

A Poem

Mirror Image

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Introduction

Most of us realize that human beings are created good. At our roots, many of us want to believe that we wish to be good persons of service to our neighbors and our world. Yet there are times in our world and in our individual lives when we are puzzled by the curious flights we take from others who are in need. Any number of us can look back over the course of our lives and remember instances when we were less than eager to help another person. Perhaps the moment was filled with the conflict of schedules or of means.

However, there is the inevitable and gnawing inner possible truth that our flight from others could have been fired by something far deeper and more pervasive. When we look at other people in life, essentially, we are looking into a mirror. We see ourselves in others very often. That is part of the way we make our friends. We see in them our goodness or the virtue we wish to have. The same is more than likely true of those we dislike. We see in them the very things we fear or know are within us. They are our shadow-selves. We see them, and we run in fear.

In many spiritual traditions, both ancient and newer, there is often a belief that our human race is in an ongoing process of being “reconciled” to the Divine. The same is the common human experience of friendship and love. In love and friendship, perhaps with those with whom we have shared some woundedness, we become reconciled. A strange word this “reconciliation.” It comes from the Latin root *cilium* meaning “eyelash.” When we are reconciled with anyone, we and they stand eyelash to eyelash with one another. The other sees us intimately and loves us as we are. We see in their eyes our very selves, our hopes, our fears, our failures, all that we dream we can yet be --- and we are led to believe in a Greater Good

Especially for those who have suffered hate and discrimination of any and all forms, there are the experiences that bring isolation and the deadliness of ultimate rejection. Many of us experience these in many ways over all our lives from childhood onward. For all of us, in real reconciliation we have a monumental opportunity to serve others with grace and power in this world when we welcome them into our lives precisely because within them we see the totality of our own selves --- and we see the totality of the Possible. For women and men of spiritual faith, this is an opportunity to see in others that Other many call God.

Under City Lights

Ultimately, in this unbridled welcoming there is no room for fear, only the adventure of the Greatest Good. And in taking steps with others on the road to that adventure, our valleys are filled, our pride is toppled, and hope is born again.....and again.

Companion

Like the paste-faced hunger of the city's homeless
pressing noses and eyes at the windows of well-lit restaurants
with the hunger steaming up the glass where their lips touch
she sat before me
wondering, waiting with longing
filled with all the human confusion and fumbling
that comes when you look into your own soul
and cannot make sense of the pieces of its puzzle:
looking and longing for something of substance
to still the ravenous hunger of her questions
knowing full well that the answers she feared within her
would mean to take a different fork in the road.
Such a road.
Never before thought, never ever dreamed, only feared.
A road before which she had always stood in absolute terror.
Her mind filled with images of stones and blood
aimed at her, pouring out of her:
the rejection of family and friends
and all those who once had walked with her in delight.
Now, the secret inside her no longer would remain silent
and cried out from deep within her body and spirit
like a new warrior whose name of gentle love
would no longer be kept a prisoner of her rage and nightmares.
I listened quietly to the storm that spewed around me,
a hurricane of meaning
garbled in the wake of anticipation
yet pregnant with a deeper living
beyond the death of leaving behind her hiding.
Once, a long time ago, I had stood at this same road-fork.
I knew the buffets and raging winds of fear
that had kept me from taking those first steps.
Then, there was no one to listen,
there was no one with whom to break some bread
and be companion to my nervous pacing
at the start-gate of discovery,
this race with one's self.
In those former days I had stood at a cliff-point
and never could believe that my leap of faith
would end in life and not damnation.

Now, resolved by my memories of my once lonely journey
my own soul can never leave in distress
those who stand at this same brink of their lives
and fear that at the bottom of the precipice
no Hands would catch them in their leaping.
She looked at me.

And in that looking I saw behind the mirror of her eyes
all the taunts she had received:
a family, that called her “leper;”
women, that called her “traitor;”
men, that called her “ungrateful;”
friends, that called her “no more;”
and holy people, that called her “sin.”

Now, between us and around us
there was another Voice,
a Voice that knows the deeper Truth
more deeply than the human mind
which seeks to mount the Tower of Babel in every age
and believe that we set the standards of Truth
by the limits of our fears.

Now, this deeper Voice spoke clearly
within the brief whispers of souls embracing one another;
and in the quiet silence of the moment,
I gently stretched my hands
to touch the tips of her fingers
gnarled around each other.
And in that touching,
bread was broken,
stone-fears ever so slightly cracked,
one leg stirred with trepidation
and together we were stretched
to put one foot forward
and take the first step on that freedom-journey
together.

Closing Note

The author published this poem and its introduction for a volume of poetry in the late 1990s. The author holds the copyright. The introduction and the poem itself have been updated and revised. Note: The opening photo is the work of Tuur Tisseghem, available for free use on Pexels at: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/close-up-photography-of-human-left-hand-159333/>.