

Reconnecting with Love

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Transfiguration Sunday

Today we come to the end of the Season of Epiphany, the season of the church year when we view the ministry of Jesus as ephiphanies of God, awakenings into the mystery of the human and the divine as one. We also come to the end of our study of *The Rebirthing of God* by John Philip Newell, in which he has provided us with eight different reconnections that he believes are needed in the next evolutionary step of Christianity.

Here are some quotes from each of the eight chapters we have covered in Newell's book:

Thomas Berry from "Reconnecting with the Earth":

What is needed is a conversion to the sacredness of matter and a spiritual communion with the earth.

Rebirth will happen when we fall in love again with the earth.

Aung San Suu Kyi from "Reconnecting with Compassion":

We need to reclaim the courage to see, to feel, and to act, bearing responsibility for the needs of others.

Rebirth will mean the waters of compassion breaking open within us.

Mary Oliver from "Reconnecting with the Light":

... we need to learn to be astonished. We need to see with radical amazement the most unbelievable gift of every moment.

Rebirth will happen when we see again the glowing luminosity in each created thing.

Bede Griffiths from "Reconnecting with the Journey":

We need to be open to the wisdom of the eastern religions, not only for the new insights they offer to us, but also because they awaken us to the hidden depths within our traditions.

Rebirth means letting go of fear thinking that there is only one true way to God.

Thomas Merton from "Reconnecting with Spiritual Practice":

We need to discover our true meaning within ourselves, so that we can be freed from the false definitions of self that are imposed upon us by cultural norms and expectations.

Rebirth means engaging in a depth of spiritual practice that will keep liberating our true nature and the deep passions for transformation that lie within us.

Mahatma Gandhi from "Reconnecting with Non-violence":

... we need to reconnect with soul-force rather than brute-force if the relationships of our lives and our world are to be transformed.

Rebirth means digging deep into the powerhouse of the soul to effect real change in the world.

Carl Jung from "Reconnecting with the Unconscious":

... we need to explore the hidden depths in the inner realm of the soul that are waiting to come further into the light of our consciousness.

Rebirth means opening ourselves to the insights that come to us in ways that are more than we can ask for or imagine, so that we can "dream the way forward for the earth."

Simone Weil from "Reconnecting with Love":

Love is the true sacrament of well-being. As lovers "love each other so much that they enter into each other and make only one being," so are we to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Rebirth means that we need to die to narrowness of our self-loves, whether as individuals, as nations, or as a species. We need to abandon the blinding illusion of separateness.

Let me say a little bit more about Simone Weil, as she isn't as well known as the others in John Philip Newell's book. Simone Weil was born in 1909, and died from tuberculosis at the age of thirty-four. She was a philosopher, mystic, and political activist. Newell says of her:

Weil believed that the universe is essentially a vibration of God. Drawing on her Jewish inheritance she saw everything as spoken into being by God...[She saw] the universe [a]s an expression of love and everything in the universe [a]s essentially a means to love.

I know that she would have loved the wonderful poem by e.e. Cummings:

"i thank You God for most this amazing"

i thank You God for most this amazing
day: for the leaping greenly spirits of trees
and a blue true dream of sky; and for everything
which is natural which is infinite which is yes

(i who have died am alive again today,
and this is the sun's birthday; this is the birth
day of life and of love and wings: and of the gay
great happening illimitably earth)

how should tasting touching hearing seeing
breathing any—lifted from the no
of all nothing—human merely being
doubt unimaginable You?

(now the ears of my ears awake and
now the eyes of my eyes are opened)

Simone Weil would add:

When we become aware that what is deepest in the heart of the other is a living vibration of the Sacred—whether that be in a tree, wild creature, or another human being— we find ourselves wanting say yes. We are created for this consent and for this alone.

This "Yes!" to love others. This "nuptial yes" has the power to change our lives. We no longer confine the other to the fixed categories of race or gender, creed or sexual orientation. The other is set free to be a unique and living expression of the One (the "unimaginable You").

As one who had to flee her homeland in France as she saw the Nazi occupation approaching, Simone Weil was well aware that there are those who resist love, but she also knew that you cannot hate your brother or sister and love God. To truly love, she believed, is to know how to say *no* to the false use of power. It is to learn how to denounce the abuse of force, to avoid being enthralled by it, neither to fear it nor to pursue it.

To love others is to come close to them, to identify with them, and to do all in our power to shelter them and work for their well-being.

To desire wellness for our families and the earth is to stir energies deep within us that can be transfigured to words and actions of well-being in the world. Transfigured. Radiating love.

In the church calendar, this last Sunday of Epiphany is known as Transfiguration Sunday. It always includes a version of the story of Jesus on the Mountain with Moses, Elijah and three disciples of Jesus: Peter, James and John. Jesus goes up to the mountain to pray with his closest disciples, perfectly imperfect as they are, who then witness the brilliant connection of teachers past and present. The disciples want to make of that holy moment a holy shrine. Jesus says *no*, and he tells them that it's time to go back to the valley, back to the people who are hungry, who need clothes and shelter and loving care. We came here to this mountain top, he says, to remember who we are and what we can do. We no longer make shrines out of stones; we make them out of people. And we don't stack them into piles, we build them into beloved communities.

Now let's begin a new kind of exodus, and set all humanity free from the oppression of small-minded, fearful thinking. Let's teach others the way of peace. After this Sunday we are all going back down the mountain to the City of Jerusalem during a season we know as Lent.

For me, Lent is a time for us to continue our spiritual formation, to deepen our awareness that all things are connected by loving awareness, and that we can be healed and we can be healers. We can be carried by love just as we can carry one another in love.

I think of Lent as a Spring Training for the Soul. As we enter into the season of Lent, I invite us to remember all the reconnections that John Philip Newell says might open the way to rebirth. And if you have a hard time remembering what those reconnections are, just remember this: be kind to yourself and to others; love your neighbor as yourself; carry your loved one, or let your loved one carry you across the street.

Amen.