

Via Positiva – Summer 2021 **Dancing with the Divine**

Albert Einstein said, “The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and all science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead: his eyes are closed.” I would add it is the source of all true faith.

The awe we feel in the face of mystery is the beginning of faith and this awe is at the heart of the Via Positiva. On our website, we say about this Via: “During these months, we discover beauty and awe in each other, in ourselves, and in the fascinating world around us.”

Sometimes discovering the beautiful in ourselves or the people whose paths we cross or the world around us is easy: the moment of kindness, the perfect sunset. Other times, not so much: the brutal storm, the pointed blame, the dark regret. The call of the Positiva is to dance with it all. To find God at the center of it all. To play in the mystery and beauty and awe. Friedrich Nietzsche said, “Those who were seen dancing were thought to be insane by those who could not hear the music.” Let the insanity begin!

June 20 – Dancing with the Light (Summer Solstice)

Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. ~ Gen. 1:1-4

I am happy even before I have a reason.
I am full of Light even before the sky
can greet the sun or the moon.
Dear companions, we have been in love with God
for so very, very long.
What can Hafiz do now but Forever Dance?
~ Hafiz

With the summer solstice comes the fullness of sunlight. The longest days of the year reach their peak. The gardens grow wild with possibility. The lush green mountains rise above the wild orange lilies. Sunscreen use expands.

Dancing with the Divine through the Via Positiva begins with this flood of light. Summer invites us to lighten up and travel lightly. The Via Positiva invites us to see the Light – in creation, in ourselves, in each other. Life may not be *all* sweetness and light, but with the honey-ripe fruit and full bright sun of the season, we remember that life is indeed sweet and full of shine.

June 27 – Dancing with Expectations

The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?”
~ John 4:1-30

[Competing religions] are all basically
contestants in a beauty pageant,
and the religion that can make
your own beauty most known
will win your most respect.
~ Hafiz

If the Via Positiva is about discovering beauty and awe all around us, it may call into question some of our ideas about beauty. Is it in the eye of the beholder or inherent in all creation? When we judge between the awesome and the awful, whose standards do we use?

Dancing with expectations may have us tripping over the roots of our biases or stepping to the beat of somebody else's drum. Can we hear the music of divine expectations and learn those dance moves?

July 4 – Dancing with Freedom

It is absolutely clear that God has called you to a free life. Just make sure that you don't use this freedom as an excuse to do whatever you want to do and destroy your freedom.

Rather, use your freedom to serve one another in love; that's how freedom grows. For everything we know about God's Word is summed up in a single sentence: Love others as you love yourself. That's an act of true freedom.

~ Galatians 5:13-15 (The Message)

For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.

~ Nelson Mandela

The preacher Peter Marshall may have been thinking of this passage from Galatians when he said, "May we think of freedom not as the right to do as we please, but the opportunity to do what is right." So often we think of freedom as "freedom from" something. Freedom from restraint, freedom from rules, freedom from work. But what if freedom always means "freedom to" do or be something?

As we celebrate our nation's "Independence Day" do we wonder what we used our independence for? Freedom from the British so that we can be free to ravish this land and the people already on it? There is so much in this nation's history we need to reckon with. Do we wish to be free from remembering our past? Or do we wish to be free to make amends?

Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist Viktor Frankl said, "Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom." What if this is true not just for individuals but for communities? Let's make space to find our freedom ... and share it.

July 11 – Dancing in our Spiritual Footprints

In many shamanic societies, if you came to a medicine person complaining of being disheartened, dispirited, or depressed, they would ask one of four questions: "When did you stop dancing? When did you stop singing? When did you stop being enchanted by stories? When did you stop being comforted by the sweet territory of silence?"

~ Gabriel Roth

Words, concepts, doctrines, ideas are all very necessary for clarity and for consistent action. There is a time for words. It has lasted from the Reformation to the present.

Now we are sick of being inundated in an ocean of verbiage. The word must be rediscovered in the flesh. Religion must return to dance. Perhaps Zorba is the saint for our time.

~ Sam Keen, *To a Dancing God*

Our ancestors (way, way back . . . maybe not my grandma or yours), knew the importance of dance, movement. As Gabriel Roth describes in the above quote, medicine people knew the importance of dancing, of art to shake up the Spirit and keep it moving, around inside and expressing it out to the air. Our feet pounding Mother Earth as she absorbs our power and channels it back up with new roots and growth. Sam Keen says Zorba may be the saint for our time, though it's been over 50 years since he wrote that. We still need to dance. Shake, rattle and roll. Pound the earth, listen to the ancestors--- alive in the trees, the vibration in the music of the spheres and the song in our hearts. ~ Anne Wray

July 18 – Dancing with Visions

He answered and said to me, 'Blessed are you that you did not waver at seeing me. For where the mind is, there is the treasure.'

~ Gospel of Mary 7:3-4

The eye through which I see God is the same eye through which God sees me; my eye and God's eye are one eye, one seeing, one knowing, one love.

~ **Meister Eckhart**

"When I dare to be powerful, to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid."

– **Audre Lorde**

In Proverbs we read, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." Helen Keller was a little more blunt, "The most pathetic person in the world is someone who has sight but no vision." Poet and activist Audre Lorde reminds us that vision can make us courageous. Pablo Picasso reminds us that vision creates possibilities beyond what is obvious to the eye when he says, "If I paint a wild horse, you might not see the horse... but surely you will see the wildness!"

Vision drives us to courage and creativity, to purpose and possibilities. Where do we find our visions and how do we let them find us? Do we know how to tend them when they arrive or do they tend to us as they carry us to a new destination? Bono sings of the moment of surrender to vision over visibility ... who's ready to surrender to a new vision?

July 25 – Dancing with Dolly! (WWDD?)

August 1 – Dancing with Fullness (Lammas/1st Harvest)

Do not weep and be pained, nor doubt, for all his grace will be with you and shelter you.

But rather let us praise his greatness, for he has prepared us and made us Humans.

~ Gospel of Mary 5:5-8

I rarely let the word 'No'
escape from my mouth
because it is so plain to my soul
that God has shouted, "Yes! Yes! Yes!"
to every luminous movement in Existence.
~ Hafiz

Aug 8 – Dancing with Delight

At the immortal touch of thy hands, my little heart loses its limits in joy and gives birth
to utterance ineffable. ~ Rabindranath Tagore

Rejoice in the Lord, always. Again, I say rejoice. ~ Philippians 4:4

Aug 15 – Dancing with Dogs

"Lord," she replied, "even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." ~ Matt 15:
21-28

Pulling out the chair
beneath your mind
and watching you fall upon God –
What else is there
for Hafiz to do
that is any fun in this world.
~ Hafiz

Aug 22 – Dancing with Fear

From the Hebrew Scriptures: Proverbs 9: 1, 3, 5-6, 9-10: Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn her seven pillars. She has sent out her servant-girls, she calls from the highest places in the town, 'Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed. Lay aside immaturity, and live, and walk in the way of insight.' Give instruction to the wise, and they will become wiser still; teach the righteous and they

will gain in learning. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

From A Course in Miracles, Chapter 1: Revelation induces complete but temporary suspension of doubt and fear. Miracles unite you directly with your siblings. Revelation is intensely personal and cannot be meaningfully translated. That is why any attempt to describe it in words is impossible. Revelation induces only experience. Miracles, on the other hand, induce action. Revelation is literally unspeakable because it is an experience of unspeakable love. Awe should be reserved for revelation, to which it is perfectly and correctly applicable. It is not appropriate for miracles because a state of awe is worshipful, implying that one of a lesser order stands before his Creator. You are a perfect creation, and should experience awe only in the Presence of the Creator of perfection. (ACIM, T-1.II.1:1–3:3)

From Buddhist Monk Pema Chodron: If there's any possibility for enlightenment, it's right now, not at some future time. Now is the time. Now is the only time. How we relate to it creates the future. In other words, if we're going to be more cheerful in the future, it's because of our aspiration and exertion to be cheerful in the present. What we do accumulates; the future is the result of what we do right now. We can make ourselves miserable or we can make ourselves strong. The amount of effort is the same. (From *When Things Fall Apart*, p.144)

Aug 29 – Dancing with the Heart/CREATION SPIRITUALITY RETREAT

Sept 5 – Dancing with Innovation (Rosh Hashana / Labor Day)

I am about to do a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert. ~ Isaiah 43:19

Sept 12 - Laura - Dancing on the Water

Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” ~ Matt 14:22-33

O keep squeezing drops of the Sun
From your prayers and work and music
and from your companions' beautiful laughter
and from the most insignificant movements
of your own holy body.
Now, sweet one, be wise.
Cast all your votes for Dancing! ~ Hafiz

"A Native American tribe was known for its great ability to bring rain through its prayerful and joyful rain dances. Whenever this tribe was called upon to dance for rain, its members danced and danced, and it always rained.

"The Chief was asked, 'How is it that even when all the other tribes fail, your tribe is so successful at bringing rain through your rain dances?'

"The Chief replied simply, 'We just keep dancing until it rains.' "

The Velveteen Rabbi:

I often notice the pulse point at the wrist when I'm laying tefillin. I learned to map the ten wraps of the arm strap to the ten *sefirot* of our mystical tradition. Above the elbow, the top three windings are for *chochmah, binah, da'at* -- wisdom, understanding, knowledge. Then come *chesed, gevurah, tiferet, netzach, hod, yesod, malchut* -- lovingkindness, boundaried strength, harmony, endurance, humble gratitude, foundations, and Shechinah, the indwelling divine Presence.

That final wrapping goes right over my pulse point. Divine presence, pressing on that place where my life-force is palpably present. "God is as close to me as the beating of my heart." I don't remember the citation for that, though a quick google search suggests that this idea can be found across many religious traditions. What could be closer to us than the beating of our own hearts? It's an intimate, embodied metaphor, and that too makes me think of Shechinah: God with/in us, with/in creation.