

Seeds for Celebration – Via Transformativa 2021

The Spring Equinox marks the beginning of the Via Transformativa. *Becoming* is our theme for the quarter, as we seek to embody different states of transformation. Not just to seek healing, but to *become* healing; not just to love nature, but to recognize we *are* nature. The light that began creeping back, second by second, after the dark of the Winter Solstice has now reached an equilibrium with the darkness and we turn the corner toward long hours of light. What is illumined by these lengthening days? What can we see more clearly? Like the buds on the spring trees, can we feel ourselves drawn toward the sun's invitation to burst into bloom? Wonder what we'll *become* this time?

March 21 – Becoming Balance/Equinox

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. Matt. 11:28-30

Spring is nature's way of saying, 'Let's party!' ~ Robin Williams

This week we are *Becoming Balance*. What does it mean to embody balance? We can't all do the Tree Pose – one foot up and arms high in the air – but maybe we can move through the world with some sense of equilibrium. Not too fast or too slow, not too anxious or too apathetic. Just right – like the balance of light and dark on the Equinox. But even the Earth keeps moving in her dance with the Sun. From less light to more light to less light again. The balance keeps shifting as we cha-cha-cha to the ch-ch-ch-changes all around.

March 28 – Becoming Healing/Palm Sunday

And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their garments on it; and he sat on it. And many spread their garments on the road and others spread leafy branches which they had cut from the fields. And those who went before and those who followed cried out, "Hosanna! Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that is coming! Hosanna in the highest!" - Luke 11:7-10

When Jesus came to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, the crowds around began to treat him as a king ready to fight off the Roman occupiers, a warrior ready to take up arms in the name of justice. Like David before him, they wanted him to take on the Goliath of the Empire. Maybe they hadn't really been paying attention. Sure, he was quick to take the side of the oppressed. And no doubt he was a warrior for justice for women and lepers and other outsiders. He had a sharp tongue and a piercing wit, but apart from the occasional whips at the Temple, he was a mostly gentle soul. Other than his mind-bending parables and heart-opening stories, what he mostly did was heal. He mended bodies and minds and relationships and communities, sometimes all at the same time. The healing poured off of him, so that just being in his presence could restore a person or repair a breach. Palm Sunday is a tale of confused expectations about to be burst. During Holy Week Jesus went from offering healing, to becoming medicine.

April 4 – Becoming Alive/Easter

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, ‘Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.’ Then they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. ~ Luke 24:1-11

“Why do you look for the living among the dead?” This may be the question for the ages. We tend to hold onto things long past their “use by” date. Ways of working, voting, communicating with our families – it’s easier to stick with what we know than imagine something completely new – even if what we know ceased to have anything resembling breath in it some time ago. The Jesus story invites us to imagine something new: maybe our five senses aren’t the realest thing around. Maybe we’ve been told to trust something that has only limited – if beautiful – usefulness. Maybe there’s a different way of being alive than simply still having brain waves and lung capacity. Maybe there’s more going on here than meets the eye ...

April 11 – Becoming Trust

Jesus asked the father, ‘How long has this been happening to him?’ And he said, ‘From childhood. It has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you are able to do anything, have pity on us and help us.’ Jesus said to him, ‘If you are able! All things can be done for the one who believes.’ Immediately the father of the child cried out, ‘I believe; help my unbelief!’ ~ Mark 9:21-24

*Sometimes I think it is my mission to bring faith to the faithless, and doubt to the faithful.
~ Paul Tillich*

While Journey hopes we won’t stop believing, sometimes we do. Maybe we stop believing in ourselves or the Tooth Fairy or the government. Maybe we can’t believe what we learned to lean on for years ... but don’t know what else to lean on. Maybe we wonder what this word “God” means or if what we believe it means is what other people believe it means.

Maybe, like the father reaching out to Jesus, we want to cry, “I believe – help my unbelief!” I believe the universe is safe – except when I don’t. I believe I am here with a purpose – except when I can’t figure out what that purpose is. I believe I am loved – help my unbelief.

Doubt is not the opposite of faith, but an aspect of it. A reaching, an asking, a desire. Don’t stop believing. But when you do ... lean in and see what comes next.

April 18 – Becoming Nature / Earth Day

*Stand at the crossroads and look;
ask for the ancient paths,
ask where the good way is, and walk in it,
and you will find rest for your souls.
~Jeremiah 6:16*

*The ground of this infinite and inexhaustible depth and ground of all being is God.
~ Paul Tillich*

We might think of nature outside of ourselves, such as go outside and enjoy nature, the natural world, save the earth. Yet, we are nature and are derived from the elements just as the flowers, the rivers, the sun, and the wind. "We are stardust," the song and many other sage voices, mystics and scientists remind us. Tillich described God as the "ground of all being," the metaphysical root and source, but also, the earth, the source of all life.

"Ashes to ashes, dust to dust" it says in Genesis 3:19 in the King James Version. In the revised standard version "in the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return." Sounds pretty bleak, though it does remind us truly where we came from and where we will eventually return. We are born of nature/earth and it continues to heal and restore us. ~ Anne Wray

April 25 – Becoming Harmony / Tao

*Free from desire, you realize the mystery.
Caught in desire, you see only the manifestations.
— Tao Te Ching Verse I, stanza II*

Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"— yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." ~ James 4:13-15

Many years ago I was catering a wedding at the Daoist Center on Sardis Road

It was a beautiful late Fall day.

One of those late September days,

after a rain, where the air was bright and clear.

You could see with hawk-eye detail each falling leaf against a bright perfectly Carolina Blue Sky.

A crisp steady southern breeze of 15 mph fluttered the white dresses of girls blowing bubbles through congregation.

A perfect day, that promised a perfect evening of celebration.

Except there was a problem.

You see, the wedding planner and the bride had designed that the bridal party would approach the Altar

Over a hundred yards of beautiful white shimmering silk,
laid over fresh mown emerald green grass.

Being the resourceful wedding professionals we are
(and given that the food was mostly catered from 12 Bones - requiring little preparation)
We wrestled this snake of silk against the steady wind for the better part of an hour.
We would stake out the head, and the tail would flap in the breeze like a New Years' dragon,
We would stake out the groom's side and the bride's side would fly out into the chairs.
A fair bit of cussing punctuated the discussion at the Daoist Center that day.
There was just no way to keep it in place.
After a time the bride, in tears, suggested we give it up.
Roll it up.
No silk on her wedding day.
Then the groom's father laughed, a big hearty reassuring belly laugh,
And taking his new daughter-in-law in his arms, whispered,
"Don't you see my child,
At a Daoist wedding,
the Wind makes the Way."

So much of our culture centers around the idea that harmony is order.
A place for everything and everything in its place.
That things done well, and with care, except themselves from fear, as a better poet once said.
But what if,
what if,
true harmony, is just letting things be as they are. As the day has shaped them to be.
What if, as another hearty belly laugher we know, has often reminded us,
We simply,
Let the mystery be. ~ *John David Short*

May 2 – Becoming Joy / Beltane

Joy is that extraordinary happiness that is independent of what happens to us. Good luck can make us happy, but it cannot give us lasting joy. The root of joy is gratefulness.
Brother David Steindl-Rast, Gratefulness, the Heart of Prayer

*For you shall go out in joy
and be led forth in peace;
the mountains and the hills before you
shall break forth into singing,
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. ~ Isaiah 55:12*

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. ~ Galatians 5:23-24

*This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.*

*A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.*

*Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.*

*The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.*

*Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.*

~ Rumi

May 9 – Becoming Creative / Mother's Day

Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness..."

~ Genesis 1:26

*Helped are those who create anything at all, for they shall relive the thrill of their own
conception and realize a partnership in the creation of the Universe that keeps them responsible
and cheerful. ~ Alice Walker*

*Creativity, which is the expression of our originality, helps us stay mindful that what we bring to
the world is completely original and cannot be compared. ~ Brene Brown*

The invitation of "Becoming Creative" immediately brings to mind the arts...paint a mural, write a play, weave a basket, choreograph a dance. Julia Cameron in *The Artists Way* teaches us, "Creativity is God's gift to us. Using our creativity is our gift back to God." Inspiring advice.

But is creativity limited to artistic expression?

Maybe we need a broader definition. Here are some synonym sisters of "creative:" original, imaginative, inspired, inventive, resourceful, innovative and productive. Yes, creativity encompasses much, much more than just the arts. Every new day offers us opportunities to use our creativity to solve problems, build community, make decisions...and maybe knock out a painting or poem, too.

So how do we feed our creativity? Cultivate a beginner's mind with lots of curiosity. Perceive the world in new ways. Find hidden patterns. Make connections between seemingly unrelated phenomena. Mash up old ideas in innovative ways. Find a workaround to a problem. Or maybe it's just what Albert Einstein said "Creativity is intelligence having fun." So go have yourself some fun, knowing that your time spent ideating, envisioning and figuring stuff out is just as the Creator intended. ~ Michele Bernhardt

May 16 – Becoming a Planetary Family

*Sometimes as an antidote to fear of death, I eat the stars
Those nights, lying on my back, I suck them from the quenching dark, till they are all,
all inside me*

~ Rebecca Elson, "Antidotes to Fear of Death"

*When we are connected-----to our own purpose, to the community around us, and to our spiritual
wisdom----we are able to live and act with authentic effectiveness.*

~ Malidome Patrice Some

A global pandemic . . . All peoples, countries, cultures, religions, have been affected by the pandemic. Not in exactly the same way and not with the same response, but all of us have been impacted. It's a tragic example, yet still reminds us that we are all connected. There have been great divisions from how we view the pandemic and how we respond and think others should respond to it. Some have experienced greater suffering and loss. Early on, we heard "we all in this together" and people seemed eager to unite behind the cause of staying home and staying safe. As many stayed home and travel lessened, as cities became ghost towns, the earth and some beings seemed to "breathe" a collective sigh of relief. This also reminded us that what we do, or don't do affects us all. As restrictions lessen and we can resume some of the things we have so long been without, let's forever remember what we have all experienced. It has brought us great suffering, loss, division and separation. Remember that, but also never forget our undeniable connection with our brothers and sisters, human beings and all living beings across the planet. ~ Anne Wray

May 23 – Becoming Fire / Pentecost

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

~ Acts 2:1-4

Spill the oil lamp! Set this dry boring place on fire: If you have ever made wanton love with God, then you have ignited that brilliant Light inside that every person needs. So----spill the oil.

~ Hafiz, (Daniel Ladinsky, translator)

God says:

I am the supreme fire; not deadly, but rather, enkindling every spark of life.

~ Hildegard of Bingen

How about this for a daily prayer: “Come on, baby, light my fire!” The Jesus followers must have prayed something like that when the spirit decided to show up in full force. Pentecost is sometimes called the birthday of the church. I don’t know whether the church was born that day ... but something finally came alive in these goofball disciples. They went from cowering in the corners to shouting in the streets. From arguing over who was Jesus’ BFF to agreeing to spread the love. Suddenly they went from puzzled to powerful, from fearful to fearless, from nebbish to noble.

They became more than they had imagined or desired. If we only ask to be a little better, a little nicer, a little wiser, we might get our wish. But what if we could light the world on fire? Now, that’s hot!

May 30 – Becoming Surrender

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect. ~ Romans 12:1-2

2. *Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.*
3. *Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God. ~ The 12 Steps*

*We have not come here to take prisoners
But to surrender every more deeply
To freedom and joy.*

*We have not come into this exquisite world
To hold ourselves hostage from love.
~Hafiz*

“Surrender, Dorothy,” wrote the wicked witch of the west across the sky. It was a threat, not an invitation. And to our ego-mind, surrender always feels threatening. We spend our life building up the ego-structure – learning, achieving, developing our persona. And all of that is important – part of the trip down the yellow brick road where we meet our heart and mind and courage and learn what we’re made of. But to find our way home, we do have to surrender, to kiss goodbye the internal friends who have walked with us so far. To trust that their wisdom remains with us if we can let go of their constant presence. We can take our egos along for the journey, as long as they don’t get in the driver’s seat.

Surrender sounds threatening when we don’t trust in Something bigger and better to carry us home to our heart’s desire. Not just a wizard behind a curtain, a little god fiddling with the knobs, but a Goodness that lifts us up, even beyond the glimmering beauty of the places we can imagine, and sets us down right in the middle of Love. Then “Surrender, Dorothy” ceases to be a threat and turns out to be the only way Home.

June 6 – Becoming Flow

And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”
~ Matthew 3:16-17

Each one of us is an outlet to God and an inlet to God – Ernest Holmes

We can go with the flow or get in the flow, feel the flow or follow our flow. But sometimes when we step in the flow, the current knocks us off our feet! Or we try to catch a wave only to find ourselves tumbling under the torrent. Surfers and kayakers learn the secrets of becoming one with the water – not fighting against it. Timothy Leary said surfing is “just the individual dealing with the power of the ocean, which gets into the power of lunar pulls, and of tidal ebbs and flows; and it’s no accident that many, perhaps most, surfers have become almost mystics.” As one kayaker who took up the sport at age 60 said, “Kayaking is, literally and figuratively, keeping me looking ahead.”

In physics, superfluidity is the characteristic property of a fluid with zero viscosity which then flows without any loss of kinetic energy. In other words, with no friction causing resistance, it can keep moving without expending more energy. What if we can get into a superfluid mystical state? Stop resisting and move with ease? Catch the wave to shore and read the river ahead? What if we could move with love through the present moment, whether a still deep pool or a whitewater eddy? Oh yeah!

June 13 – Becoming Jubilee!

*We can come to God
Dressed for Dancing
Or,
Be carried on a stretcher
To God’s Ward.*

~ Hafiz as translated by Daniel Ladinsky

I have been in Sorrow’s kitchen and licked out all the pots. Then I have stood on the peaky mountain wrapped in rainbows, with a harp and a sword in my hands. ~ Zora Neale Hurston

Go Directly to Jubilee!

KNOW THIS MUCH: You may lay down your weapons of anger and fear, and start playing your heartstrings. You may strip away the tattered garments of your former selves and let them collapse in a heap at your feet. Instead, drape yourselves in coats of many colors stitched together with the threads of your spiritual practices. You have prayed and meditated and visioned. You have stood at the door and knocked, and perhaps you are still knocking.

Just be mindful that whatever answers may not behave gently. The time for gentle discourse and polite conversation has passed. No more half-hearted mantras and reserved prayers. No more standing still when you are meant to move forward. No more directionless, frantic motion when you are meant to be still.

You see, Spirit wants to hurl you full throttle into the life you have always envisioned for yourself! It wants to knock you to your knees—not in prayers of supplication, but in praise songs of grace and gratitude. You are meant to speak in tongues, bypassing decipherable language so that you go directly to jubilee. You are destined to raise the dead dreams languishing in your heart. Play your harps! This thing called Infinite Glory Be seeks to have full dominion over your everything. It longs to pour Itself into you so that you are floating on pure dynamic energy and swimming in serenity.

Then, when you grow tired of rationalizing and resisting, when you are truly surrendered, It wants to swoop down from the altar of your Most High Selves, and wrap you in rainbows. The spectrum of colors now available to you is astonishing. Drink them in so that you are on fire for God and for your very life.

PeakSpeak: I radiate bold new hues on the color wheel of life.

My light is a beneficial beacon everywhere. I shine—and I shine everywhere! ~ *Karen Brailsford in Sacred Landscapes of the Soul: Aligning with the Divine Wherever You Are*