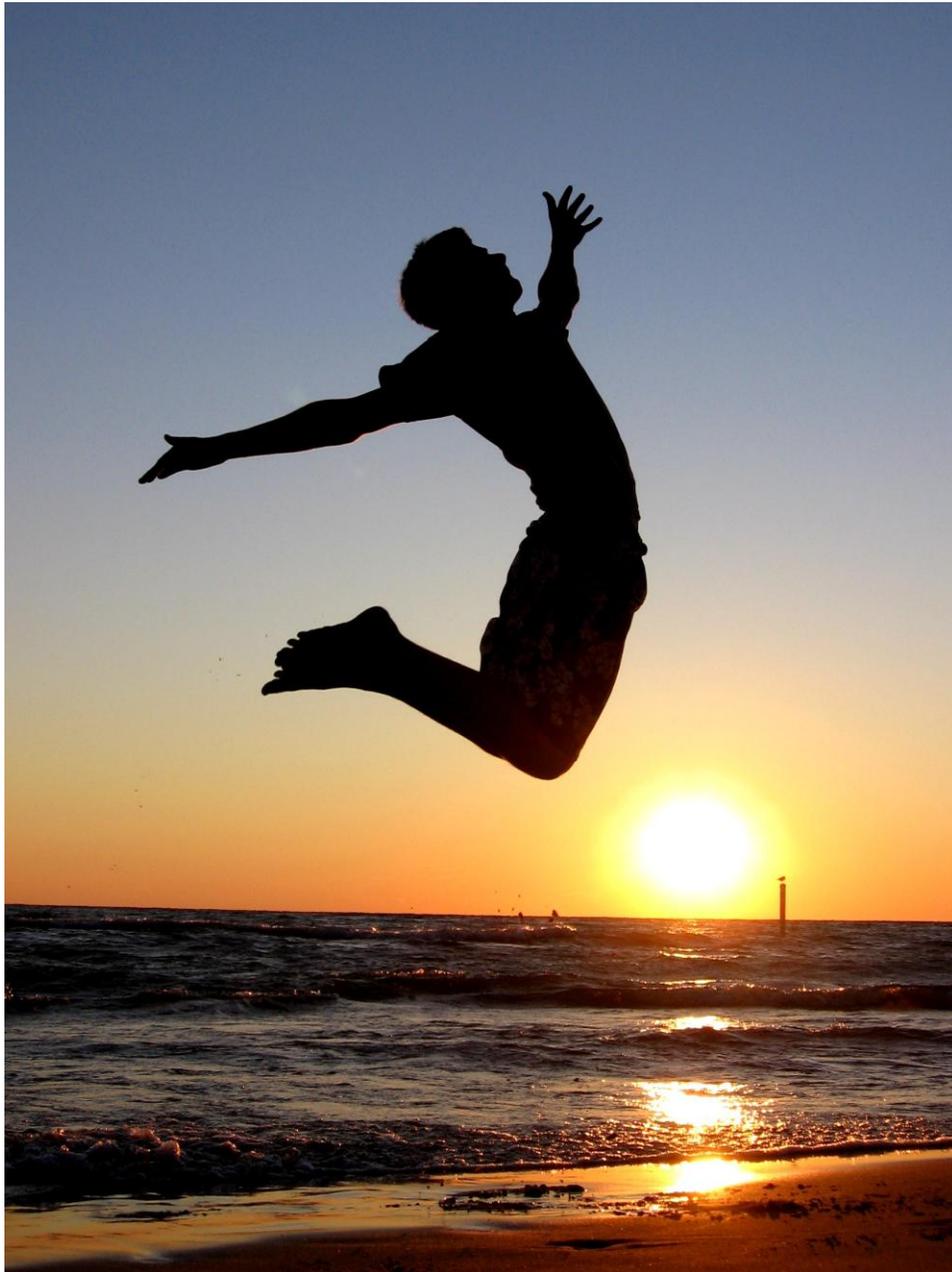


40 Days of Gratitude

Forty “Facts of Life” for which
we can all be Thank-full every single day ...



through *Scaughdt*
... an (i)am publication
(3rd Edition)

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*“Cultivate the habit of being grateful
for everything that comes to you,
and of giving thanks continuously ...*

*Because all things past have
contributed to your advancement,
and all things present will
contribute to your growth.
And thus all things always can be
included in your gratitude.”*

~ inspired by Ralph Waldo Emerson

*"In every moment of my life
I am less desirous of what could be,
& more accepting of everything that already IS ...
Without struggle or strife, Life itself keeps bringing the change.
And it is my greatest honor & my utmost privilege
to remain open & receptive as it does so."
~ anonymous*

An Introduction to what follows ...

We have all been programmed to desire less pain and yearn for more comfort & pleasure over the course of our lives. These instinctual urges certainly played an important role in our species' survival and early stages of evolution, and yet in these modern times – in what can properly be called the young adulthood of humanity's development – they are proving to be more of a hindrance than a help. Indeed, it seems almost irrefutable that the early Buddhist scholars (including Buddha himself) were right about the nature of suffering & the impossibility of attaining any real, desire-based satisfaction – referring namely to the Truth that the more we desire anything for ourselves, the more attached we become to acquiring the same, and thereby the more suffering we accrue when those outcomes do not come to pass as we had hoped.

Of course, as anyone who has done any amount of sincere work with this subject already knows (and as the majority of “Self-Help” gurus clearly do **not** yet comprehend), the solution to this conundrum is most certainly **not** found in complaining, or gossiping, or setting up “healthy boundaries” against adversaries & “leeches”; nor is it found in nibbling on “sour grapes”, or become passive & inert (sometimes called “going within”), or “manifesting abundance”, or caring for one's self, or limiting one's caring for others (often incorrectly labeled as “detachment”).

No, as any truly Wise One understands, suffering comes from seeking for one's self, and as such the solution to suffering can only come from looking in places where the self is not. Simply stated, the solution to suffering rests in selfless Giving – and the foundation of any act of selfless Giving must rest upon the solid bulwark of pure, unadulterated GRATITUDE ...

Now I don't refer here to the traditional definitions of gratitude we learn in the hallowed halls of our youth – I don't mean “counting our blessings”, or being thankful for the good times, or even appreciating not being inflicted with the more intense forms of pain felt by others around us ... No, when I speak of **Gratitude**, I speak of a different energy altogether; one that is not dependent in any shape, form or fashion on external consequences or circumstances of fate – one that is always available to us, no matter what & no matter when.

This “real Gratitude” is as difficult to explain as it is powerful to experience, and as such it has merited an entire book – this tome that can be read at one sitting or slowly ingested over 40 days. Rest assured that even though the Truths shared herein might seem impractical when first read, they have all been tried & tested by yours truly over many years. They all “work” beautifully -- functioning in perfect proportion to the amount of courage with which they are enlivened ... May you enJOY them accordingly!



Scaughdt
(July 2016)



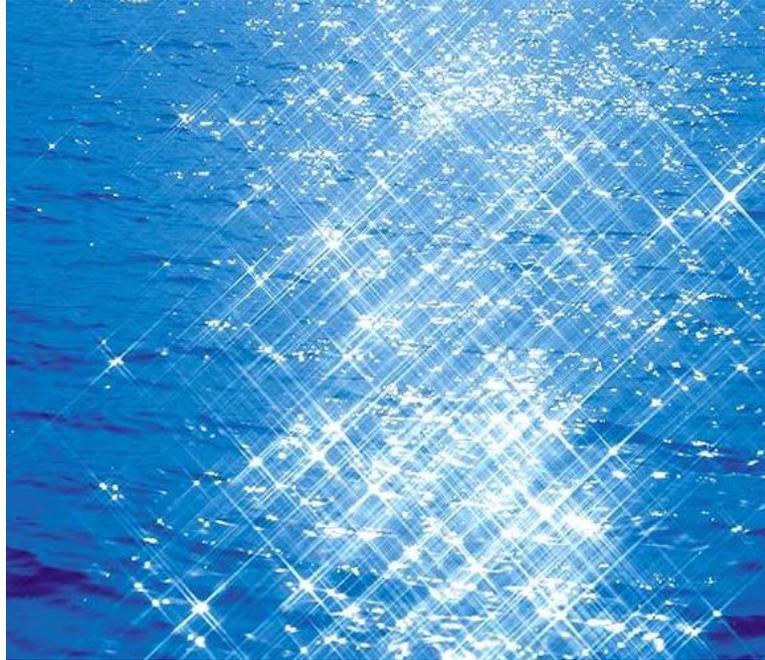
*When you arise in the morning
give thanks for your food and for the joy of living.
If you see no reason for giving thanks,
the fault lies not in your life,
but rather in your vision.
~ Chief Tecumseh*

Day 01 ... being Grateful for Life

Today I am grateful for awakening again to my conscious Life; for being given another chance to go forth and choose to become a Force for Good in this world (despite my more primitive, instinctual urges to merely “take care of myself”).

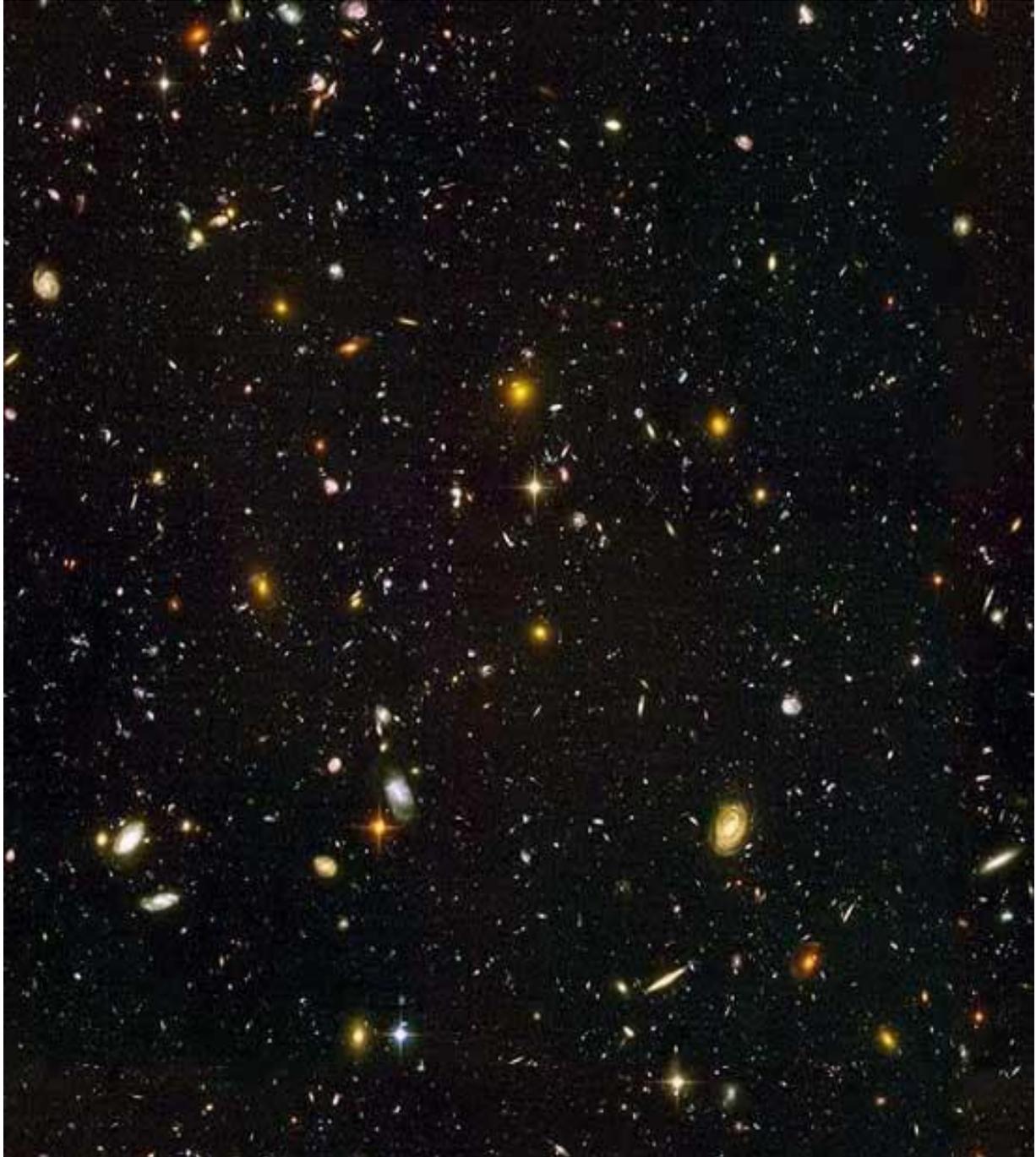
In addition, I am also thankful to be able to reawaken Life’s more intrinsic Meanings – facets far more scintillating and Truths far “deeper” like:

* ... appreciating the Beauty that constantly surrounds me (even in encounters normally deemed “normal” or times deemed “boring”) ...



* ... reveling in intimate re-Connections with the Souls of strangers (even when some of them might seem a bit “weird” or even might be a bit “scary”) ...

* ... cherishing the “Universal Life-Source” (otherwise known as “God”, or “Adonai”, or “Buddha”, or “Cosmic Consciousness”, or “Chi”, or “Prana”, or “Quantum Interconnection”, etc.) for all my blessed moments of pleasure and ease ...



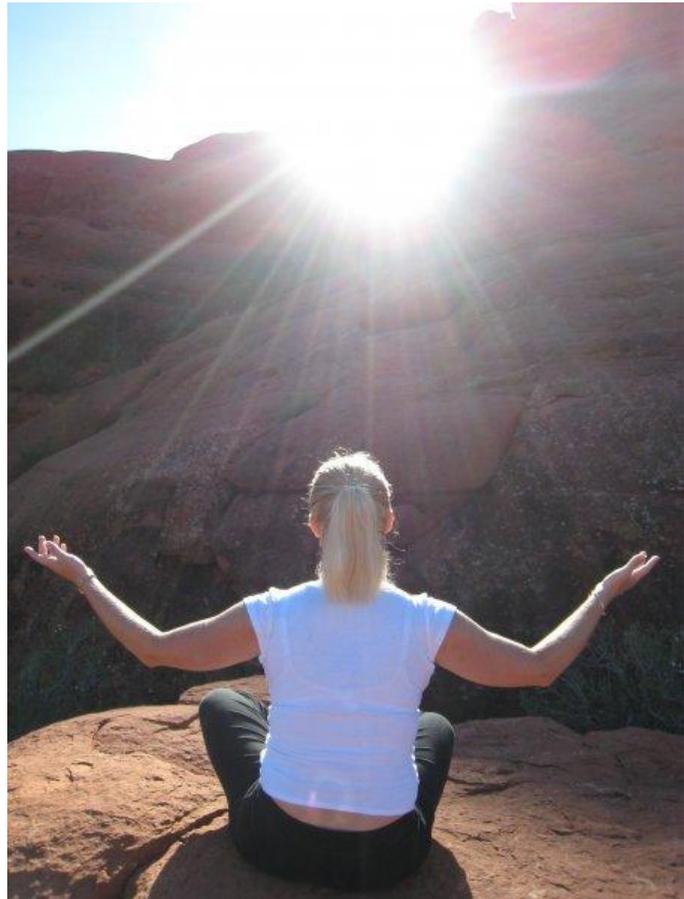


*... and choosing to *LOVE* my “enemies” (all those who make my *LOVE* powerful by making it difficult to give — by rejecting, ridiculing, condemning, criticizing &/or ignoring either me &/or my path). How wonderful it is that I can choose to *LOVE* them anyway!

Frankly, now that I think about it, I am simply thankful for the ability to be consciously grateful at all!

And so, I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with profound reverence, and let loose with a deep & heartfelt –

Thank You!



Day 02 ... being Grateful for Partnership

Today I am grateful for all my Partnerships — both those relationships “tried & true” that continue to unceasingly provide me with support and guidance, as well as those pairings “fickle” that have provided me with amazingly difficult opportunities to “Love anyway” ... And it is the latter upon which I focus my thankfulness now.

When one of our Life’s partners abandons us in any way (or even when we feel that Life itself has abandoned us), we come face-to-face with crisis; great physical pain and intense emotional suffering that often bring with them intense feelings of fear or anger or sadness. And yet, there is another way to respond to such trials ... I have been told that the written Mandarin word for “crisis” is a joining of the symbols for “danger” and “opportunity”, and this is indeed how we each are allowed to see any shift in any relationship that is both unexpected & undesired — as a challenge that presents the “*danger*” of slipping forever into the abyss of feeling lonely or unworthy, *and* simultaneously the *opportunity* to set those fears aside and Love the other (and Life itself) anyway.

To continue to care for a partner who is rejecting us; to appreciate the power of that rejection’s pain that has us clawing so desperately – yearning so intensely to be cared for and supported; to forgive those bystanders who (no doubt inspired by their own painful memories of being treated similarly) maliciously snicker over or callously turn away from our suffering — **these** are the noble choices available to us all in such times ... And these are the choices that allow us to more vividly witness the wonders of the Universe that surround us even in such moments of emotional turmoil — miracles of the Beauty & Kindness that wait forever within; that wait so patiently for us to awaken from our self-focused stupor and once again laugh with unbridled Joy (or maybe even weep with unrestrained gratitude) for the miracle of Life with which we have all been blessed.

For it is *this* relationship – your Union with the All – that is your only true Partnership; a relationship that cannot fail; a partner who cannot ever reject or abandon you in any way.

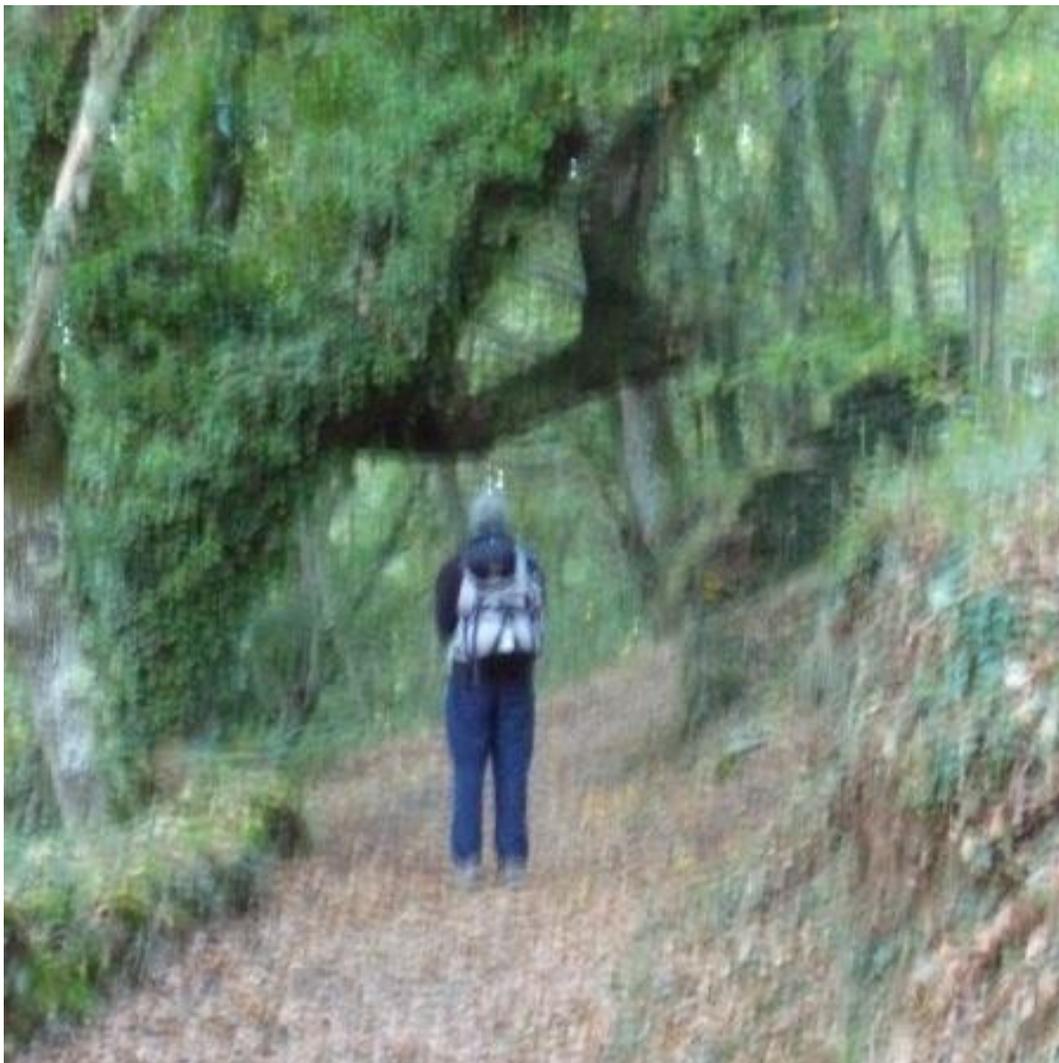
And so, I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with profound reverence, and let loose with a deep & heartfelt –

Thank You!



Day 03 ... being Grateful for Sacred Space

Today I am grateful for Sacred Spaces external — those natural havens of Peace where the energies of the Earth seem to pulse a bit quicker and flow a bit stronger. They are known by many different titles of reverence: “place of power”, “holy ground”, “vortex”, “energy eddy”, “citadel of calm”, “ley-line nexus”, and “my favorite place” — just to name a few. These are the locales where we feel compelled to stand in wonder ... These are the destinations where we feel closest to The Divine ... These are the citadels where we “charge our batteries” ... These are the sanctuaries where the air shimmers and these are the grottos where Mother Nature speaks more clearly ... Essentially, these are the places we love above most others ... These are places our Soul calls “Home”.



And there are also those Sacred Spaces that reside within: the moments when we choose to see the Amazing in the normal; the times when we choose to see the Friend in the stranger; those priceless instants when we choose to see the Beloved in an enemy; the instants when we set aside all our arrogance and all our fear and choose to See the greater glory of our much greater Connection with everything around us ...



To come into the realms of the former is to be forever changed for the better. To live in the grace of the latter is to continually re-forge the Universe.



Some of my own external Sacred Spaces include (in no particular order) — Ryon-Ji Temple in Kyoto (Japan), the Grand Canyon (preferably down inside it), Ruby Beach and the Hoh Rain Forest (both on the Olympic Peninsula of Washington State), Mt. Rainier, Huautla de Jiminez (Mexico), The Green Sands Beach (Big Island, Hawaii), Hurricane Park (Alabama), Wright Park (in Tacoma, Washington), Leon Cathedral (Leon, Spain), The Wildwood Labyrinth (Alexzanna Farms, Georgia), The Eibergen Labyrinth (Eibergen, Holland), Santorini (Greece), Ngorongoro Crater (Tanzania), Avebury (England), The Glastonbury Tor (England), the EBA gardens (Chicago, Illinois), Doe Bay (Orcas Island, Washington), The Badlands (South Dakota), the Birmingham Japanese Gardens (Alabama), Grayton Beach State Park (Florida), New Orleans (Louisiana), Rocky Valley (near Tintagel, England), St. Necton's Glen (near Tintagel, England), Tangier (Morocco), and St. Antonien (Switzerland) — just to name a few ...

These are some of the magical places where I have resided (even if but for an afternoon) during my first 40+ years; places that have changed my outlook on Life and inspired me to approach my living with an intensified purpose and passion. Alone the clarified frequencies of Oneness they emanate have been enough to mold my character and ease my Journey, and for this I am thankful to each of them ...

Just as important (possibly even more so) are those *internal* Sacred Spaces — those moments of deep calm when I remembered that true Bliss & profound Meaning in life comes not from the people we meet or the activities we engage or the places where we engage them, but rather from within ourSelves. And this Peace is as readily accessible to us in the most isolated desert as it is in the most lush of forests; is as prevalent in our times of intense pain as it is in those of our perfect solace.



And so today I am as thankful for my bouts of sadness as I am for my moments of bliss; remembering that I am as blessed by my spikes of anger as I am by my moments of caring — that I am as happy for my encounters with fear as I am for my moments immersed in Love. For this is the ultimate gift of our Free Will; that we may choose to be grateful even in those moments when we are least inclined to be so ...

And it is with this in mind & heart that I climb my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with calm reverence, and let loose with a deep & heartfelt —

Thank You!

Day 04 ... being Grateful for Children

Today I am grateful for children — both the joy they bring, as well as the lessons they teach. It has been said that children laugh on average 400+ times per day, and regardless of whether or not this is true, it does seem impossible for me to be in the presence of a child without at least smiling myself.



It is also children who remind me to see all things “normal” as wondrous — to truly appreciate the miracle that is a butterfly, or a rain cloud, or consciousness, or friendship ... or even a good (albeit sometimes indecipherable) joke.





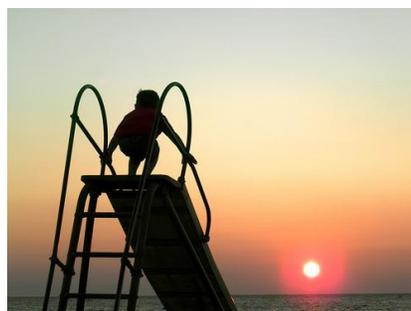
It is children who remind me to truly **Be** in this moment (the only moment we truly have) — to express my emotions fully and then let them go completely, to pay attention to what I am doing and only to what I am doing, to attend to what is actually happening as opposed to preparing for what might someday occur.

It is children who remind me of the priceless of my relationships with others — to cherish each and every friend with whom I am blessed to share space, to greet each person I meet as though it is a reunion with a long-lost Soulmate, and to say farewell at each parting as though I will never see that person again.



It is children who remind me the amazing worth of not taking life so seriously — to dance in the rain, to sing in the car (with the windows down), to laugh (albeit internally) in the face of criticism and to be resilient (albeit with compassion) when faced with tragedy.

And perhaps most importantly, it is children who provide both the clearest look at how we have strayed from our Path, while simultaneously providing us with the light that leads us back Home ...



And so it is that I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with profound reverence, and let loose with a deep & heartfelt –

Thank You!

Day 05 ... being Grateful for Oneness

Today I am grateful for ONENESS ...

*I am grateful for the ONENESS that has me remembering my interconnected kinship with everything around me, even while feeling independently separate from it all; the innate Understanding that life is not happening *to* me as much as it is happening *with* me.

*I am grateful for the ONENESS that has my prayerful gaze looking inward to find God resting peacefully there, even while I am tempted to look solely upward to the heavens for Him (or Her – or It); the innate Knowing that my very own conscience is the stuff of that Source.

*I am grateful for the ONENESS that has me caring for everyone who has ever harmed, abandoned or betrayed me; knowing that I would & will still gladly give my own Happiness & Contentment to them all, even as I remember that their own joys and successes are mine as well.

*I am grateful for the ONENESS that has me already aware of all the Truth & Wisdom there is to be known, even though I often still sit stifled by moments of confusion and indecisiveness; the innate Comprehension that it is actually these times of doubt that emPower all my subsequent decisions to “Do Good Anyway”.

*I am grateful for the ONENESS that has me cherishing my Solitude — that has me reveling in my gentle partnerships with both the Universe (a.k.a. “God”) and mySelf (a.k.a. my “Soul”); that has me doing so even when sometimes feeling lonely and desiring the company of others.



*I am grateful for the ONENESS that has me realizing that, simply by choosing to wake and set forth into the day intending to be a Force for Good, I have already fulfilled that day’s primary Purpose; that has me doing so even when I am doubtful of my ability to “be good enough” or “fulfill my Destiny”.

*I am grateful for the ONENESS that knows that I allWays have everything I truly need — both what I require to survive, and what I need in order to feel true Happiness; that has me Knowing so even when I am hungry or afraid or tired or mad or sad.

*And finally, I am grateful for the ONENESS that simply IS; the ONENESS that allWays was – and the ONENESS that ever will be.



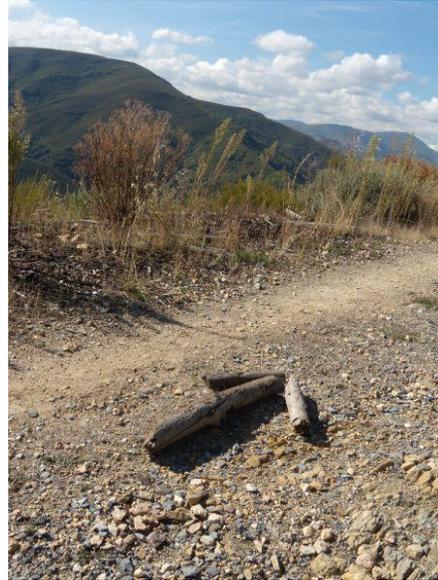
And so it is that I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with profound reverence, and let loose with a deep & heartfelt –

Thank You!

Day 06 ... being Grateful for LOVE

Today I am grateful for Love — both the feeling of deep-seated Peace that washes over me in all my moments of selflessness, as well as the ever so subtle base-frequency of Harmony that is the foundation of the material Universe.

It is true that there are still times when I yearn for pleasures I no longer experience. And there are still times when I too experience pains of body and mind. Indeed, just like the rest of my sentient brothers & sisters, there are still times when my awareness wanders into analyzing the past or fantasizing about (or worrying over) the future. And there are still times when I get lost in a vast array of “important things to do” ... And, yet underneath all of these dysfunctions rests a bedrock of Love – the same foundation of solidarity that always shows us all the Way back to a life of interconnected Bliss.



Indeed, all matter is simply light compressed into different densities, and that light is itself composed of the base-frequency we all know as “Love”. As such, every particle of every facet of every portion of every setting of every moment of our lives is *literally* composed of various densities of compressed Love.

As such, it is not our job to make our Reality “better” (either for ourselves or for others), but rather it is our *privilege* to humbly harmonize our words and deeds with Reality *AS IT ALREADY IS* — to harvest this Love by bringing others Joy or easing their burdens ... And this Truth allows me to feel a deep Gratitude for all I *already* possess; allows me to re-member Joy in the midst of my moments of pain & dis-ease; allows me sense deep Wonderment when feeling “bored”; and allows me to re-member to appreciate my Here&Now when tempted to wander mentally into the delusional realms of regret or worry.

And the key word here is “allows” — for no one (not even my own ego) can force me to awaken to thankfulness or happiness or wonderment or appreciation. These (and any other Virtue with them) must be *chosen* before they can truly BE. And it is a privilege to be able to do so; an intimate Honor — never a duty or an obligation.

Love, as the essence of Oneness, must be expressed as an active force before it can blossom into Reality. It must be seen as a verb; not some mere emotion to experience or a mere possession to covet or capture. Rather, real Love exists only in those moments **when we give it to others** — and only when we do so with courageous deeds (as opposed to mere “nice thoughts” or “kind words”) ...



Today, I am thankful for this constant opportunity: a most ever-present *privilege*, and a most humbling honor -- to LOVE.

And so it is that I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with profound reverence, and let loose with a deep & heartfelt –

Thank You!

Day 07 ... being Grateful for Duality

Today I am grateful for Duality — the essence of my conscious awareness; both my ability to know that I live, along with the foundation of any ability I might have to make that life Meaning-full ... As such, I am deeply thankful.

* I am thankful for my duality of **self/Self**; the dichotomy of consciousness that allows me to distinguish between acts that primarily serve myself (the selfishness of ego) and those that intend to serve others (the selflessness of the conscience).

* I am thankful for the duality of **intimacy**; that 1/4 second gap between the time my reptile brain tells me to flee from my enemy and the time my neo-cortex has me courageously stop and choose to be Kind to him/her instead.



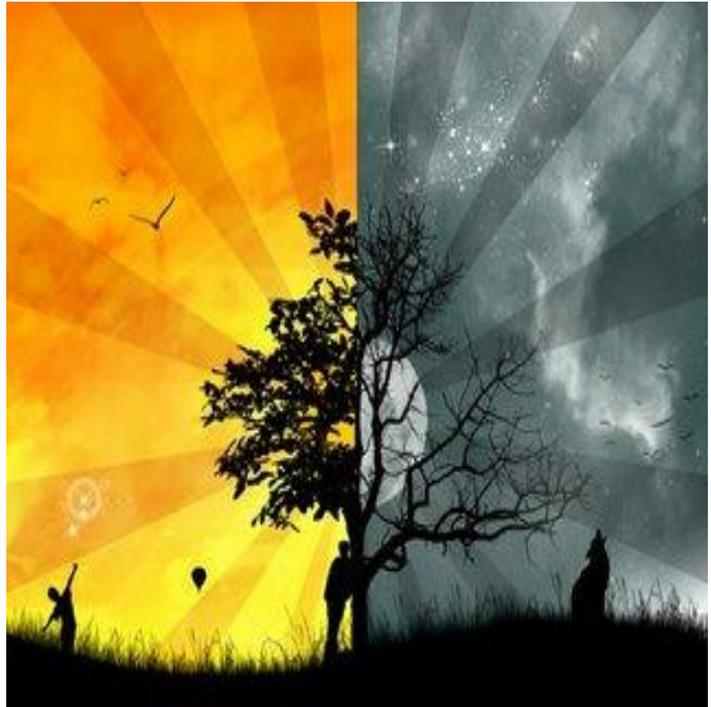
* I am thankful for the duality of **ownership**; that divide that makes every possession either a thing to be owned or a gift to be given.

* I am thankful for the duality of **affection**; that ever-present choice between actions that protect my own existence (those based in fear) and deeds that protect another's well-being (those founded in Love).

* I am thankful for the duality of **judgment**; that “Dance of Destiny” when we are allowed to either impotently inflict others with our analysis (or ridicule, or punishment, or aggression) for their misdeeds — or powerfully forgive them for the same.

* I am thankful for the duality of **hope**; that set of options always before us that demands either that we strive for what we know is best, or humbly flow with what already IS.

* I am thankful for the duality of **perception**; that has us constantly choosing between seeing life as either boring (i.e. familiar) or spectacular.



* I am thankful for the duality of **dignity**; that priceless moment when we choose to either justify, rationalize or explain our actions to those disapproving, or smile in silence with the knowledge that there is no one to convince but ourSelves.

*And I am thankful and for the duality of **Freedom**; where we are all afforded the opportunity to reside in the whim-built prisons of societal rules, cultural conventions and friends’ expectations — or boldly embrace & enliven the essence of our True Selves anyway.

And it is so that I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with profound reverence, and let loose with a deep & heartfelt –

Thank You!

Day 08 ... being Grateful for Sound

Today I am grateful for sound — both those ringing out all around me, as well as those peeling softly within ...

*I am thankful for music & drumbeats, for trickling waters & storms of wind & rain, for the laughter of children & the giggling of adults, for the howls of coyotes & the cacophony of crows — for the purring of contented cats & the soft chirp of the cardinal as he calls to his Beloved at sunrise ...

*I am thankful for the lonely lament of owls at midnight, and that instant of perfect silence that rests upon us all at every midday ...



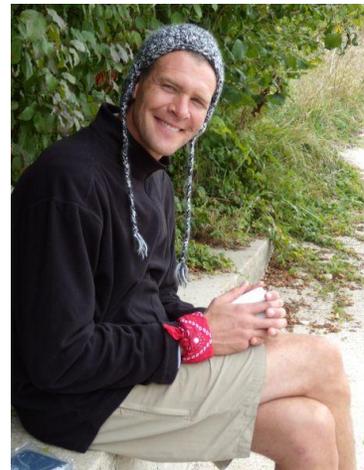
*I am thankful for the words “I Love You” — even when the one doing the uttering is speaking from a worn script she holds in her head ...

*I am thankful for the sound of *The Brown Book* (my smoothly-aged & Self-channeled “Life-Guide”), as I slowly open it to partake of its Truth & Wisdom ...

*I am thankful for the crash of waves on stony beaches and the crackling embers of a dying bonfire that warm my hands & feet ...

*I am thankful for every gently uttered prayer for Peace; wishing devoutly that God’s Highest Will of Harmony will one day be truly done ...

*And I am thankful the Great-Silence upon which all these sounds dance — the Great Silence heard in every smile.



I am equally thankful for all sounds internal ...

*I am thankful for the ever-more-prevalent creakings of my joints — reminding me that even now I can still move and sway and jump and run and dance (albeit more than a bit less gracefully than in younger days) ...

*I am thankful for the rumblings in my stomach, reminding me that sustenance is always on its way; that to continue on is not so much a gift as it is a given ...

*I am thankful for my own heartbeat that reminds me that I am alive and have been called to *Live*, and I am thankful for the heartbeats of others, both those of my dearest loved ones, as well as those of my most powerful enemies ...

*I am thankful for the low, constant whine of the blood coursing through my body — the blood that flows to and from my heart; the Home of my Soul and the crucible of my Love ...

*I am thankful for the velvet echoes of my breath, sustaining both body & mind — sustaining them that I might dedicate just one more moment to Loving ...

*I am thankful for the smooth rustlings of every gentle kiss given or received — each a perfect union just this side of silence ...



*And I am thankful for silence itself — the silence that resides at the very center of every atom of my being — the complete stillness upon which the entire Universe rolls & spins & tumbles; the silence that weaves the backdrop upon which my Soul reaches out to lightly touch the cheek of God.



And so it is that I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with profound reverence, and let loose with a deep & heartfelt –

Thank You!

Day 09 ... being Grateful for “GOD”

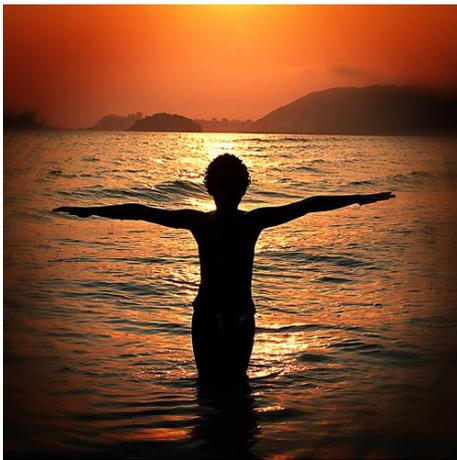
Today I am grateful for the Divine Essence many call “God” (and all Its many names & forms & genders) ... It is the center of every atom, and the standard-bearer of my conscience. It is the essence of my awareness, and the Light of my Love. It is the inspiration for all my acts of Compassion, and the courage for me to Do what is Right. It is the nurturing “Mother” who provides us all with sustenance, and the guiding “Father” who incessantly urges us away from temptation ...



So thank you, God. Thank you for keeping me strong while gravity strives to crush me, for holding me together while inertia tries to pull me into the void, for nurturing my faith again & again while disappointment & frustration & hope continually strive to have me ever-yearning for the tenuous illusions of “more” and “better” and “perfect” ... Thank you for leading me to still waters of inner calm whenever my outer world is dark and turbulent and sticky, and for leading me to opportunities of service whenever I get stuck in the despairs of self.



Thank you, God, for allowing me to choose who I become by giving me the freedom to choose in each moment just how I will **Be** ... Thank you for always gifting me with the next opportunity to enjoy my time — to humbly See the next wonder, to humbly smile with the next celebration, to humbly Love again and again and again (regardless of how many times I hurt or am hurt thereby) ... Thank you for ever guiding me back to the courageous Path of selfless Kindness.



Thank you, God, for never allowing me to experience the full brunt of the consequences of my selfish acts, and for always sending me far more Joy than my good deeds ever merit ...

Thank you for allowing me to see the angel in every demon and the friend in every enemy — for having built my very being from the Light of Love; imbuing me with the innate sense of Oneness that forever calls me to cherish *all* my brothers and sisters.

Thank you, God, for the rain & for the sunshine ... for the cold and for the heat ... for love's warmth and for hatred's callousness (that both make Caring so priceless). Thank you for the wellspring of Goodness that enables us all to laugh with children, to smile at sunsets, and to be moved to tears over the Beauty of the noble deeds of sacrifice ... Thank you, God, for US — that you & I are ONE, and that I am able to act accordingly whenever and as often as I wish.



And it is so that I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with profound reverence, and let loose with a deep & heartfelt –

Thank You!

Day 10 ... being Grateful for Death

Today I am grateful for death — that ominous & shadowy peril that lurks around every corner and resides deep within every creature's every breath. For as sturdy as Life remains as a whole, each individual life therein holds on to its existence by the thinnest thread of grace — a thread made stronger with every act of selfless Love, and yet always a mere thread nonetheless ...

And yet, despite the precariousness of our most fragile lives, there is no cause for either fear or worry. It is simply the nature of our existence for us to be constantly confronted by the tenuousness of our being ... Indeed, it is better for us to actually rejoice in the same, for what is the preciousness in an existence immortal? Let me rather taste the wonder and the excitement and the relief and the gratitude that are all born from living just one moment more — from being given just one more eternal instant in which to awaken from my self-centered slumbers to Love again!

In every instant of our lives we are being literally assaulted internally by a veritable horde of ravenous micro-organisms — and yet still we live to know moments of Peace. And in every moment of our lives we are attacked by the wind and the rain and heat and hunger and predators more intimate than these — and yet still we live to know moments of amazement and joy. In this sense, death becomes a most priceless gift; that we can be aware of its inevitable omnipotence enough to at least sporadically treasure the moments we still have in our possession.

Oh Death, come not for me in this moment, and yet allow me to celebrate the thick & rich Meaning over which you continually ladle my existence ... Oh Death, you are invincible and all-infusing (at least as far as my mind-body is concerned) — and yet as long as I am alive and *aware* of my aliveness, you are ruled by *me*; by the degree of selflessness I choose to exhibit in the face of your threats; by the deepest contentment that my fears of you grant me when I nobly choose to set them aside in order to **Care anyway**.

Thank you, then, oh Death. Thank you for mocking my feeble attempts to disregard you. Thank you for your invincibility, that I have no choice but to accept my ultimate fate, and thereby imbue all the remaining moments of my life with Wonder and Joy and Peace. Some think you to be evil, and others label you as cold & dark, and yet I know that your shadow only frames Love's radiance, and thereby guides me straight thereto.

And so it is that I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with profound reverence, and let loose with a deep & heartfelt —

Thank You!



Day 11 ... being Grateful for the Earth

Today I am grateful for the Earth — both all her peaceful Beauty, and all her violent turmoil ...

I am thankful for her shape — that there ever remains a realm of mystery beneath her every surface (no matter how deeply we happen to delve); that there is always a panorama of perfection above our heads (no matter where we roam and no matter what the weather); that every “end of the earth” is simply another starting point on our never-ending Journey of re-discovering our scintillating blue-green marble of a Home ...



I am thankful for her symphonies of sound and sight; for her pungent odors, subtle tastes and varied textures. I am thankful for her invisible beauties — her ley-lines & her Van Allen belts, her underground rivers & her skies draped with jet-streams ...

And, of course, I am thankful for her Soul (made of the same stuff as my own). She comprises all that is most beautiful and all that is most challenging in the Universe. As such, there is nowhere else I could travel that would amaze me more, and as such, there is nowhere else I would rather be — right Here, right Now ... on Earth, as it *is* in Heaven!

And so it is that I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with profound reverence, and let loose with a deep & heartfelt – ***Thank You!***



Day 12 ... being Grateful for Family

Today I am grateful for family, in all its splendid forms ...

*I am thankful, of course, for my immediate family: for my mother who nurtured me from my true Beginning (both via her caring deeds, as well as her occasional lack thereof), for my father who inspired me along the way (both via his gentle guidance, as well as his occasional lack thereof), for my brother who remains the truest of Friends (even after his death; even to this day), for my grandparents who — each in his/her own way — instilled within me the Virtues of selfless service & social justice, and for my son who will forever be a source of profound inspiration and paternal pride ...



*And I am equally thankful for the members of my “extended” family: for all my aunts & uncles & cousins & relatives “more distant”; as well as all my life’s past teachers & coaches, mentors & bosses, guides & gurus.

*I am thankful for my friends — both those close and far; as well as all past lovers — both actual & those unrequited ...





*And I am especially thankful for my enemies — both those real & those I merely imagine, for it is they who make my life truly Meaning-full, by giving me constant opportunities to enliven a Love unconditional; for allowing my True Self to bloom anew.

*I am thankful for all those other facets of the Earth that the unenlightened deem to be “less than”: all members of kingdoms animal (bird and beast), plant (tree and grass) and mineral (earth and stone); all the manifestations of the elements (wind, rain, lightning, sunbeam, cloud, mist, fog & fire); as well as all the citizens mysterious or unseen that inhabit the realms both “above” the Earth and those “below” her ...



*And finally, I am thankful for all my many Families within — both the relatives of my ego (all the fears I try to avoid & all the desires I strive to attain), as well as those facets of Me more close to my Soul (my Callings to serve others & my Knowings of all that which is Moral -- and thereby True).

And so it is that I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with profound reverence, and let loose with a deep & heartfelt –

Thank You!

Day 13 ... being Grateful for Purpose

Today I am thankful for Purpose — that while it is not certain whether we each have a predestined path to follow or a pre-arranged task to find & fulfill, it *is* clear that each of us has been blessed with a unique package of gifts & talents that only we can give to – and enliven for – others ... And even while we struggle with discovering these individual “Life-Missions”, (a.k.a. Vocations, or Callings), one Truth seems certain: that **we are all here to Love**; that regardless of our unique & differing beliefs about how we are best to live our lives &/or interact with others, Love sits calmly as the only moderator for such external discussions & observes objectively as the sole arbiter of these internal disputes.



All that is left for us, then, is to set boldly forth in each moment of our lives — to Love purely, in whatever ways are available to us in all the moments available for us to do so. There is no need for indecision and wavering; no need to find the “best way” or discover the “most effective deed” ... It is enough to simply go forth and be kind to somebody, as radically as possible and as caringly as possible.



And herein reclines another of our greatest of blessings: that no matter how far we might stray from our personal paths of purity, our True Path remains forever intact and forever available to us — should we choose to walk it again.

As such, it actually matters not whether our Destiny is at home with others – flowing to me to be Loved, or “on the road” – with me flowing smoothly into the lives of others. We each have a unique message of selfless Kindness to share, and we have an unique method with which to share the same ...

All that remains is for us to decide that today, right Now, is the best & only time to commence with walking that Way.



And so it is that I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with profound reverence, and let loose with a deep & heartfelt –

Thank You!

Day 14 ... being Grateful for our Enemies

Today I am grateful for my enemies — for those that persecute me directly, as well as those who place more subtle (yet just as ominous) obstacles in my path ...

I am thankful for all the partners and friends over the years who have abandoned me — those who have rejected my chosen Way, those who have ridiculed my beliefs, and those who have ignored my pleas for assistance. For it is these people who have made it possible for me to transcend my tougher times; to blossom into the man I have chosen to become. It is these “enemies” to whom I actually owe the most — as they are the ones who have provided me with my most difficult opportunities to “Love anyway”. And in those moments when I chose to do so, I was strengthened beyond measure.

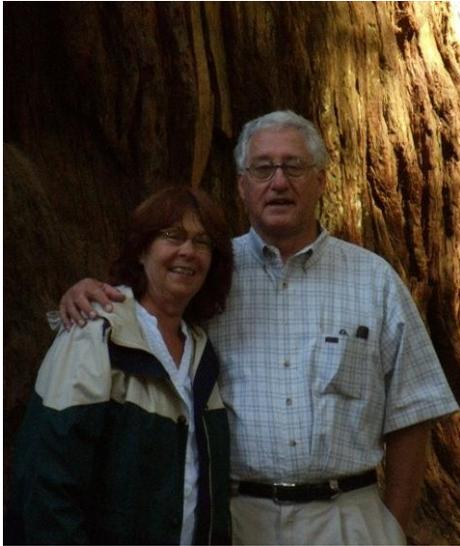
*Some of our life’s “enemies” are unkind or insincere ... thereby emPowering all our subsequent acts of Caring.



*Some of our life’s “enemies” are critical of our decisions or condemn our lifestyles ... thereby emPowering all our subsequent acts of courageous Faith in our Way.

*Some of our life’s “enemies” abandon us ... thereby emPowering all our subsequent acts of Loyalty.





*Some of our life's "enemies" worry about us and others reject our chosen Paths ... thereby emPowering all our subsequent acts of Positivity & Persistence.

*Some of our life's "enemies" condemn who we are & others misrepresent what we have done ... thereby emPowering all our subsequent acts of Forgiveness.



*Some of our life's "enemies" tempt us to stray into selfishness ... thereby emPowering all our subsequent choices to selflessly Care for others instead.

*Some of our life's "enemies" attempt to control our days or manipulate our moments ... thereby emPowering all the choices we make thereafter that reaffirm our Freedom.



*And some of our life's "enemies" want us to falter in the face of Friendship or fear when confronted with Intimacy ... thereby emPowering all our later acts of unconditional Love.

I am thankful for them all – for all those who distract me in all those moments when I am on the verge of re-attaining a sense of Oneness: friends calling for me to “take a break”, TV shows that seek to “entertain” me, newspaper articles designed to “keep me informed”, associates who encourage me to gossip behind others’ backs, those who profess to be bored and need “more excitement”, and even those who feel the need to analyze others in order to “figure them out” ... These are the “enemies” who encourage me to glance without looking, to hear without listening, to speak without thinking, to touch without feeling, to do without truly attending – to focus on others’ “failures” instead of their brilliance, to notice life’s “deficiencies” instead of its gifts & wonders ...

They each provide me with challenges of great difficulty, and yet thereby each emPower me in those moments when I choose instead to *See* what I gaze upon, to *Hear* what is said, to *Know* what I say, to *Feel* what I touch, to *Attend* to the tasks I engage; essentially – to concentrate my efforts on honing & polishing my own innate perfection – and my own only.



*I am thankful as well for the societal conventions of my culture and the expectations of my peers that both strive continually to keep me “in line” – in harmony with *their* versions of what is “normal” and “responsible” and “productive”, for it is pressures such as these that make all my actions taken outside those walls and all those taken above those limitations that much more courageous – and thereby that much more potent.

*And finally, I am thankful for my own internal “demons”:

... the desire to constantly analyze my moments instead of simply living in them;
... the hopes and attachments that tempt me to wish for what “could be” instead of reveling in what already IS;

... the innate self-centeredness that has me yearning for “what’s best for myself” instead of leading me to engage in what is good for others;

... the envy that has me seeing others’ successes as my own defeat instead enJoying them as *our* victories;

... the indifferent apathy that has me protecting myself from others’ traumas instead reaching out in empathy to lessen their pain;

... the cowardly dishonesty that has me developing a persona designed to please others instead of letting my True Self shine forth (and thereby pleasing my “God within”);

... the arrogance that has me believing that my own goals are more worthy instead of the humility that allows me to engage the opportunities already placed before me;

... the familiarity that has me often bored with the “normal” instead of witnessing the miracles of Beauty that constantly surround me;

... and the doubt that freezes me into action while waiting for “a better time” instead of boldly going forth to simply **Do Good anyway**.

For all of these ego-based hindrances I am grateful, for it is they that give me the opportunities needed to transcend both difficulty and temptation — and thereby allow me to rise into the glory of what it means to be a true Human Being while doing so.

And so it is that I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with profound reverence, and let loose with a deep & heartfelt –

Thank You!

Day 15 ... being Grateful for Sustenance

Today I am grateful for sustenance — both those substances that energize my body & mind when ingested from without, as well as those that sustain my spirit & Soul when partaken from within ...

*I am thankful for the air that carries oxygen into my body; the same air that brings me gentle harmonies on its soft breezes ...



*And I am thankful for the sun's light that has enlivened the plant-based foods that continue to emPower my existence.



*I am thankful for the water — the stuff of which I am made and the fuel that both smoothes & sanctifies my living ...



*And I am thankful for the sustenance of Love — the Love that has me caring for this moment like a long-lost Friend; the Love that has me both feeling faint when left by a lover, and that brings me the greatest Peace when I choose to keep loving her anyway — and the Love that thereafter enCourages me to See everyone and everything as my Beloved ...

*And yet last but not least (indeed first & foremost), I am thankful for the ability to be *otherwise* thankful — to rejoice in the success of others ahead of my own, to celebrate the joys of others as if they belonged to me, to smile while watching lovers as if I were the one wrapped in their Bliss ... It is **this** form of selfless gratitude that makes Oneness real. Every time I wish others health when I myself am ill, every time I give others strength when I myself am tired, every time I send others contentment when I myself am worried — **these** are the moments when I am blessed beyond measure by the ability to go beyond the mere concept of Oneness and dive deeply into its Reality instead.



And so it is that I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with profound reverence, and let loose with a deep & heartfelt –

Thank You!

Day 16 ... being Grateful for Guidance

Today I am grateful for my Guides — both those “avatars” who have led me to the Light of Love, as well as those “false prophets” who continue to tempt me from It ...

And yet, you might ask, what makes a guide “True”?

Well, she or he must first & foremost teach the selfless Way — enCouraging others to care and to give and to love from a place of Kindness that thinks nothing of self, and everything of the other. He is humble & jovial in his giving, and completely unconcerned with personal profit of any type. She is all-accepting & ever-grateful, and generous with both her full time & her few possessions.

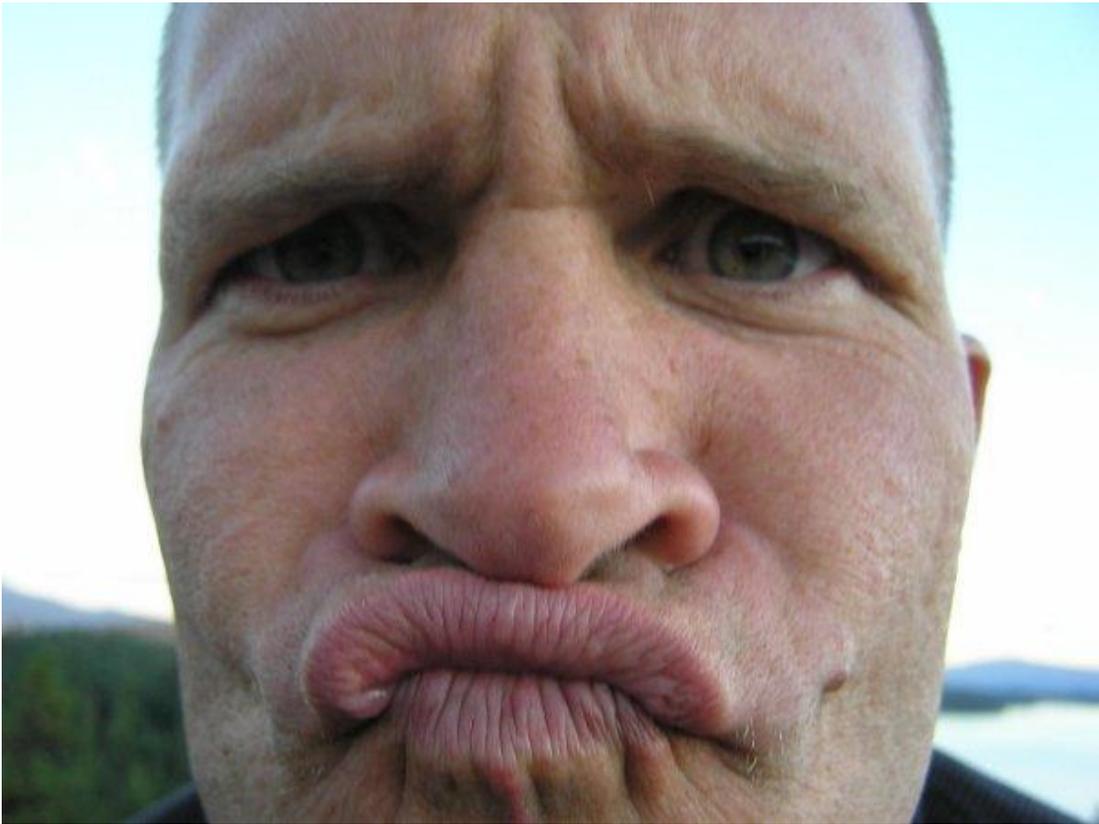
At least for me, some of these “Saints” have been & remain: Mahatma Gandhi, Jesus of Nazareth, Martin Luther King Jr., Thich Nhat Hanh, Gautama Buddha, Lao Tsu, Victor Frankl, Abraham Lincoln, Jalal-ad-Din Rumi, Thomas Keating, Peace Pilgrim, Hildegard von Bingen, Paramahansa Yogananda, Swami Chetanananda, Ram Dass, St. Francis of Assisi, Krishnamurti, Kahlil Gibran, Rabindranath Tagore, Albert Schweitzer — and of course, my own conscience; the same “Saint” that resides within us all.



And yet, you might ask, what makes a prophet “false”?

Well, she or he first & foremost represents the self-focused “un-Way” — *decouraging* others to “*take care of*” themselves before someday thereafter caring for others; to look for personal “salvation” before tending to the sufferings of others. He is proud & stern, and believes that his efforts deserve material reward &/or recognition. She is judgmental & envious of her “rivals”, and places conditions on all her gifts and givings.

And yet, such people can be guides as well — at the very least by showing us how *not* to Be. In their most extreme forms, these individuals are all those who have engaged in or endorsed torture, all those who have hoarded material wealth, all those who have worked primarily for their own superficial pleasure, all those who have openly condemned others, all those who have shown indifference to suffering, all those who have procrastinated the expression of their selfless greatness, and all those who have been too afraid to extend Kindness towards their enemies ... For me, some of these “false prophets” have been & remain: the “apostle” Paul, the “prophet” Muhammad, Hillary Clinton, Adolf Hitler, Augusto Pinochet, Idi Amin, Joseph Stalin, George W. Bush, Ronald Reagan, Barack Obama — and, of course my own ego; the same “villain” that resides within us all as well.



Some – my True Guides – have illuminated my Way directly, while others – my “false prophets” – chose to shine their lights upon paths I dare not tread. And yet every one of them has been a signpost along my Life’s Journey; every single one of them, to the degree that I chose to pay attention to their messages, has helped to keep me on track.

And so it is that I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with profound reverence, and let loose with a deep & heartfelt –

Thank You!

Day 17 ... being Grateful for Resolve

Today I am grateful for resolve; for the ability to persist — not a “strength” fueled by fear or a “confidence” fueled by a certainty of religious faith, but rather a Strength that is available when we are deathly afraid and yet stride forth anyway; a calm resolution of being that settles over us when we choose to risk pain & danger, even when completely uncertain of God’s grace.

Here, I speak of a resilience that has us pressing ever onward – even in the throes of terror or drowning in the fog of doubt. It is a higher Faith; one that maintains the calm & courageous composure necessary for us to know fear but Do Good anyway; for us to know doubt yet walk onward anyway. It is this persistence of moral direction that fuels our will to continue when times are tough, as well as maintain our focus-of-Purpose when times are pleasant ...

This Resolve is an internal Friend who rests calmly next to us in times of trouble; a Friend who waits for us in every foyer while we struggle to douse the stresses of finance & love; a Friend who sits and smiles quietly in the corner at every dazed celebration & every hollow victory ...



... waiting patiently ...

... waiting calmly ...

... waiting to take us Home.

And all we must do to walk her smooth Way is to remain diligent in our search for her companionship; to repeatedly set aside our self-focused musings & goals & addictions; to do so just long enough to notice her — walking quietly beside us all along.

And she is indeed always there — smiling; waiting with infinite patience for us to cease my petty searching for “the better path”, “the more important task” or the “missing information” — for us to let those vanities go and simply set forth with her to Do the Good that is already there to be Done.



peace.

it does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble or hard work. it means to be in the midst of those things and still be calm in your heart.

(unknown)

Resolve is indeed most faithful — always both beside and within us ... ever there for us whenever we have the courage to choose to go anyway, leap anyway, forgive anyway, love anyway ...

And for this I am ever so thankful.

And so it is that I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with profound reverence, and let loose with a deep & heartfelt —

Thank You!

Day 18 ... being Grateful for Sanctuary

Today I am grateful for my life's sanctuaries — those havens of rest and safety where I have been blessed both to relay The Way to others and to replenish my energies while doing so

Initially, I am thankful for the more traditional homes in which I lived before becoming a Peace Pilgrim — the neighborhoods of Brentwood in North Carolina, Homewood in Alabama, Ann Arbor in Michigan, Tacoma in Washington, Stuttgart in Germany, Kailua-Kona in Hawaii, and Wildwood in Georgia. They all provided me with the priceless gift of Community that we so often take for granted.

And I am thankful as well for the diverse array of homes in which I have been blessed to stay since choosing in 2003 to live without a residence of my own — Rebecca Jean's sofa in Tacoma (Washington), the tennis-court bench in Kailua-Kona (Hawaii), the parking lot of the 1st United Methodist Church in Kailua-Kona (Hawaii), Alexzanna Farms' guest room in Wildwood (Georgia), Emily's living-room floor in Boise (Idaho), Zeta's apartment in Seattle (Washington), Jon & Danielle's guest room in Chicago (Illinois), a storage room of the Loevy & Loevy law firm in Chicago, the Edgewater Beach Apartments (also in Chicago), Kristin's house in Kailua-Kona (Hawaii), the house at the top of Lani Kona Road near Captain Cook (Hawaii), Donnell's guest bed in Watertown (Wisconsin), Cecile & Dennis Even's home near Madison (Wisconsin), Emily's sofa in Boise, the Shoebridge residence in Boise, Kurt's guest room in Boise, numerous hostels along the Camino de Santiago (northern Spain), Janie's storage room in Park City (Utah), Bev's guest room in Miami (Florida), Richard's sofa in Chicago, Becky & Peter's sofa in Seattle (Washington), Deb & Mark's sofa in Brattleboro (Vermont), Duncan's floor in Feuerbach (Germany), Waltraud's guest bed in Feuerbach (Germany), Suzanna & Lawrence's guest "chalet" in Wildwood (Georgia), and most recently a fold-out cot in the warehouse "antechamber" in the engineering firm of Bickele & Bühler in Feuerbach (Germany) ... All of the aforementioned have provided me with both external shelter for my body as well as internal Peace for my Soul along my Way.

And I am also grateful for sanctuaries less typical — places that, while they might appear "less than ideal" (and while many do not resemble homes at all), still served the function of Sanctuary at various times during my Journey. These are those many places over the past ten+ years where I simply lay my head to rest when no offer of shelter had been given, and yet rest came calling anyway -- picnic tables, hammocks, tents, couches, air mattresses, the rough ground beside deserted highways, lifeguard towers, church pews, lawn chairs, store-front awnings, porches, covered bridges, construction sites, tree canopies, garden pagodas, gymnasiums, airports and bus terminals ...

Indeed, I am grateful for them all.

And I am thankful for my most intimate Sanctuary — me; composed of a physical body perfectly designed to transport me to those in need, an emotional ego that tempts me not to serve those others once I arrive, and a conscious conscience that enables me to reach out and Care for them anyway.



And finally, I am thankful for my Sanctuary least tangible of all — namely, the Earth herself, and the Universe that encapsulates her as she hurtles and whirls and spins and weaves and bounces through that vast Cosmos. Indeed, she serves as a constant and beautiful reminder that I am allWays “at Home” wherever I happen to be — whenever I choose to set aside my fears of “then” to revel in my Here&Now ...



And so it is that I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with profound reverence, and let loose with a deep & heartfelt –

Thank You!

Day 19 ... being Grateful for Movement

Today I am grateful for Movement: the beauty of all forms that flow ...

... the path of the sun as it travels across the sky, the undulating curve of the moon's shadow that waxes & wanes across its luminous face, the gentle ribbon of the horizon that shifts ever so slowly over time (as islands are born and mountains melt into the sea), the perfect arc of a rainbow as it fades into being when the sun comes out from hiding...



... the crest of every ocean wave as it rolls onto sands infinite, the undulations of a snake on the move, birds in flight as they slow to land, the blossoming of a baby's uninhibited smile, the interlocking fingers of incense smoke drifting unhurriedly to the heavens, the meanderings of water at tempos perfect ...



... a crisply thrown Frisbee as it sculpts space on the way to its target, my feet as they softly tread upon soft paths through old-growth forests, the flickering slope of candle flames...

... the way long hair spills and bounces upon smooth shoulders, calligraphy as it melts onto rice paper, the peal of a lone bell through early morning mists, the wind as it races around and through all non-wind, ocean-tumbled stones...



... the brave display of an opening lotus, a hand-made book as it is opened and closed and then opened again (and again and again), the way lovers interlock into their encircled embrace, how it feels to whirl & dance with Joy...

... holding hands with a Friend, steam rising from fresh vegetable soup, a hummingbird's buzzing wings, a head bending silently in prayer, a body rising slowly to greet the new day ...



These are some of the things that have me reveling in not only my own ability to move, but also the constant elegance of the Universe as a whole as it spins and bounces and bobs and weaves and cascades and curls all around me every day.

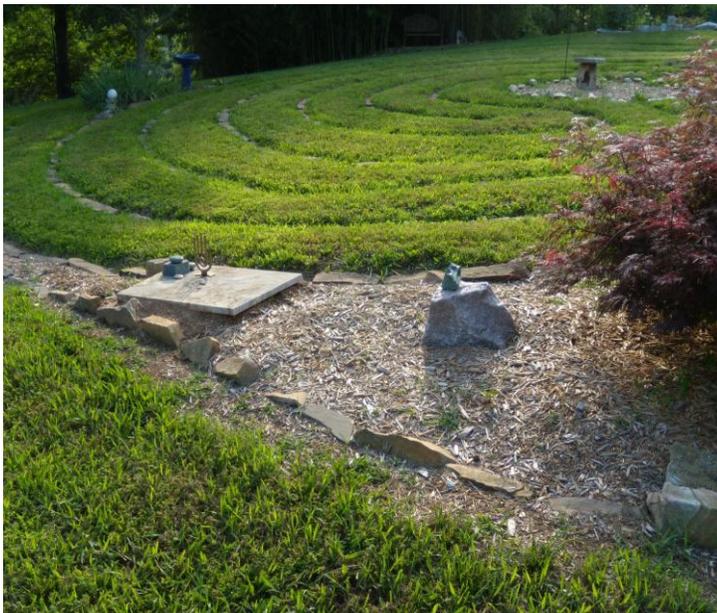
And so it is that I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with profound reverence, and let loose with a deep & heartfelt –

Thank You!

Day 20 ... being Grateful for Accomplishment

Today I am grateful for my Accomplishments — both those seen as such by myself, as well as those deemed to be “failures” by others; recognizing while I do so that none of the former could have been completed without the help of many assistants, and that none the latter could be criticized at all if not for their innate worth ...

First of all, I am thankful for “*The Brown Book*” — a tome that is comprised of most of my favorite quotes and images collected over a 6+ year period (with almost all of its contents being inserted therein between mid 2003 to 2010). Hand written and hand-illuminated, it is my own personal “Book of Truth” — and has brought many who have perused its pages the Peace that comes from sacred inspiration & deeper wisdom.

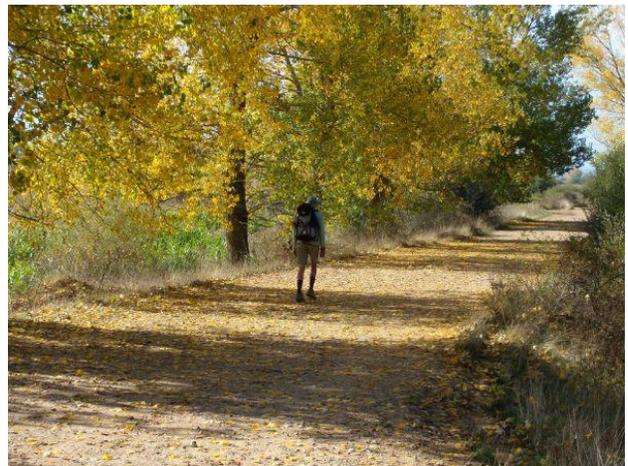


And I am thankful for the labyrinths I have been blessed to build or help build over the years: the Wildwood Labyrinth at Alexzanna Farms (pictured at left; made of sunken sandstone spurs), the Feuerbacher Wald Labyrinth in Weilimdorf, Germany (laid out in two-pound river stones on the forest floor), the Eibergen Labyrinth in Eibergen, Holland (carved by machine and smoothed by hand), and the San Bol Labyrinth in San Bol, Spain (made from a pile of cast-away construction stones) — allowing all who have walked them to reunify with their most immediate source, the Earth, and their truest Self, the Soul.



I am also thankful for the various stairwells I have carved into hillsides: the stairs leading up to the plateau above Appolonia Sabine’s home in Huautla de Jiminez (Mexico), the stair-laden switchback trail that leads into the hollow of Alexzanna Farms (“The Mossway”, pictured at left), and the AAC stairwell running from that company’s main office down to its artifact-processing lab — that all who traverse these paths with their legs be simultaneously climbing to new heights of objective Awareness (or delving deeper into their unique inner Knowing) while doing so ...

And I am thankful for having been blessed to walk the Camino de Santiago — that I might continue bring to others the refreshed sense of humility and Oneness I gained on that Journey most Wonder-filled.



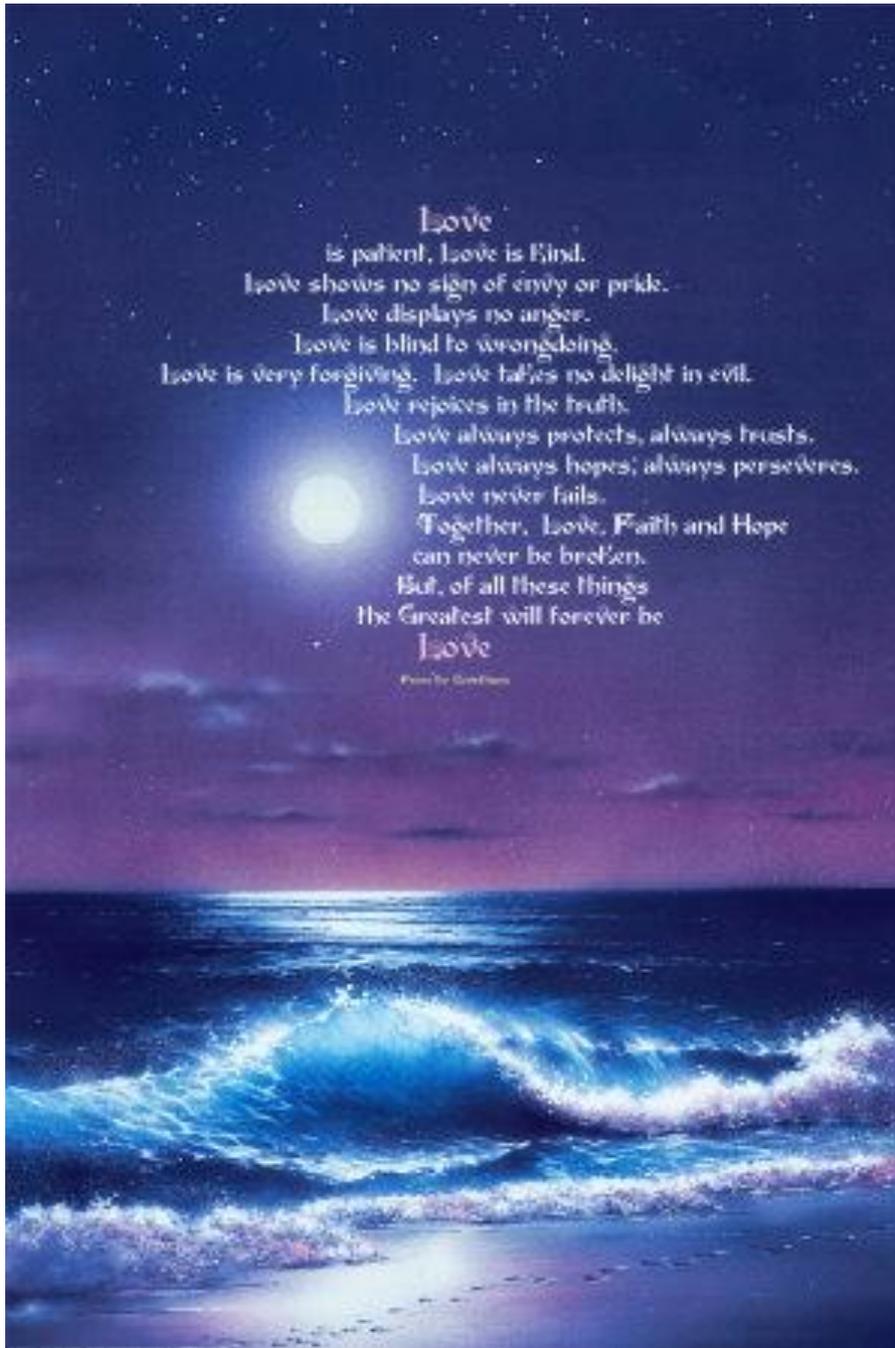
I am thankful for the courage it took to make a true Leap of Faith and begin living as a Peace Pilgrim back in the summer of 2005 — as well as for my Big Island “Experiment with Truth” the two years prior that led me to ultimately walk that Path ...

And I am thankful for the strength it took to finally learn (after many, many failed attempts) what it means to truly LOVE another person; to Care deeply even while being pushed away; to maintain a sense of Self even while being ridiculed or encouraged to change; to continue to Love even while being left behind — that I might now carry this perfect LOVE to others ...



I am thankful for having “rescued” both Billy (1990-2004) and Nooka (pictured; 2004 to present) from the streets and finding them both a good home on Alexzanna Farms — where they then made my Love appear quite small compared to the constant, unconditional Caring for everyone they encountered (well, at least in Billy’s case, almost everyone).

And I am thankful for the humility it required to set aside my adolescent revulsion for the Bible (brought on as a reaction to being “damned to hell” by well-intended-yet-ignorant friends during my childhood), to read and re-read what it has to offer, and then to test its Truths for myself — not by adhering to its dogma, but by radically & Faith-fully following its Way ...



I am thankful for having cleared the land on top of Lani Kona Road — for setting aside my own visions of “what is best” or what others might like or dislike, and simply fulfilling the desires of the land to Breathe & Shine ...

I am thankful for continuing to unconditionally Love & Care for all the friends, family members and associates who still refuse to see the Rightness of my current path — that I might continue to bring the selfless Way to those ready to Hear its Wisdom & See its Truths ...

... and I am thankful that I still share with every home-free beggar who asks of me — sometimes only giving a dime; other times lending a friendly ear; sometimes giving only a nod & a smile; other times an open, humble recognition of their brilliant Human Being within ... and yet always offering something of worth that helps them to re-cognize their own innate Beauty.



I am thankful for the times I smile when sad, when I am calm when angry, and when I stride boldly forth when frightened; when I give to the grasping, care for the critical, and Love my persecutors — for these are Life’s true Accomplishments.

And so it is that I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with profound reverence, and let loose with a deep & heartfelt –

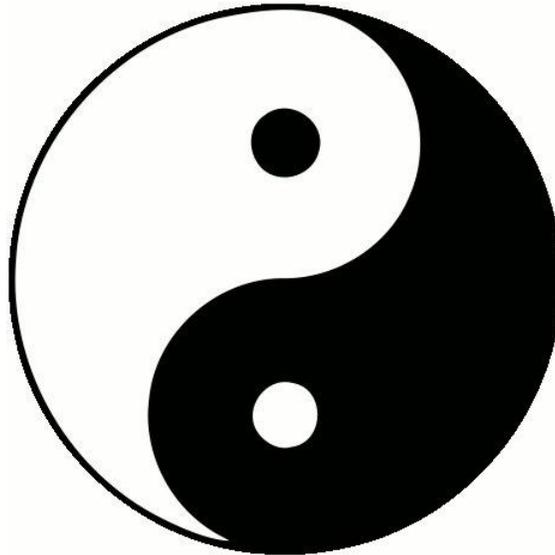
Thank You!

Day 21 ... being Grateful for YinYang

Today I am grateful not only for duality itself, but for “YinYang” – the immense power that all things “bad” give to all things “good”, and the inspiration to Greatness that all things “good” bring to everyone who witnesses them. Or, in other words, today I am grateful for the Truth that all that is “good” can be directly utilized to further the grander Harmony of the Universe, and that all that is “bad” can be just as directly utilized to inspire acts of noble selflessness.

Moments that are considered “good” -- labeled by some as “Yang”, are those in obvious harmony with the Universal base-frequency of Oneness. “Bad times”, on the other hand – or “Yin” moments, evidence discord or conflict (either external or internal) in our surroundings. And yet, there is a far deeper Truth at play whenever these extremes are evident. For life’s “Yins” need not be judged as “bad” or even “unideal”. Rather, they can be used just as effectively to bring about an overall Harmony in one’s environment. Indeed, it is our courageous acceptance of all that is uncomfortable or painful or frightening in our lives that is the most difficult — and therefore it is this acceptance that can become the most potent “Force for Good” in the entire Cosmos.

And probably the best way we can harness these “negative” energies for the positive is to start by being thankful for them ...



I am thankful for the Yin of Abundance — which comes from **loss**, and the enhanced value that loss gives to all that remains unlost. Indeed, for the enlightened, loss inspires an appreciation of Abundance ... and the two become ONE.

I am thankful for the Yin of Togetherness — which comes from **separation**, and the ability such duality grants us to revel in true intimacy. Indeed, for the enlightened, solitude inspires Togetherness ... and the two become ONE.

I am thankful for the Yin of Creation — which comes from **destruction**, and the space destruction clears for new birthing. Indeed, for the enlightened, destruction inspires Creation ... and the two become ONE.

I am thankful for the Yin of Joy — which comes from **sadness**, and the acuteness sadness brings to our memories; in turn allowing us to return to Joy by appreciating the Love that still flows in our lives in the present. Indeed, for the enlightened, sadness inspires Joy ... and the two become ONE.

I am thankful for the Yin of Harmony — which comes from **discord**, and discord's grating vibrations that clearly show where & how we are "missing the mark". Harmony comes from transcending discord, and discord lights the way thereto. Indeed, for the enlightened, strife inspires Harmony ... and the two become ONE.

I am thankful for the Yin of Love — which comes from **indifference**, and the power such apathy grants us when we choose to give Love anyway. Indeed, for the enlightened, apathy inspires Love ... and the two become ONE.

I am thankful for the Yin of Kindness — which comes from **cruelty**, and the possibility cruelty creates for our Compassion to blossom. Indeed, for the enlightened, inhumanity inspires Kindness ... and the two become ONE.

I am thankful for the Yin of Beauty — which comes from "**ugliness**", and the radiance within all things "ugly". Indeed, for the enlightened, "deformity" inspires the ability to See true Beauty ... and the two become ONE.

I am thankful for the Yin of Peace — which comes from **dis-ease**, and the anxiety's constant summoning to Calm. Indeed, for the enlightened, fear inspires Peace ... and the two become ONE.

I am thank for the Yin of Life — which comes from **death**, and the re-Birth that death confers. Indeed, for the enlightened, death enables Life ... and the two become ONE.



And so it is that I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with profound reverence, and let loose with a long & loud –

Thank You!

Day 22 ... being Grateful for Providence

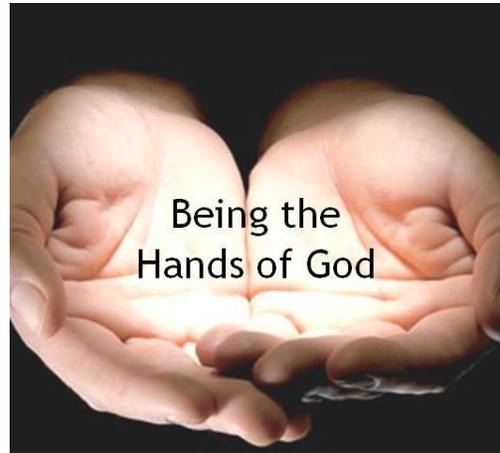
Today I am grateful for Providence — the “Hand of God” always guiding us; both directly – by inspiring us to search for (and perceive) current opportunities to serve, as well as indirectly – by letting us *feel* the nature of the actions we are already engaging (otherwise known as intuition, or “hunch”; the peace that is felt when acting with kindness, and the dis-ease we feel when acting from self-interest) ...



There are innumerable “right actions” available to us in every moment of our lives; an infinite array of services we can lend to others and an infinite number of paths we could tread to enact those “labors of Love”. Despite this, it is quite tempting to fantasize about the “greater good” we could someday enliven, after we “learn more” or “obtain more life experience”. And yet, when we pause to look into any particular instant with a “humble eye”, we can see that every single one of our current “coincidental” encounters are already ripe with opportunities to Do Good. As such, it is not necessary to search for a “better path” or a “more powerful service”, but rather to simply dive deeply into the challenges we have already been given. And this is what I mean with regards to “Providence” ...

... This is what it means for me to be “led by God”.

Indeed, there is no need for any of us to “pray for guidance” — for we are all already being led ... There is no need for us to pray for the chance to Do Good — as our Callings to Caring are already in front of us ... There is no need for us to pray to become a powerful servant of the downtrodden — for the selfless Kindness we can extend to strangers is already more than enough!



We are all literally swimming in a river of Love, and the Grace of the Source is its central current -- one that carries us along its infinite length. Yes, we may strive against this Flow with our selfish desires and self-centered attempts to make things “better”, and yet every time we do so we inevitably tire — and are swept back into the smoothly meandering flow of Oneness ... Ultimately, it is unconditional Acceptance that brings us back to this Peace — an Acceptance born in the inevitable knowledge that no matter how steadfastly we strive against the Flow of what IS, we cannot succeed in altering its course.

And to get to this state of pure detachment most smoothly, radical Gratitude becomes The Way – a heartfelt Gratitude not only for the blessings that bring us pleasure and comfort and ease, but also an equal Gratitude for the challenges of ego that call us to return to a Life dedicated to the One. And this brings the most Peace, for this challenge – this transcendence, is why we are all here in the first place.



The “Hands of God” are gently firm in their pressure; allowing us to veer as far from the Flow as we wish — to experience as much suffering as we desire, and yet always coaxing us back to the fold; always allowing us back into the current of unity without so much as a hint of reproach for our selfish divergences. We are even allowed to stray with such vehemence that we physically perish. And yet even then the gentle hands are always there to guide our conscient Souls back to a soft residence nestled deep in the heart of The All.

I am so thankful for those Hands — their strength of constant guidance, and their strength to let me find my own way to answer their Calling.

And so it is that I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with profound reverence, and let loose with a long & loud –

Thank You!

Day 23 ... being Grateful for Change

Today I am grateful for change — specifically those calls to transition that take the form of loss, pain and any other disturbing destruction of the old; specifically those times when our clinging to what was (and our yearnings for what could be) are ripped from our grasp; making room for a renewal of Self that opens a new path back to a deeper, more Meaning-filled Life.

Of course, the moments immediately following such upheaval (literally “Up-Heave-All”) are not free from pain. Indeed, after any storm has passed, paths must be cleared before they can be walked anew ...



And yet, it is this removal of the “dead growth” that allows us to see the fears and desires that had shackled our previous lives; self-centered behaviors and superficial habits that had bound our happiness and imprisoned our Peace. And it is during such times that we realize, with more clarity than ever before, that we are Soul-creatures – first and foremost Beings of Love, and that no severity of event or dysfunctionality of conduct can alter this fact.



And most importantly of all, it is during these times of change that we gain a renewed Strength of Purpose and a refreshed Vigor of Character. It is during these initial moments of courageous “setting out again” that we are truly reborn. Our resolve is bulwarked thereby, and we re-enter the world with a determination to enliven our True Selves — to be servants as opposed to seeking to be served. We have been reminded by our already-fading tragedies that we are here to revel in our time, and that we must do so by caringly engaging the lives of others.



And so I enter this day again grateful for my life — its times of ease, yes, and yet even more so for its times of turbulent change. I remember that both my pasts (thickly shrouded in the haze of arrogant attachment) and my future (hidden by the foggy mists of worry or hope) are only illusions; that I am only to truly live in this very moment, with all the calms and distresses it contains.



And when I do so — there is no more change ... There is only this instant ... and what I choose to Do with it.

And so it is that I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with profound reverence, and let loose with a long & loud –

Thank You!

Day 24 ... being Grateful for Virtue

Today I am grateful for Virtue — for the simple fact that, no matter how entrenched our delusions to the contrary become, or how insidious our self-centeredness remains, Love (in all its forms of Virtue) always – and in all Ways – rules the day.

Truly, even when we are lost and don't know where to turn, Love is showering us with its guidance still — for there is always an opportunity to extend Kindness ...



Truly, even when we are steeped in the battles of conflict & discord, Love is always an option — for there is always an opportunity to forgive and ask forgiveness ...



Truly, even when we feel helpless and disempowered after having lost or known failure, Love provides us with victory — for there is always an opportunity to make the enemy into a Friend; to celebrate his/her victories as your own ...



When we are tempted to criticize & condemn, Virtue is there — enCouraging us to unconditionally **Accept others as they are.**

When we are tempted to cling & worry, Virtue is there — enCouraging us to simply set forth and **Do what there is to be done.**

When we are tempted to gather & hoard, Virtue is there — enCouraging us to simply **Give what we have to give.**

When we are tempted to envy others, Virtue is there — enCouraging us to remember to **Be grateful for what we already have.**

When we are tempted to turn away from suffering, Virtue is there — enCouraging us to **Care for strangers as though they were Family.**

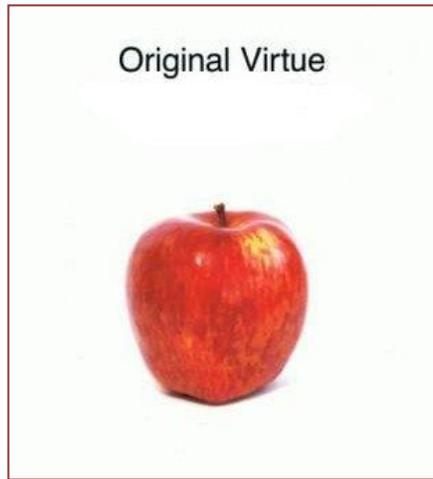
When we are tempted to manipulate & deceive, Virtue is there — enCouraging us to be ourSelves and to **Allow others that same Freedom.**

When we are tempted to “understand” & “be certain”, Virtue is there — enCouraging us to just **Do Good**; especially when unsure.

When we are tempted to be bored & “be normal”, Virtue is there — enCouraging us to both **see Wonder and be Wondrous.**

When we are tempted to doubt & dogmatize, Virtue is there — enCouraging us to **Avoid judging others** and simply be Kind to them.

Virtue, our ability to transcend self-centered instinct in favor of selfless kindness & humble compassion, is always an option — an option that is always Right, and an option that is always available.



And so it is that I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with profound reverence, and let loose with a long & loud –

Thank You!



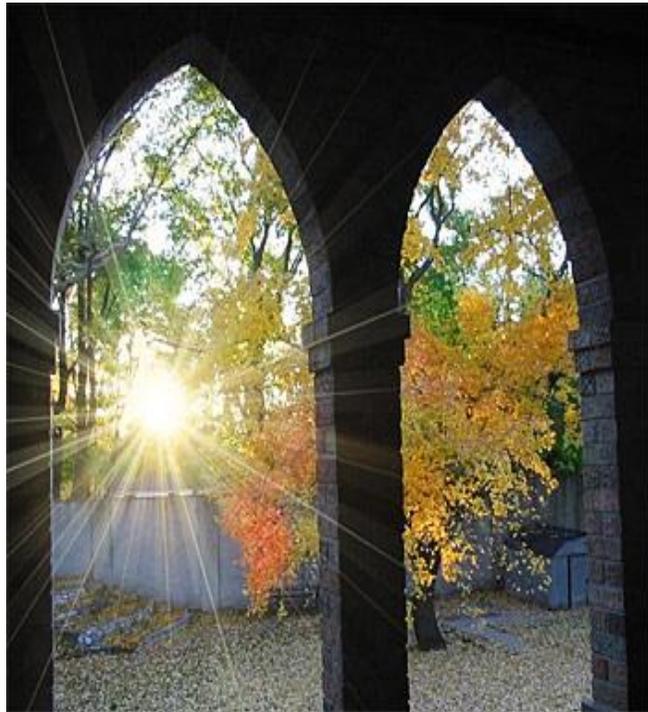
Day 25 ... being Grateful for Dreams

Today I am grateful for Dreams — both those seen while asleep, as well as those felt while awake ... I am initially thankful for the former -- for their symbolic reflections of both previous experiences as well as current interactions between my material mind-body and the energies of the Cosmos (what some call “the Divine”). My sleeping dreams come to me in forms varied; vision and fable, metaphor and archetype, emotion-laden confrontations and Peace-infused wonderments ... As such, because they arrive in forms that scintillate unexpectedly and cryptically, they can be quite difficult to decipher.



And yet, because of their symbolic medium, they also come to me untainted by my ego’s known desires and unadulterated by my subconscious mind’s driving fears. As such, if they can be deciphered, their messages are guaranteed to be accurate ones — the pain of nightmares calling for an adjustment of how I am living; the peace of pipe-dreams encouraging a continued stroll along current rivulets of compassionate unity.

Just as importantly, I am thankful for the “waking dream” that is my current life ... Every instant I experience, both the thousands of which I am subconsciously Aware -- as well as the few dozen I choose to focus intently upon each day -- speak to me in many layers of Truth. On their surface, they provide me with either direct challenges of pain or obvious rewards of joy. And yet, underneath my tangible perceptions thereof, they also chant deeper Truths of the dance between the harmony of selfless Oneness & the suffering of independence-based duality — using methods diverse to guide me back to my Destiny: namely, to awaken and live again as a focused Force for Good.



And so it is that I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with profound reverence, and let loose with a long & loud –

Thank You!

Day 26 ... We can be Grateful for Power

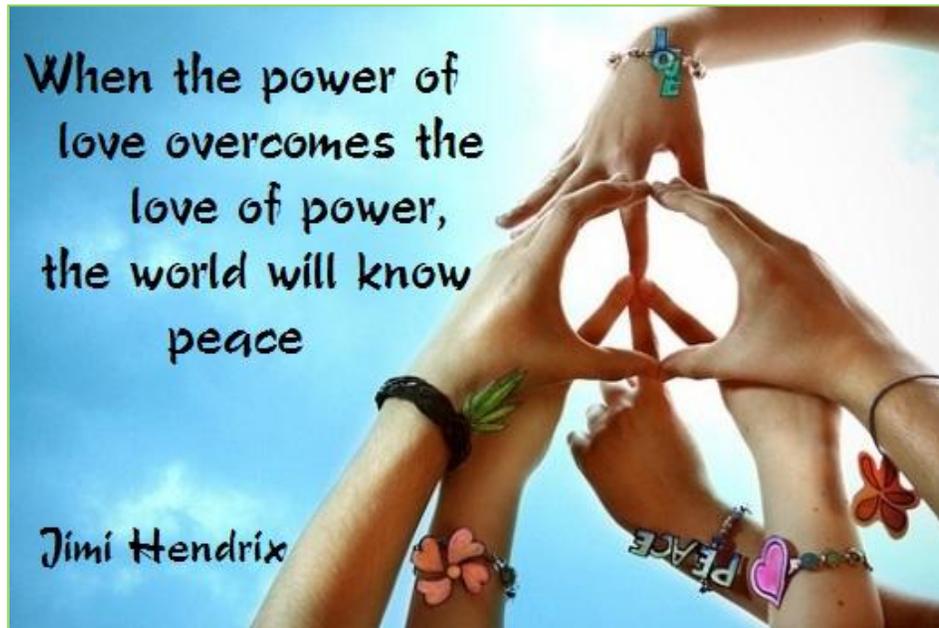
Today I am grateful today for Power, especially Power in all its less-than-well-known forms — subtle manifestations that include the Power to intently answer the insincere &/or respond to unneeded calls for help, the Power to serve the Universe even when ignored by humanity, the Power to care for those who persecute or ridicule, the Power to joyfully engage the service that demands self-sacrifice, and the Power to set aside personal goals in order to work towards furthering the goals of others ...



And I am thankful that to enliven and experience this Power, all that is often required is for me to simply & briefly sit still; consciously enraptured by the awe-filled Beauty of life and all things living, consciously choosing to See the Good in every man and woman (even those behaving otherwise), consciously seeking for opportunities to be of service — while intending to engage those chances powerfully once they are given.

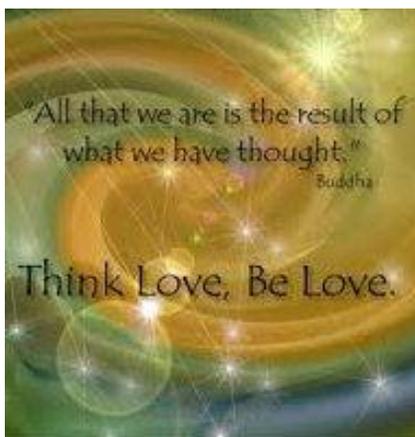


I am thankful for the Power that allows all sentient beings to travel without moving, to hear others' needs even while humming our own, to see the Grace of the All even with eyes held tightly shut in fear, and to Love those we don't even like ...



And I am thankful today for the Power I have been given to re-make my own life in any way I see fit ... Yes, there *is* an objective Reality within and all around me, and yes, I am indeed required to flow in accordance with that Reality's parameters and energetic laws. *And yet*, it is I & I alone who decides how I feel about life and its Living. It is I & I alone who choose what I shall do and why I shall do it. It is I & I alone who is the sole arbiter as to my worth as a Human Being. It is I & I alone who can decide to serve witness to the beauties of the Cosmos. It is I & I alone who can choose to be grateful for the challenges set before me. And it is I & I alone who can thereafter decide to Love the sources of my discomfort — to make my existence revolve around the betterment of others' lives, as opposed to the furthered comforts of my own.

And this is true Power indeed ... in-deed!

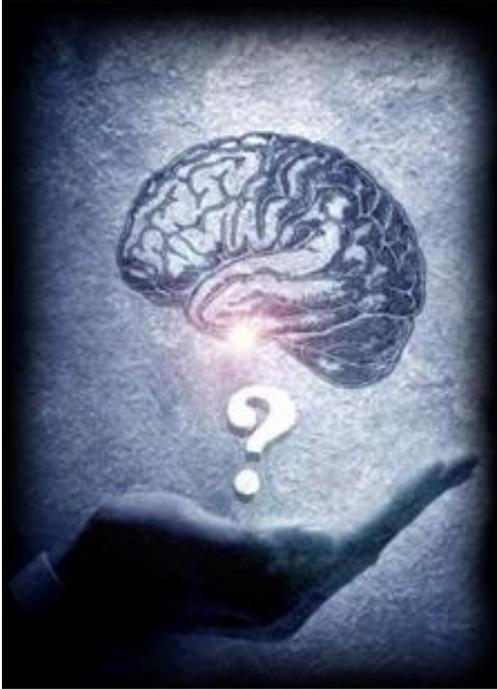


And so it is that I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with profound reverence, and let loose with a long & loud –

Thank You!

Day 27 ... being Grateful for the Past

Today I am grateful for my Past — both how those events have co-generated my Here&Now, as well as how they have solidified the person I have decided to Become ...



Yes, I realize that there is no such thing as a truly objective recollection of the past. Our perceptions of time (along with time itself) are illusory by their very nature, and the memories we possess of past encounters are all severely tainted both by the extremely limited input that we used to construct them, as well as by our emotional inclinations at the time those memories were recorded ...

And yet, there is a much deeper Worth to the past, a worth much more relevant than any mere factual recollection of events — a Worth that is unsurprisingly found *in the present*. Indeed, regardless of how inaccurate our recollections of the past are, they do reflect with perfect precision the person we are *currently* choosing to become.

And it is for this reason that I am thankful for the memories of my past — for they provide me with a clear bellwether as to how closely (or not) I am coming *in this moment* to actualizing my True Self. In those moments when my memories are filled with anger or sadness; indignation or regret — I know that my ego holds sway over my present moment, and I know that I am far from my True Self. Conversely, when my memories are filled with gratitude and joy — I know that my conscience is ruling the day; that I have gently taken hold of my Here&Now and am using it as the Gift it is ... and I know that I have returned to Being who I was born to Become.



In this way, my memories — when I choose to detach from them — serve as signposts, guiding me back to The Way to Oneness.



And so it is that I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with profound reverence, and let loose with a long & loud –

Thank You!

Day 28 ... being Grateful for New Beginnings

Today I am grateful for New Beginnings — namely, the ability in each moment of my life to start anew; to allow my Soul to rise from the ashes of current sins and recent foibles to be reborn into each & every iota of its selfless glory ...



I am thankful for the ability to see in **Wonderment**, where before I was mired in the doldrums of routine and the “normal” ...

I am thankful for the ability to be **Appreciative**, where before I focused in envy upon others’ joys and successes ...

I am thankful for the ability to **Give** graciously, where before I was intent on protecting and caring for my possessions ...

I am thank for the ability to **Forgive** my enemies as they are, where before I longed for them to “be nicer” or “wake up” ...

I am thankful for the ability to **Care** for strangers, where before I kept them at a “safe distance” ...

I am thankful for the ability to have **Faith** to be a powerful Force for Harmony, where before I thought I was “only human” ...

I am thankful for the ability to serve with **Humility**, where before I gave arrogant advice or scathing criticism ...

I am thankful for the ability to rise up & simply **Do Good**, where before I waited for services “more powerful” or times “better” ...

I am thankful for the ability to be my True Self with **Courage**, where before I simply “towed the line” ...



So often I have stumbled into self-centeredness, and so often I have drifted into a lifeless existence — ruled by routine, governed by conventions, and tainted by temptations. And yet I have always been given the Grace — no matter how far I happened to have strayed in the past or how far I might stray again in the future — to return to my gentle, caring True Self; to set aside all my past failures and transgressions to be re-Born into the Here&Now as a Champion of the Loving Way ...

It is the choice we all have — when we want to say “No” to a request for assistance but then lend a helping hand anyway; when we endure great pain and yet profess sincere gratitude for life itself anyway; when we have something taken from us and yet give to those who have taken it anyway, when we lose and yet celebrate with those who have defeated us anyway, and when we have been abandoned and yet Love those who have betrayed us anyway.

*Let Your
Heart Open*

And so it is that I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with profound reverence, and let loose with a long & loud –

Thank You!

Day 29 ... being Grateful for “The Mystery”

Today I am grateful for “The Mystery” — namely, the forever unknowable that innately encompasses the entirety of our lives, including the infinite moments before our Beginning (the existence of conscious energies – or “the Soul” – before our conception) and the eternal lingering after our End (those energies’ return to the Cosmos after the death of our physical mind-body) ...



I am thankful for the Mystery of **Consciousness** — subject neither to the laws of chemistry nor those of physics, and yet somehow ruler of them both, along with all they encompass ... for it is this Mystery that makes Self-Awareness possible.

I am thankful for the Mystery of **Joy** — not knowing where laughter comes from or why it exists makes its power all the more complete ... and this Mystery is what makes true Contentment possible.



I am thankful for the Mystery of **Oneness** — that even though we *appear* to be separate entities that can act independently from one another, we are actually all interconnected facets of one Cosmic swirl of energy ... and this Mystery is what makes heartfelt Compassion possible.



I am thankful for the Mystery of **Selflessness** — the Moral Compass that (albeit admittedly with incredible subtlety) guides us to continually transcend our self-centered instincts with more selflessly Caring alternatives ... for this what makes real Kindness possible.



And I am thankful for the Mystery of **Duality** (described as “YinYang” earlier in this tome) — namely, that the “negatives” in our lives are merely shadows of their “positive” opposites; allowing Peace to bloom in times of strife, Generosity to manifest in times of lack, Caring to come in times of apathy, Gratitude to spring forth in times of envy, and Love to return in times of fear ...



Indeed, how are any of these impossibilities possible? ... How are they the rule of our lives as opposed to the most fleeting of exceptions?

Indeed, it is a Mystery ...
... one for which I am immensely grateful.

And so it is that I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with profound reverence, and let loose with a long & loud –

Thank You!

Day 30 ... being Grateful for the Smile

Today I am grateful for the power of the Smile ...



For whether I am saddened or angry, envious or pained; whether I am worried or resentful, critical or arrogant; whether I am lonely or dejected, fidgety or befuddled – even when I am downright afraid, all I must do to head back towards a state of deep Peace is to pause in the face of such discomforts – and smile ...

Indeed, whether I am elated or slothful, content or zoned-out; whether I am pleasure-soaked or giddy, silly or entertained; whether I am any other out-of-balance immersion into the realm of the tenuous physical, all I must do to head back towards a state of deep Peace is to pause and smile.





Even if but for one moment, a smile sates me when I am hungry ...

Even if but for one moment, a smile quenches my longing when I am thirsty ...



Even if but for a moment, a smile energizes my being when I am tired ...

Even if but for a moment, a smile makes me
Whole when I am ill or injured ...



Even if but for a moment, a smile brings
me back to life when I am fearing death ...

And even if but for a moment, it is a smile that can
bring me back to Peace when I am cold or hot or soaked or
parched ...



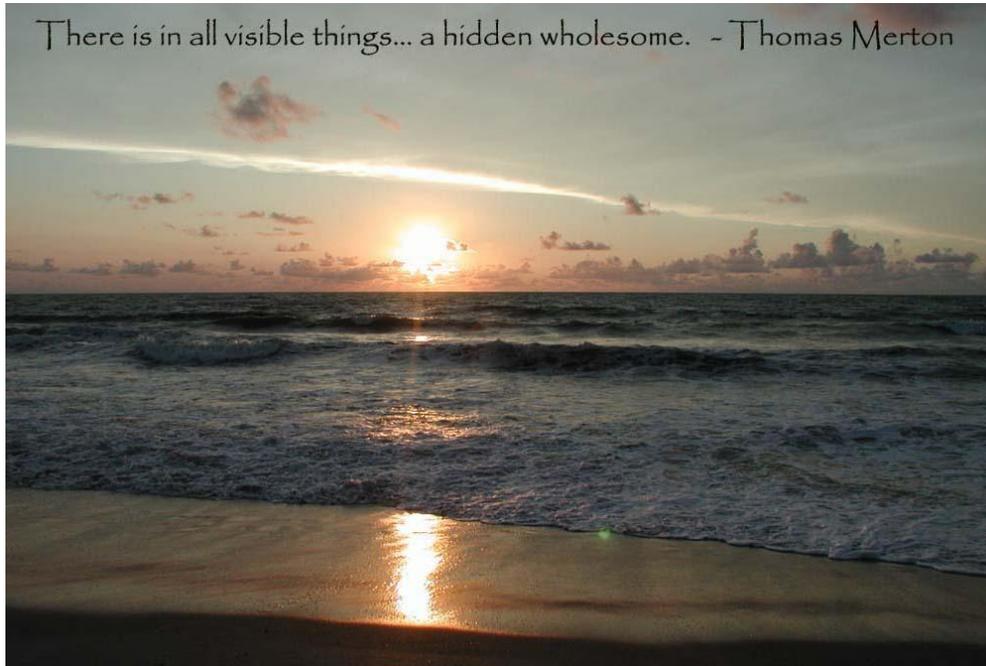
And whenever I am already at Peace — whenever I am
already accepting of all that IS, am patient with all that is not,
am generous with what I have to give, am grateful for what I
have already been given, am kind to my fellow human beings,
am honest with word or deed, am humble in thought or action,
am enamored with the beauty that surrounds me, and have faith
in the harmonic overall flow of the Cosmos — then all I must do
to maintain this Peace is to pause in silence ... and smile.

And so it is that I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled
with profound reverence, and let loose with a long & loud –

Thank You!

Day 31 ... We can be Grateful for Health

Today I am grateful for Health — not so much for the physical sense of well-being that comes from the absence of illness or injury, but rather for a far deeper Health; the sense of Wholeness that washes over us in those moments when we feel a synchronous harmony between what we know, what we think, what we feel and what we do. As such, this greater Health for which I am thankful is not visited upon me at random, but is rather a choice I am free to make any time I wish ...



It is important to remember that such perfect Wholeness is not known in times of physical pleasure or emotional ease, but is rather purely experienced solely in those instances when we are afraid or in pain and yet seek to **Care for others anyway**.

Maybe our humble Caring is for a stranger ...



... and maybe it is for a child.

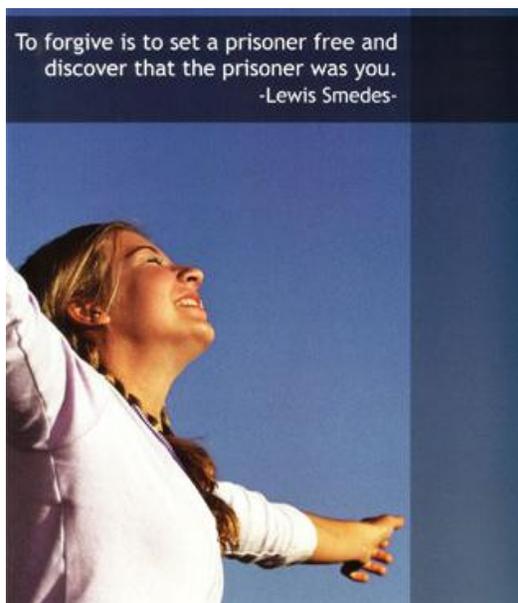


Maybe that Caring is for an animal ...

... and maybe that
Caring is for our surroundings.



And maybe, just maybe, that pristine embodiment of Caring is given to meld ourselves with the pristine will of our own Soul.



And yet regardless of the “why” of it all, it is well worth remembering that our purest sense of Wholeness is not known in times of mere emotional happiness, but is rather most profoundly experienced in those moments when we are rejected or ridiculed or rescinded, and yet go forth to fulfill our purpose anyway — when we are sad or angry or afraid, and yet choose to forgive the sources of the same.

For this is what it means to be truly Human — this is what it means to be truly Whole – and therefore this is what it means to know true Health.

And so it is that I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with profound reverence, and let loose with a long & loud –

Thank You!



Day 32 ... being Grateful for Transcendence

Today I am grateful for Transcendence — namely, all those times in my life when I have been downtrodden by circumstances depressing or unfair, and yet have risen regardless into a life of Purpose and Joy ...



Yes, we all encounter confinements and enemies and temptations in abundance throughout the course of our lives, and yet it is we & we alone who turn these difficulties into sources of suffering. I too have faced situations “unfair” and futilely “pushed the river” while attempting to dismiss them — only to make them ever more painful the more I strived to do so ...





I have encountered those who would rather see me die than succeed, and I futilely “pushed the river” while attempting to make them understand; to make them “better people” — only to call forth an even darker essence from within them ...

And I have been seduced with wealth and power and status, and futilely “pushed the river” while striving to deny their lusciousness — only to make them that much more appealing & thereby that much more addictive ...



It was not the nature of these people or the inherent tendency of these happenstances that caused me to suffer, but rather the way in which I dealt with them. I was seeing them as “negatives” and fighting them as opponents, instead of using them as allies on my journey back to my True Self. In effect, I was rejecting their greatest gift: the ability to rise above them with but a chosen shift in perspective.

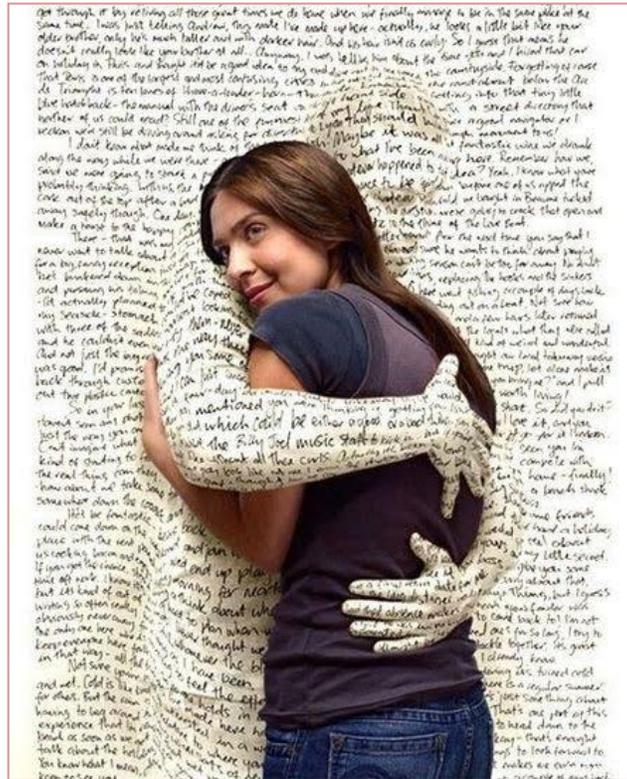
And yet these days I choose to avoid repeating this mistake. Instead, I choose to know each of these forces as opportunities to transcend the primal, and thereby allow my actions to re-harmonize with the innate state of perfect Grace within my Soul. I am still on occasion treated unfairly, and yet today I am thankful for my life anyway.



I have been imprisoned – both in various relationships, and by my own mind’s convictions, and yet today I am thankful for my innate Freedom – both my Freedom of being and my Freedom of thought.



I have been manipulated & attacked by my enemies, and yet today I choose to Love them anyway ...



I have been tempted by my desires & my fears, and yet today I am thankful for the ability to set them aside (at least for one moment) and extend **Compassion to all** those around me anyway ...



Today, I remember that this is a gift not granted as readily to most of the other species in our Universe — and it is a Gift for which I am most grateful.



And so it is that I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with profound reverence, and let loose with a long & loud –

Thank You!

Day 33 ... being Grateful for Silence

Today I am grateful for Silence ...
... the ultimate calm from which all Life springs;

... that place of rest from which is born all motion; the complete canvas of nothingness upon which the myriads of matter paints its many masterpieces.

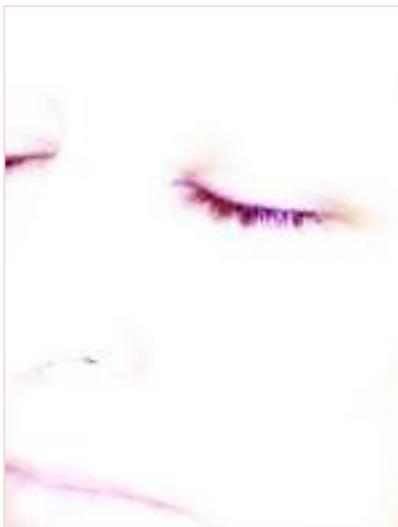


And interestingly enough, I am just as thankful that we humans do not have the equipment necessary to objectively perceive this stillness. For even in the most quiet of moments, there is always the low buzz of our blood coursing through our veins; the dull hum of our body's electrons spinning around and within each other; the faint echo of all we have ever heard in the past ...



And yet we *can* know this Silence on a deeper, intuitive level. We can feel it in the smile of an infant, we can see it in the flight of an owl, we can witness it in the center of a rose, we can taste it in the savoring of each day's first morsel of sunrise – and all other such moments of perfect balance that remind us of the ever-present Divine ...

We are touched by it in every cool breeze, and every first instant of warmth when the sun peeks again from behind a cloud ...



And we know it as well every time we reach out to touch it in return -- every time we see a loved one after an absence of any significant length; every time we become re-filled with the pure Stillness that unconditional Love always brings ...

And so it is that I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with profound reverence, and let loose with a long & loud –

Thank You!



Day 34 ... being Grateful for “The Way”

Today I am grateful for “The Way” — not the mental/emotional “path to salvation” preached by the dogma of the Christian church, but rather the active & practical Way shared by the founding mystics and Masters (Jesus included) of all the world’s more prevalent faiths ...

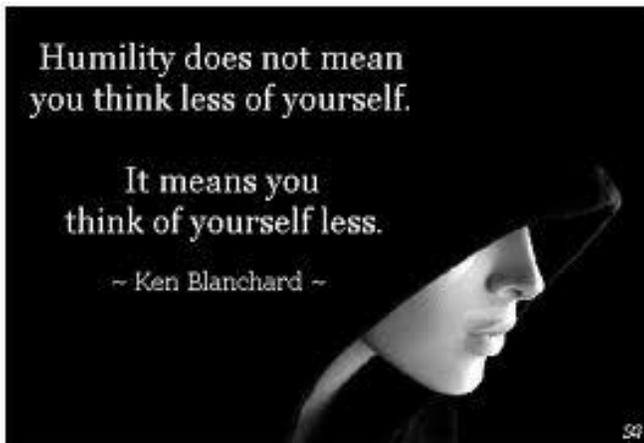


The Way is a lifestyle that mandates only one thing: that each person, in his/her own manner and timing, choose to set aside all personal ambitions & desires, by choosing to replace the same with bold, caring deeds of self-sacrifice for others.

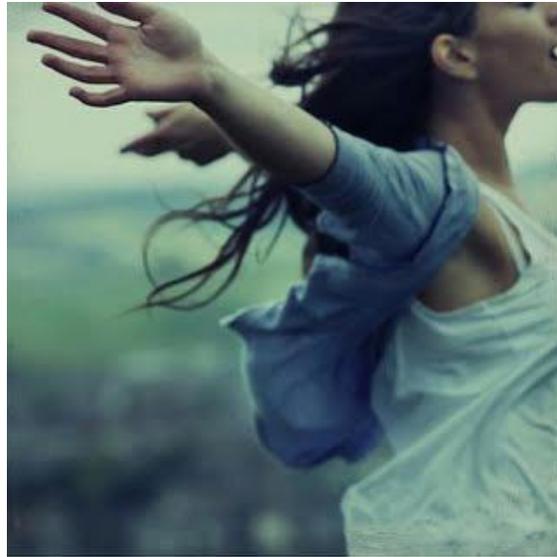
Humility does not mean
you think less of yourself.

It means you
think of yourself less.

~ Ken Blanchard ~



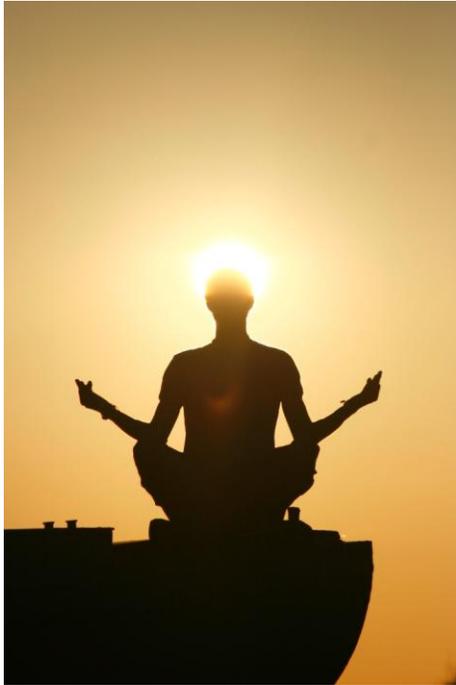
And there is no more difficult choice to make for beings so steadfastly programmed to care for themselves first & foremost, and yet for that very reason this “narrow way” provides the greatest experience of Bliss for all those who choose to walk its lengths anyway ...



“**Step 1**” along this path is choosing to recognize the availability of the selfless alternative, along with the humbling of one’s ego-mind necessary to recognize its innate Truth (i.e. its viability as a lifestyle option). At this point of commencement, a slight detour is typically made when many practitioners attempt to use the concept of “like attracts like” to manifest various forms of “abundance” or wealth for themselves (e.g. all those “New Ager” striving to co-create happiness &/or riches &/or comfort using the “Law of Attraction”).

Once the hypocrisy (and ultimate ineffectiveness) of this dastardly diversion is realized, one can then proceed to “**Step 2**”: choosing to serve others (albeit comfortably) instead ...





At this point, as long as the practitioner persists in regularly attempting to lessen others' burdens, an ultimate awakening to the true power of The Way is inevitable — leading finally to “**Step 3**”: the final realization of how Oneness *feels* in those moments when one chooses to joyfully self-sacrifice for another.

This Way of pure self-sacrifice can take many forms (note: the “ultimate sacrifice” of the martyr is *not* necessary): we can give of our time even when “too busy”; we can purposefully delay the gratification of personal desires; we can make prolonged, gentle eye-contact with others; we can continue to see a current task through even when something “more important” presents itself; we can give credit to others for our own achievements; we can celebrate the victories of our opponents; we can be Kind to strangers; we can (even anonymously) give to those who persecute or ridicule us; we can continue to fulfill our Life Purpose even when friends & family members are criticizing said choice; we can Love a partner even when being abandoned or rejected by him/her; we can give when “lacking”, keep working despite “exhaustion” and/or be gentle with the ill when we ourselves are in pain.

These are just some of the myriad routes along The Path to true Inner Peace — the true & pure embodiment of The Way ...

And so it is that I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with profound reverence, and let loose with a long & loud –

Thank You!



Day 35 ... being Grateful for Faith

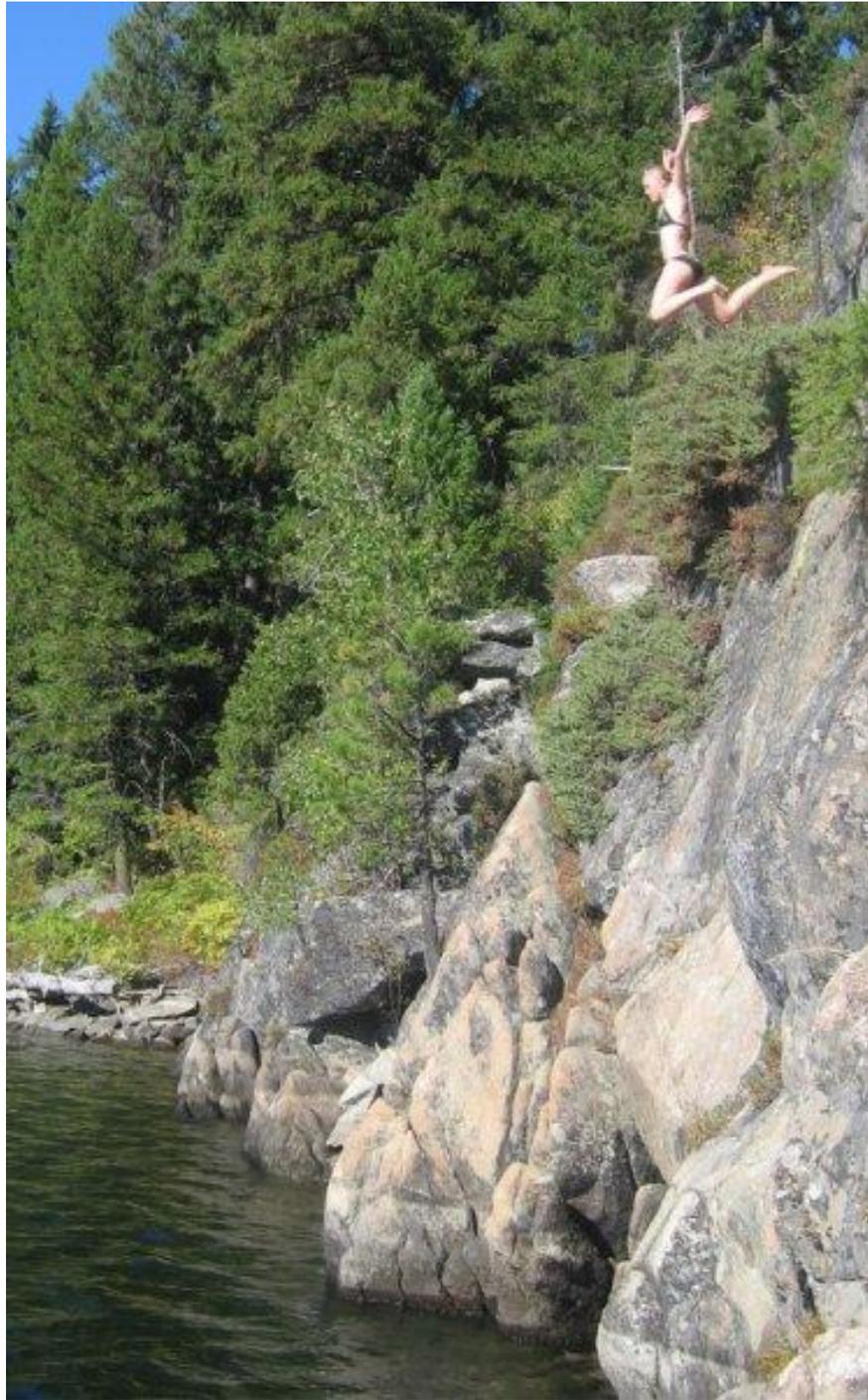
Today I am grateful for Faith — not the “faith” that others cling to bring them “peace of mind” from a concrete assurance of salvation in a heavenly hereafter, but rather the Faith that maintains no such self-centered hopes and has no such desires or expectations. Indeed, I speak here of a Faith that knows nothing with any certainty or guarantee — the Faith that has absolutely no reliance whatsoever on outcomes “beneficial” to oneself — the Faith that has no sense of certainty in the effectiveness of Love or the “rightness” of Kindness, and yet chooses to **Love & be Kind anyway**.



No, today I am NOT thankful for my personal, unique visions of “the Divine”, nor am I grateful for any sense of redemption in the soon to be, or for any possibly imminent adoration from on high for all of eternity. Rather, I choose to be thankful instead for a far greater Faith — a Faith that exists only in this particular time & place; a Faith that knows not what blessings might come — and yet a Faith that still indeed feels on a most deep & profound level of consciousness that everything that **IS** is leading the Universe back towards a state of Harmony; that even inaction (if purposeful) can motivate others to move; that even the apathy of those nearby can inspire us to Care; that even the “evils” that we see surrounding us can serve as a reawakening for thousands of conscient beings — guiding us all via their cruelty & “wrongness” back to new depths of service and kindness ...



For this is true Faith: to not know anything at all with any certainty whatsoever, and yet to **Do Good anyway**; to not have any assurance of salvation at any time in the hereafter, and yet to **Give Fully of oneself anyway** today; to not like another in the slightest – even to rabidly despise a hated enemy, and yet to make the boldest of Leaps of Faith by reaching out to him/her and actively **Express Love anyway**.



For this raw & pure Faith is the innate birthright of all sentient life-forms, and the ever-present inheritance of every conscious being in the Universe — a remarkable family of beings with which I cherish a familial bond that transcends species and race and gender and nationality and hope and fear ...

It is for **this** Faith-granted birthright, that today I am most grateful.



And so it is that I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with profound reverence, and let loose with a long & loud –

Thank You!

Day 36 ... We can be Grateful for Fortitude

Today I am grateful for Fortitude — not the typical “strengths” we have been taught to praise, for real Fortitude has little to do with the powers we possess – and rather everything to do with being able to Give of those same strengths to others. For me, Fortitude has nothing to do with “making life better” and everything to do with doing Good with the life that already has already arrived.

For me at least, real Fortitude is not physical power ...



... for me, true Strength comes from choosing to be intimate with strangers.



For me, real Fortitude is not the ability to destroy things ...



... for me, true Strength is choosing to celebrate Life.





For me, real Fortitude is not breaking the law ...



... for me, true Strength is seeing & accepting the gifts offered you.



For me, real Fortitude is not provoking others with word or deed ...



... for me, true Strength is caring for the children.

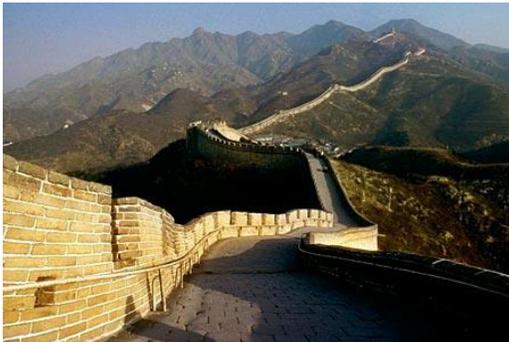


For me, real Fortitude is not exploring the “darkness” of your past ...



Forgive everyone for everything.

... for me, true Strength is forgiving others right now.

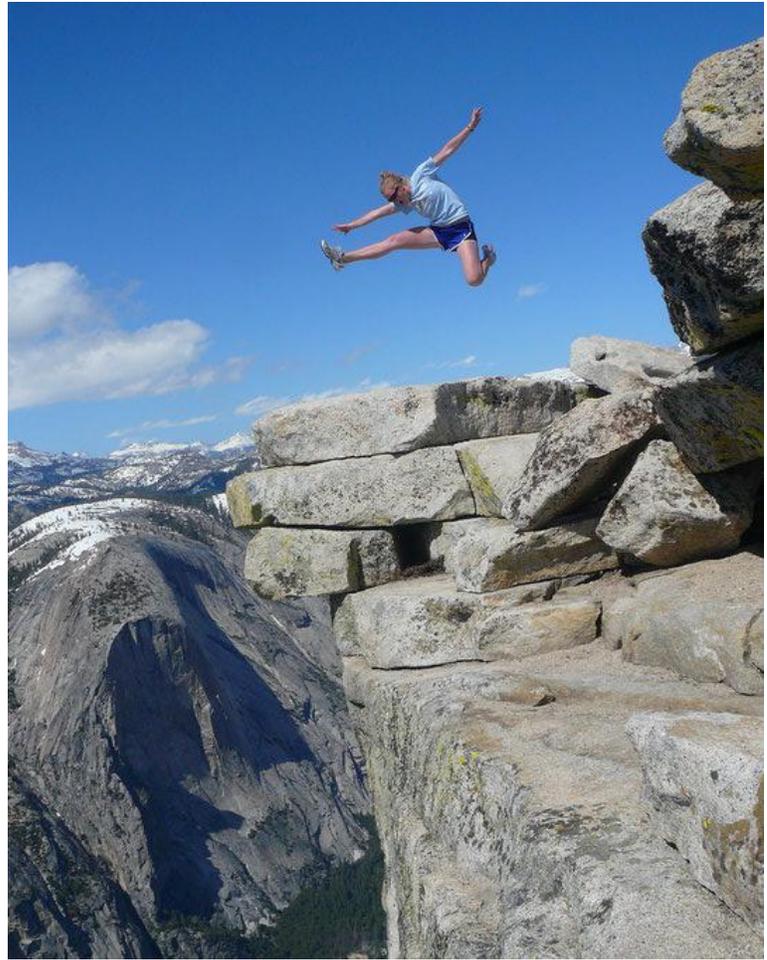


For me, real Fortitude is not establishing “healthy boundaries” ...



... for me, true Strength is being gentle with our enemies.

For me, real Fortitude is
not doing “daring deeds” ...



... for me, true
Strength is pausing to
smell the flowers.



For me, real Fortitude is not civilians angrily & aggressively protesting war ...

... for me, true Strength is soldiers making Peace.



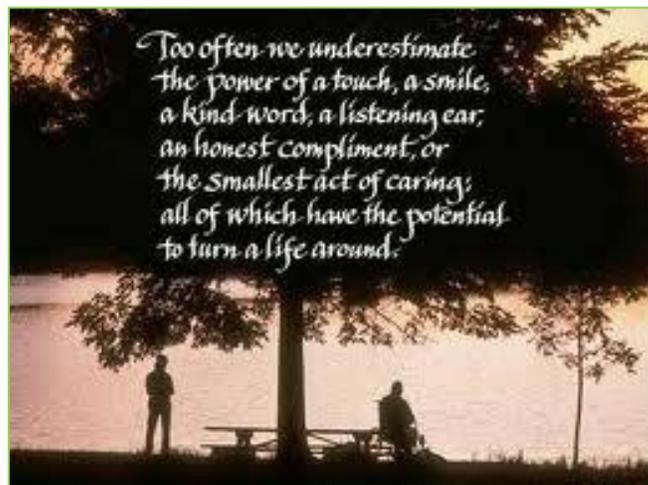


For me, real Fortitude is not headstrong determination ...

... for me, true Strength is flowing with what already IS.



In-deed, I am thankful today for my ability in every moment to make all these latter choices aforementioned; to do choose ever anew that one small-yet-brave deed of Kindness that will change another's life forever.



And so it is that I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with profound reverence, and let loose with a long & loud –

Thank You!

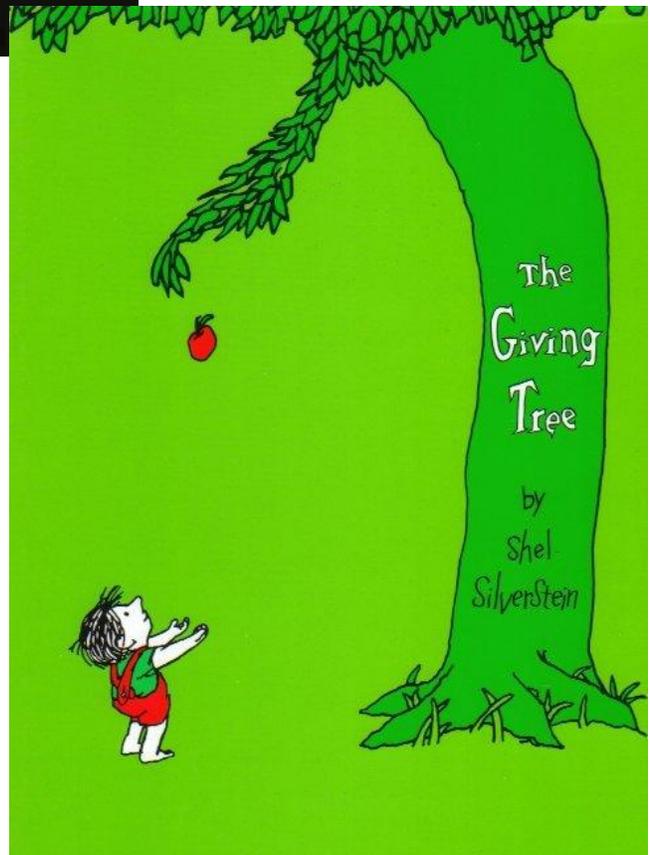
Day 37 ... We can be Grateful for Weakness

Today I am grateful for “weakness” — though not the typical “powerlessness” or “timidity” we have been taught to shun. You see, for me, true Weakness has nothing to do with how much force I can exert upon situations, and everything to do with how much Power I have to harmonize with them. For me, true Weakness has nothing to do with being helpless against the world’s “villains”, and everything to do with having the Power to choose to Care for them despite their “evil” — and thereby conquer the same.



For me, real Weakness is not being defeated by my enemies, but rather is realizing my true Power when I **choose to forgive** them ...

For me, true Weakness is not “being used” by others, but rather is rediscovering my true Power when I choose to *willingly give everything* ...



For me, true Weakness is not being isolated or alone, but rather is uncovering my true Power whenever I re-member that **we are never alone** ...



For me, true Weakness is not lacking a religious faith, but rather is finding my true Power anew whenever I **allow my Faith to shine** through my deeds ...



For me, true Weakness is not merely taking small steps towards a someday goal, but rather is the enlivenment of my true Power whenever I **choose to get up** and move forward at all ...

For me, true Weakness is not being “too young”, but rather is remembering my true Power whenever I **embody the purest Love** of my internal child ...



For me, true Weakness is not being “too old”, but rather is recalling my true Power whenever I **enliven the Kind Wisdom** of my internal sage ...



For me, true Weakness is not being a “quitter”, but rather is comprehending my true Power whenever I have the wherewithal to identify unreasonable hopes, stop “pushing the river”, **let go of my illusions** of “better then”, & move on ...



For me, true Weakness is not refusing to support war, but rather is reawakening to my true Power whenever I choose to **become a champion for Peace** ...

For me, true Weakness is not being slow or immobile, but rather is regaining a sense of my true Power whenever I choose to **remain strongly rooted** in Where I Am ...





For me, true Weakness is not being naive or “ignorant”, but rather is a renewed understanding of my true Power whenever I choose to **See the miraculous** mystery at the heart of everything deemed “familiar” or “normal” ...

For me, true Weakness is not “giving in” to an annoying person, but rather is a reclaiming of my true Power whenever I **willingly Give to all** of them anyway ...



For me, true Weakness is not being “too poor”, but rather is a restoration of my true Power whenever I **purposefully revisualize Life** as ripe with opportunities to Care ...

For me, true Weakness is not being an “insignificant” lone facet of Humanity, but rather is reawakening to my true Power whenever I **act as a potent portion** of the current within Humanity’s entire River ...



For me, true Weakness is not being powerless in the face of the crashing “waves” of circumstance, but rather is a rejuvenation of my true Power whenever I **choose to Purposefully ride** those waves wherever they will take me ...

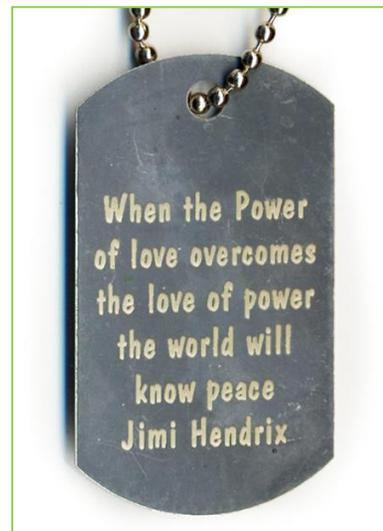


For me, true Weakness is not being injured or “fragile”, but rather is a reinvigoration of my true Power whenever I **inspire others to acts** of great gentleness ...

In essence, we will all only know our own greatest Power when we have both the courage & the humility to let go of our desire to be “strong” – and have the courage to boldly be Weak.

And so it is that I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with profound reverence, and let loose with a long & loud –

Thank You!



Day 38 ... being Grateful for Consciousness

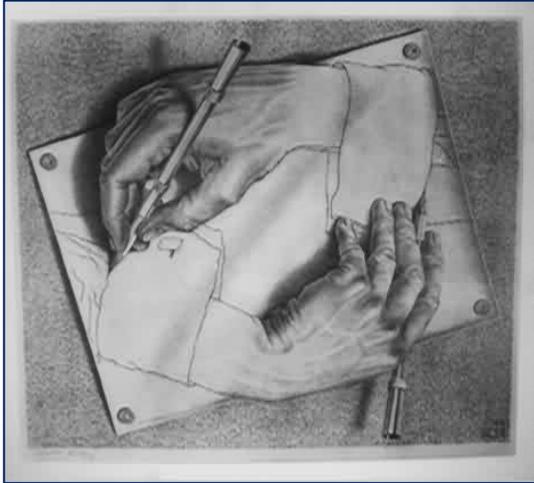
Today I am thankful for consciousness – not only the fundamental awareness of our individual existence, but also the ability possessed by every single sentient being to *feel* its own aliveness – to know its particular time & space within the Cosmos (if it so chooses) ...



For consciousness: the ability to be aware of – and be responsible for -- the consequences of our interactions with others (if we so choose) ...

For consciousness: the ability to make purposeful, thought-through decisions – otherwise known as “free will” (if we so choose) ...





For consciousness: the ability to be able to appreciate and even alter its perceived existence (if we so choose) ...

Consciousness is the ability to revel in pleasure ...



... and it is the ability to smoothly flow away from pain.



Consciousness is the ability to see immense Beauty in all things “natural” ...



... and it is the ability to be Joy-full in the face of immense discomfort.

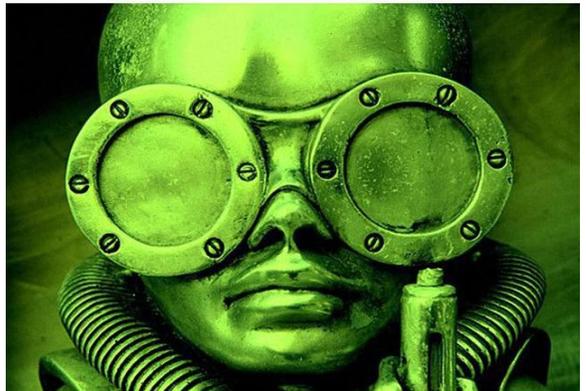


It is the ability to ponder Truth ...

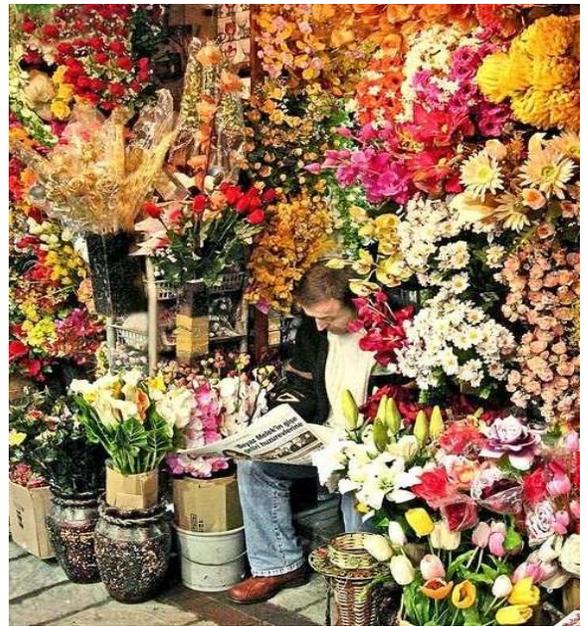
... and it is the ability to choose our own Path.



It is the ability to remove the blinder of societal norms & cultural conventions ...



... and it is the ability to recognize & honor the Beauty that surrounds us in every moment of our lives.

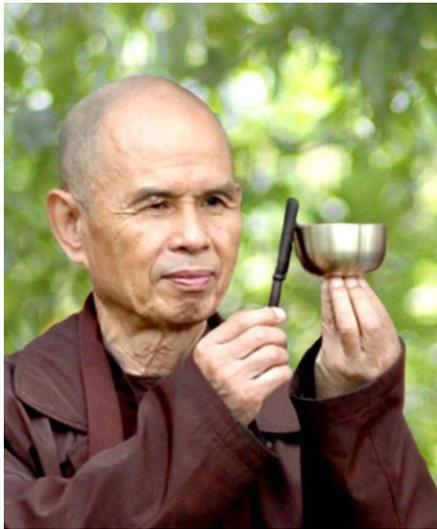


It is the ability to look deep within the hidden depths of Self ...





... and it is being able to See the common essence within everything around us.



It is identifying the opportunity to be Kind in this and every moment ...

... and it is being able to align our day with our Destiny.



It is attending to the specifics & the details ...



... and it is knowing that all is innately & essentially interconnected overall.



It is being aware both that the Journey is its Destination,



... and that the present moment is all we truly have;
*that there is nowhere else to go but Here;
*that there is nothing more to do than Care for those nearby;
*that this moment *is* our life's ultimate Pilgrimage.

All in all, consciousness is the ability to be grateful for Life at all ... So let us all be Grateful!

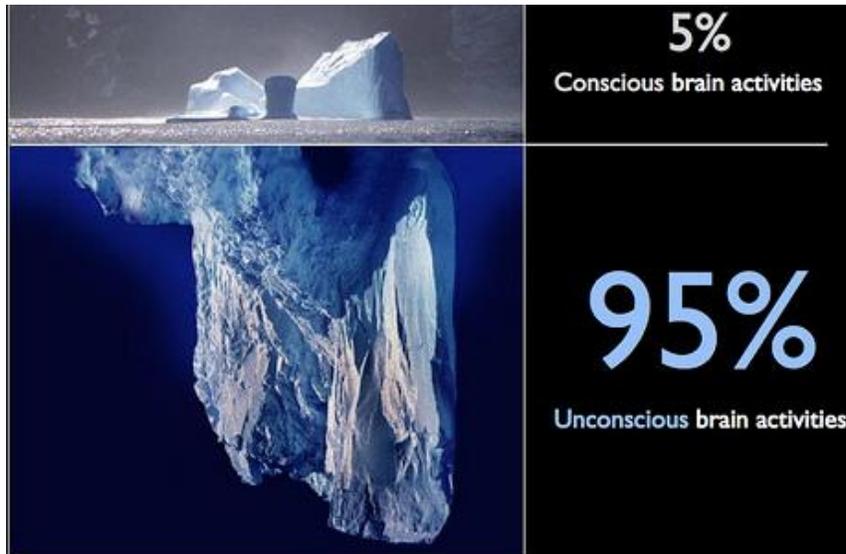
Wake Up

And so it is that I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled with profound reverence, and let loose with a long & loud –

Thank You!

Day 39 ... *being Grateful for Conscience*

Today I am thankful for the Guidance given to all sentient beings in every moment of their lives – both the external “languages” of synchronistic happenstance and archetypal symbolism, as well as the internal “voices” of collective consciousness and the True Self (what many call the human conscience). And I am thankful for this greatest of Gifts even though – as Carl Jung so astutely pointed out -- the vast majority of *potentially* conscious beings remain enslaved to the routines & habits & thoughts & emotions of the subconscious shadow-world; controlled subtly yet mercilessly by both desires primal & fears primitive for the vast majority of their lives ...



And yet, this does *not* take away from the fact that we are truly ONE with our surroundings; that we effectively “communicate” with the same via the decisions we make, and that those surroundings also “communicate” with us in return – responding to our causes with effects, and answering to the energetic “transmissions” of our choices with similarly unique and perfectly commensurate archetypal “responses” as well.

The question, then, is no longer whether such avenues of communication & streams of information exist (They do!), but rather solely whether or not we will choose to use the vast, largely untapped resources in our current mind-bodies to access the same.



And even though I realize that my own choices of perception are largely my own responsibility, I remain thankful for the “synchronous” ways in which my environment seems to “speak” to me ...

It does so using symbols ...



It does so using surprise ...

It does so using archetype ...

[with the archetypal meaning of a red-winged blackbird riding a red-tail hawk is “flow effortlessly with Nature by humbly looking upon its happenings from a higher, more all-encompassing perspective”]

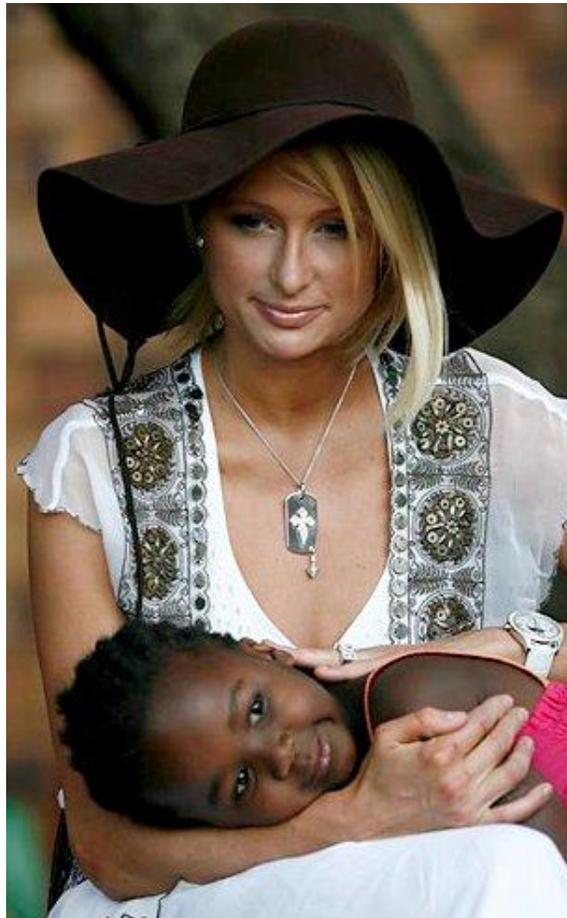


And it does so using inspiration ...

And I am also thankful for my conscience – that inner “Moral Compass” that allows me and every other every sentient being to innately understand the difference between actions that are “right” (i.e. those that are Caring) and those that are “wrong” (i.e. those that are self-centered); that hidden wisdom that always encourages me to do the Kind deed over the selfish one. Its advice is soft and sometimes difficult to hear, and yet it is always there nonetheless.



And this “inner voice” is something to which we can all relate. Indeed, when the cultural norms of human societies are examined – both those throughout history, as well as those thriving today, a common moral denominator that crosses all boundaries of class & creed & culture is clearly seen. For when this examination is undertaken with any semblance of objectivity, it can be clearly noted that the laws & social norms of all these various communities revolve or have revolved around a common set of values; a common understanding of “good” & “evil”; a common understanding of “right” & “wrong”...



And in addition, quite a bit of the latest bio-physiological research is showing that this sentient commonality is not only the result of the similar ways we interact with one another on a psychological level, but also that our brains are apparently “hard-wired” to seek out – and respond fluidly to – compassionate kindness. These discoveries are pointing to the very real existence of a what can only be appropriately termed a “Heart Brain” within the body of every sentient being ...



... that every sentient body has both only an intellectual awareness of its own existence, but also an innate “emotional intelligence” of its own as well – an intelligence that is adept at both perceiving one’s innate Oneness with others, as well as responding harmoniously to the same.





And yet regardless of from whence these empathic communications originate; whether their Calling to Harmony is showered upon us from our surroundings,

... or is received from within,



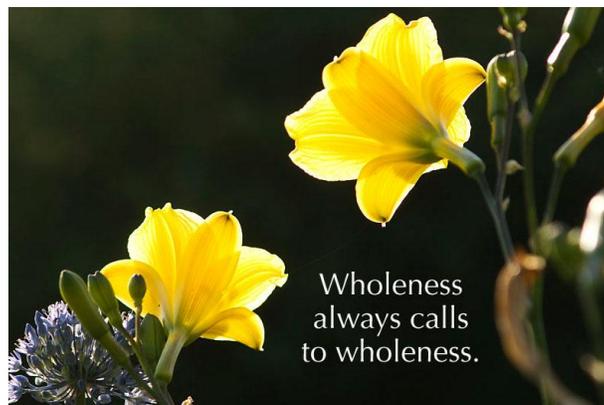
... today I am thankful for those directions. And as such will awake each day intending to pay attention to them.

So that I might notice the messages
reminding me to Love ...



... so that I might then
act accordingly, and more
smoothly flow towards my
Great Destiny ...

... and thereby return to being
One with both my True Self and the
Cosmos that envelops me.



And so it is that I climb to my proverbial mountaintop, take a deep breath filled
with profound reverence, and let loose with a long & loud –

Thank You!

Day 40 ... being Grateful for Divinity (& The Divine)

Today I am once again thankful for that Universal Essence many call “God” – the fabric of space & time; the wellspring of all wonder & inspiration; the birthplace of unconditional Love; the latticework of sub-quantum interrelations; and the source of Cosmic Energy that co-generates all being & interpenetrates the entirety of The All. This Essence is known by many names, among them –

God ...



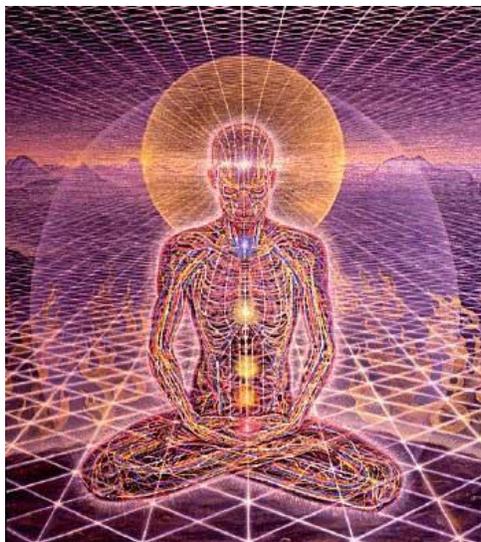
Allah ...



Buddha ...



Prana ...



& Chi ...

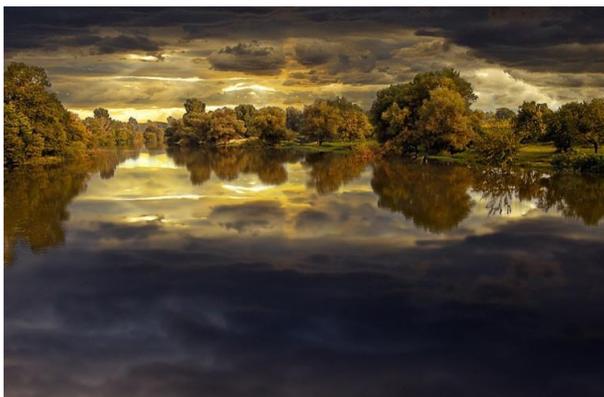
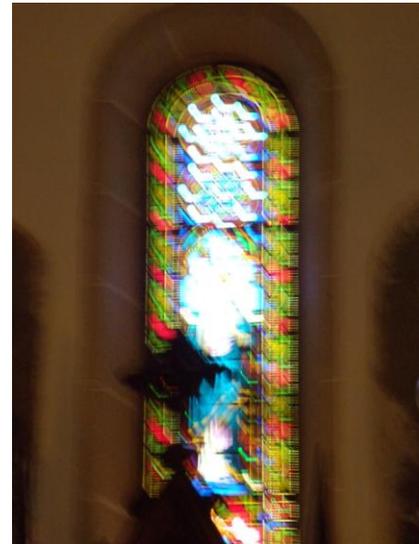


It is the Force that fills us with Life ...



... and it is the source of all inspiration & understanding.

It flows through all our places of worship – both those built by human hands ...



... as well as those built by time.



It is the “Prime Mover” constantly creating all things – both those “alive” ...

... as well as those “inanimate”.



It is the foundation of all our moments of perfect Peace ...

... as well as all those times filled with Joy.





*“And I will take one from a thousand and two from ten thousand,
and they shall Become a single One.”
~ Jesus (Gospel of Thomas 23)*