

THE PULSE OF SPIRIT



EMISSARIES
OF DIVINE LIGHT

O HOLY NIGHT

DECEMBER 23, 2013

Welcome to this Bethlehem. Welcome to this manger, this place, not only a physical place but a place of communion, a place in which the Christ is born, in and through us, the reality of the divine, which desires to be expressed and embodied in this world—the reality of our own being. We have the opportunity to move well beyond the trappings of Christmas, well beyond any religious belief, into the reality of an experience.

That experience is told in the story of Jesus' life, his birth, and all that he did and all that he endured. And it is also told most particularly in his teachings, for here was perhaps the greatest spiritual teacher to ever walk the earth. He offered the ultimate spiritual teaching, made reference to in the song, "O Holy Night":

Jesus, he taught us to love one another.

It was a teaching of unconditional love—love for the divine that is within yourself and within all people and within all creation. And unconditional because what he taught was that how you bring your love, how you bring your gift, should not be conditioned on how other people are bringing their gifts, or upon what they do. That was his teaching. You might say he was a living teaching-and-demonstration site, because it is not only what he taught with his lips, it is what he lived with his life—this ultimate spiritual teaching of unconditional love.

It is a teaching of endurance. Love endures, love prevails. No matter what happens, love prevails, for love is the all-powerful universal energy within all creation. Love prevails, love endures. The truth is that we are love. In accepting unconditional love, we are not becoming something that we are not. We are being something that we are. Humanity has been trying to be something that we are not. By being unconditional love in expression we are being who we are.

There are parts of a human life, particularly a religious or spiritual life, that are characterized by aspiration and trying. When a person feels separate from that reality of love, the reality of their own being, when they make an attempt to somehow be that reality in their life, it comes out as aspiration and it comes out as trying to be something, as if you were not already that reality that you are trying to be. And I do believe that in our human life, trying is part of it. Trying makes us stronger. It might bring out some excellence that wasn't there previously. And it beats the couch potato state.

But ultimately, have you noticed that a person who is trying often has a built-in excuse for not being it: "Well, I tried!" Somewhere in our life, on our spiritual path, we come to this place of realizing that our life should not be characterized by trying to be something that we are not. The whole purpose of our life is to wholly be who we are and embody who we are. It changes a person's life when they accept that for themselves. I notice, when a person is trying, they are not only trying for themselves. They think *you* should be trying like them, and so there is a terrible tendency towards criticism of other people: "You didn't try hard enough." And then self-criticism is always underneath that. What would it mean to give up a life of trying, and instead of spending a life trying to become something that you are not, spend a life of embodying who you are?

It takes some strange combination of complete humility and also great pride to enter a place in oneself where your life is about embodying the reality of love that you know that you are. Without both those qualities, life comes out wrong. Without humility, a person's attempt to love, or to excel personally, comes out as huge arrogance. But where there is humility born of repentance—as it's said biblically, repentance in dust and ashes—all the personal attempts of pathetic trying that come out of a conviction of being someone small fall away. The repentance in dust and ashes is simply moving through that time of the greatest grief over ever having thought that I was someone small and limited, and that I ever gave expression to something coming out of that state of consciousness.

The truth of the situation has me moving through that grief, that repentance in dust and ashes, in moments—not in days, in moments—because to continue to agonize over it would only be to perpetuate the belief in the smallness of one's own being. The only thing to do is to move right through that and, in that repentance in dust and ashes, to let it all go and to accept the glory and wonder of being—not in a reflective way of, "Look at me, how glorious I am," but in the humility of knowing that you have the greatest gift to bring. That is a statement of humility and truth, not arrogance. In all humility, I have a gift to give to other people that I've only begun to give. And in my smallness and in my trying, I know I've been stingy in the most important of ways. And no matter how much I've tried to make up for that, the stinginess is ultimately a stinginess of the heart, and a stinginess that comes out of a belief in one's own smallness and a living out of a small place in oneself. So in all humility, you and I have the greatest gift to bring.

Jesus brought this remarkable teaching of unconditional love. I use that word *teaching* to mean much more than blackboards and textbooks. And yes, parts of a spiritual teaching are things that are said and perhaps principles that are taught. But that is only a fraction of what real spiritual teaching

is about. Real spiritual teaching is about assisting other people to find the reality of their own being more fully in themselves and to embody that more fully in their life.

Quite apparently, people need help with that. And so we have the blessing of true spiritual teaching to bring, and it can only be brought out of a repentance in dust and ashes and a complete humility, and out of a person's own spiritual journey, of becoming a living embodiment on the outside of what they already are on the inside.

I note that in my own experience, and in the experience of other people, there are two parts to that becoming. There is the positive part. The positive part is where the wonder and the glory of being is expressed and embodied by a person. And as it's said, there is the experience of moving from glory to glory, so there is always more of that wonder, more of that beauty from inside to show on the outside. There is more of the wonder to create in your world. Matthew Fox calls that *via positiva*.

But there is another part to our process of becoming on the outside who we are on the inside, and that process is a process of destruction, of a breaking open and a breaking apart. There is something that does have to break in the human experience, and does break inevitably. That breaking is like the breaking of the shell that allows the chick to emerge. That breaking allows the glory and wonder of being to be present and in expression. It is a breaking of how we thought we had it all. We thought we had our lives just so. We thought we had our spiritual journey just so. Whatever it is, there is something beyond that. There is something more than that that your being wants.

For most of us, when there is something that comes apart in our experience it seems like somebody did it to us or something happened to us. But who we are is doing it. It's like the chick that's pecking at that eggshell to break it open. The glory, the wonder, the greatness and the love within us cannot stand our smallness. It cannot stand it personally. And for all of humanity, do you think the Christ spirit that is within this whole body of humanity can stand to be shut up inside of the smallness of how humanity is playing in this time in the history of this planet? You can feel the Christ spirit within humanity casting it all off, saying, "I will not be held back in all this. I will not stand for this oppression of my spirit. And I will break every structure that attempts to chain me in, until I can stand as love revealed, as who I am: the Creator, which is love, in the creation."

That is what's happening for the whole body of humanity, and it is what's happening for you and for me. So while there is *via positiva*, there is also *via negativa*, the breaking—and with that, the dark night of the soul. "O holy night," the dark night of the soul, when the soul enters the wonder of the darkness and finds that within that darkness, within the destruction and the falling away of whatever is old in one's life, there is falling to one's knees in the manger. And then there is the birth of the Christ, the birth of Universal Being through oneself.

In that process, a person is inheriting the strength and the power of unconditional love, the power that does endure and does prevail and never stops. People stop, but love never stops. Love prevails.

And when we give up trying to be loving and enter fully into that love, knowing it as the reality of our being, we never stop. We endure through it all, and we prevail.

In the Bible are these words: “Enter thou into the joy of thy lord.” So who is this lord? For many who have heard these words, it might have been thought of as Jesus or the Lord in heaven—something separate from themselves. There is another meaning that is applicable to each and every one of us. Thy lord is the reality of who you are. And so for the human soul we could well say, enter into the joy of thy lord. Enter into the joy of thy being. Enter into the joy of the reality of who you are, and be that reality, embody that reality in your life. And walk the path of that embodiment, with all that it brings.

If you are a woman reading these words, I apologize that the word *lord* is masculine. Yet there is a masculine principle at work for all people, men and women alike. And in that sense, the word *lord* is applicable. It is not relative to whether you are a man or a woman. It is a naming of the one who is sovereign for you and for me in this house of being. We could come up with another name for women, whether it is the lady of your being or something else. But whatever word we use, we are speaking about entering into the joy of the reality of who you are and of who I am.

Enter into the joy of thy lord.

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