latin. It originally meant *with union*. The deeper communion goes, the more we are communing with a reality that transcends you and me. Something else that wasn't there before is invited into the space. We're not only communing with each other as human beings. In communing with the love and the truth that you have to bring and that I have to bring, we are communing with a larger love, a larger truth that is bigger than either of us.

Something unexpected happens. There's a different space that opens up in what we are sharing if we let it. While that can occur almost unexpectedly, perhaps we may experience it enough that we understand how this works. Maybe we come to understand that as we commune with the spirits of love and truth inside ourselves, we have that to bring to somebody else. We can consciously invoke that in ourselves and we can evoke it from another person. And then we are in a very different kind of space.

I know in my own heart there is a longing for a different way of being than the one I often know with people every day. I enjoy all the daily interactions. But I have been feeling an urge to share something deeper, an ineffable quality that is hard to name. I can put names

on it, but it is bigger than any name. It is a sense of home—not just a house but a sense of being at home and at peace, with the sense of comfort that comes from being at home.

My heart yearns for the sharing of a sense of sacredness with other people. I yearn to share a space where we go beyond all the daily round of what is happening, what has happened, and all the drama of it all, as exciting as that drama may seem to be at times. I long to know a place of deeper communion and deeper knowing.

My experience is that when I enter such a state of communion, there is a transcendent place of Being that is invoked. In that place, ultimate forgiveness is available. Sharing in that place wipes away all shame and all the drama of our lives. We are left with a deep knowing, a deep understanding, and a transcendent perspective that we bring from that place to each other and to the lives that we are living. That's the power of the real communion that we have the opportunity to know with each other.

I believe there is an opportunity to commune with people in all the dimensions of our human experience—in everything from the most intimate and most personal to the interchanges that we have in our workaday world. Each interchange that we have with people has a right kind of communion that is appropriate for the situation that we are in—for oneself and for the other person, and for the creative work that we are about.

There can be sweet communion at the donut shop, over buying a coffee and a donut.

When you plop down your money on the counter and say, “Thank you for the donut and the cup of coffee. Have a nice day.”

There is communion appropriate to that situation.

A work situation is an opportunity for communion. Sometimes the opportunity for communion occurs under the stress of a workaday situation. But that can be communion nonetheless. Some of my deepest friendships I have had have been with people while under huge stress. There is a bond of friendship found in working hard on something together, perhaps holding a vibrational pattern together under difficult circumstances. I have bonds of friendship with people who know that with me, and I with them. It has been deep communion and amazing creation.

Communion leads to creation, whether that creation is the exchange over a cup of coffee and a donut, bringing in the cows or creating a website. Or perhaps it's the love and romance that creates a family.

Our sharing of the meditation contained in this *Pulse of Spirit* is an act of communion, is it not? Or at least it could be. In truth, it has little meaning if isn't that. From my heart, I'm invoking the reality of love and truth within me and sharing it as it comes through for me. Hopefully you're doing the same and allowing it to come through you.

Communion can be strong and tough in the interchange between us. I was walking out on the road to the reservoir at Sunrise Ranch this morning with Jane Anetrini and my dog, Malachi. A snowplow came towards us, clearing the snow at the outside edge of the road. We were on the side of the road where the plow was coming, and so was Malachi. Jane was at the edge of the road, so I said, “Jane, let's go over here,” pointing to the grass on the side of the road. She started to converse about it with me. I saw the plow coming, became concerned and said loudly, “Jane, get over here! The plow is coming!”

That's communion. Communion can be a command, born out of love. It can come hard, and still be communion. There are many dimensions and many textures to real communion between us as human beings.

I notice that there is huge *communion avoidance* going on in the human experience, at all levels. There are a multitude of ways that people avoid each other and avoid sharing anything of depth. So often, people avoid really being present for each other. They avoid speaking the words that would invoke the love that's present for them or the truth that they know. So often, people don't really show up.

All kinds of bad things happen when there is communion avoidance. In a work situation, if you are an employee and you avoid your manager, trouble may be close at hand. If your manager's thinking becomes

unimportant to you—if you just dodge it and figure you’ll do your own thing—the project may not be done right. Something may fall through the cracks. A customer might be disappointed. You may lose your job. Those are some of the negative results of communion avoidance in the workplace.

Communion avoidance in a personal relationship doesn’t help. Women frequently complain that men are vacant—they don’t show up emotionally. Personal relationship can’t really continue with communion avoidance.

When the communion that is natural between us as human beings is avoided, what replaces it? What do we do if we are avoiding a one-on-one interchange with a person? So often, we are turning our back on that person, and then talking about them with somebody else. We’ve got a story about them and drama with the story. We’ve avoided communion, and now we’re living in story and drama. Sound familiar? If you look out at the world at large, it is all over the place.

We tend to rail on about the story and the drama, and all the bad things that are happening in the world as a result of it. Or all the things that other people are doing. Usually, when people are in story and drama, they are not talking about themselves but about all the things that other people are doing. Perhaps they believe they have to correct other people’s behavior to make the situation better.

So often, the negative behaviors that other people display aren’t the real issue. So it doesn’t fix the problem if we correct the behavior. Often, the negative behavior is covering up the person’s communion avoidance.

We tend to view the outer form of what is happening as if it’s the problem to be solved, as if the positive space in a person’s life is all the human story that they are involved in. But that’s actually the *negative* space. That’s really not the point and not what we ought to be focusing on.

The true focus of a human is the communion, not the story. Life is all about that. How do we get back in communion with each other if we’ve fallen out of it? That’s the point. The question is not how do we work it out without being in communion, without being in right relationship with each other. And of course, that was the problem in the first place. We have these brilliant intellects that try to make life work without communion. The real meaning of our life is not the story and drama we live when we are out of communion. The real meaning is found in communion.

I believe this is how it goes when we fall out of the state of communion. We look at the opportunity to be in communion with someone else in a meaningful way, in whatever situation. And we think, *No, I could get a better deal if I opt out of this direct kind of relationship and I manipulate the situation this*

way. We think, *If I actually enter into this, I could have a bad experience. Communion could hurt, it could not be fun, I might not like it, and it would just work better for me if I avoided them, shut them out, pretend they don't exist, and objectify them.* We objectify people when we don't commune. We don't treat them like a being; we treat them like a thing to be dealt with.

Until we enter communion, we're sitting in a human story. We are sitting in unreality. It doesn't seem that way to most people because the human world as it is seems oh so very real. But the real world is the world of communion. That's reality and the true culture that we're meant to live in. That's the true consciousness that we're designed to be in—with each other and actually, at some level, all other human beings on the face of the earth. Being in communion with all of humanity, we're also in communion with that creative spirit that's within all humanity.

There is a biblical story about communion avoidance. It is the story of Adam and Eve. While the story is tragic, it is also humorous. It is the story of the first finger-pointing, with Adam blaming the tragedy on Eve and Eve blaming it on the serpent. There is an estrangement that happens between people when there's lack of communion, obviously so. In the story, there is at the same time estrangement among people; there is communion avoidance with the Creator that's within all people. It all goes together. And then there's communion avoidance with the

Creation all around. When we avoid communion, we don't show up for each other, for our God or for our world.

Most of us have to simply admit to ourselves how damn hurt we are inside and that we are avoiding the kind of hurt that we've had before in our lives. So hurt that we won't really connect at a meaningful level with other people. I know we all have different shades of this—variations in terms of how we deal with these issues. Some of us are probably afflicted with this more than others. But I do believe that this is the great human affliction for humanity, this great fear of communion.

Here's what I've learned about all this: before I commune with anybody, I'm in communion with the larger reality that I'm in response to and in service to. Before I'm a friend with another man, I am a friend to the Lord of all men, to the masculine face of God. And as I see it, the masculine reality of God is sending men to be with me in my life who are part of that reality. At a human level, I may feel terribly disappointed by the actions of another man. But while I may have to deal with that in some way, what I care about is on the plus side of the ledger. What I care about is the masculine face of God that I get to be friends with in the men in my life. I will cut my losses when a man is not interested in being that but is going to live his life in some kind of egoic reality. There is not much opportunity there, and it may be a disappointment. But whatever happens, I'm

in communion with the reality of the divine masculine that I know. I am committed to embodying the reality of that myself, knowing that it's one reality for us as men. While we're unique, we're all part of the masculine face of God.

By the same token, I worship and serve the feminine face of God. I know I am loved by that reality and I know I'm in service to it. And I know that reality sends me all the wonderful women who are in my life. But whether there's disappointment in a particular relationship or a particular interchange, whether I'm let down or anything else, it doesn't change this transcendent reality of woman, the face of the divine feminine that I know.

You may say that this is a small comfort when something goes wrong in a relationship. I say it is not only a *great* comfort but also what is real and meaningful about a human life. For all of us, before any human relationship, there is a larger reality that we have the opportunity to know. We can keep coming back to that reality. And if you know that larger reality and you're in communion there—accessing that and sharing that—you will be a lot more courageous in your interchanges with the people in your life. Because while you know that those interchanges with other people are going to have their ups and downs, you also know something that is steady through those ups and downs, starting with your own orientation, starting with your own

invocation of love and truth through yourself. And then, going to the way where you know you're not only honoring and in service to the Divine, you are loved by the Divine.

I posted a Facebook meme this morning. It was a pink rose on a black background with some white words next to it. It simply said, *You are loved more than you know*. I believe that's true for virtually every human being on the face of the earth. You are loved more than you know. You are loved from inside. When you are in service to that higher reality, you know that love and you receive that love, and you have that love to share.

I received some interesting responses. I have a number of Facebook fans who simply give me an “amen,” and I received plenty of those. Someone asked, “By who?” I was tempted to answer back, but I resisted. I wanted to tell her that if she stopped questioning it and started receiving it, she *would* know. Another woman wrote, “Not true.” How do you argue? I wanted to ask, “How do you know it's not true?” I wanted to tell her, “You don't know how much *I* love you. I could prove you wrong.” I didn't get into it because Facebook's not a great venue for doing such things. When we come to know that we are loved more than we have known, we bring courage to our human relations. We can get over our communion avoidance and begin to really live. There are things to learn about how we relate to other people in relationship. Are you going to wait till you have all that figured out before you share communion

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with anybody? I don't think relationship works like that. I think relationship is one great experiment. But you can't experiment if you're not in communion. In such case you're waiting, you're an observer, and

you're not a participant in your own life. Let's embrace the communion that's available to us, and really live.

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