

Seeds of Celebration ~ Via Transformativa 2022

March 20th – Let the Day of Fulfillment Begin

Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none.

So he said to the gardener, 'See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?'

He replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it.

If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

~ Luke 13:6-9

Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.

~ Isaiah 55:1-2

So I don't generally watch Oprah but I love Michael Jordan, Larry Bird, Steve Nash. The late '80's- early 90's NBA rivalries my father and I bonded over after my parents divorced and he moved out of state.

I remember an interview Jordan gave the oracle of Chicago shortly after he signed to the Bulls. He was there on stage with his mother talking about his budget.

Oprah: "You just signed to the NBA for millions of dollars, what do you need with a budget?"

Deloris Jordan (Michael's Mom): "Honey, everybody needs a budget. Especially young millionaires!"

Those were salad days for young Michael and young John David. (I'm quoting Shakespeare here, "They were my salad days, when I was green in judgment.")

Our worlds - once small and well defined - were rapidly expanding.

Touchstones once immediate and as fulfilling as bread were now remote and quiet. Exciting, scary times.

Not much different than today. Not much different than ancient Palestine.

In order to grow into our talents, to be truly fulfilled, we had to have patience.

We had to have a guide, we had to be willing to go to the hole again and again and find it dry.

The effort itself is the fulfillment.

Fast forward to 2022. SensorTower reports globally \$47.9 billion spent on in-app purchases. That's a lot of Candy Crush manure.

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Maybe it's time to put down the iPhone and shoot a few hoops?

March 27th – Let the Day of Journey Begin

"There was a man who had two sons.

The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them.

A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living . . .

~ Luke 15:11-13

When he returned a second time,

the straps of his sandals broken,

his robe stained with wine,

it was not as easy to forgive.

By then his father

was long gone himself,

leaving me with my other son, the sullen one

whose anger is the instrument he tunes

from good morning on.

I know.

There's no room for a man

in the womb.

But when I saw my youngest coming from far off,

so small he seemed, a kid

unsteady on its legs.

She-goat

what will you do? I thought,

remembering when he learned to walk.

Shape shifter! It's like looking through water—

the heat bends, it blurs everything: brush, precipice.

A shambles between us.

~ Allison Funk "The Prodigal's Mother Speaks to God."

So it often is with journeys—we think we know what we want, we think we know what will give us joy or, at least, a relief from pain. Then we get what we aim for, however low or high, and as the song goes we wonder, "Is that all there is?"

The story of this prodigal son, which details aside, could be anyone of us, goes on. The starving, dissolute, hungover son goes home expecting to be treated as

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one of his father's servants. This would be a far better situation than the one he came to on his own.

This would be ordinary grace.

And yet, in returning, the father showers him with an extraordinary grace. The grace of a father who spent many sleepless nights scanning the horizon for His son. Had many conversations, some in anger, some in tears, with the Son's mother- many cries of "why, why, why?" Those of us that have been touched by addiction understand how cunning and baffling it can be. It's a family disease. We feel the righteous indignation of the older, faithful, taken-for-granted son.

This is not a perfect family.

This is not a perfect journey.

This is merely Perfect Grace.

April 3rd - Let the Day of Conscience Begin

"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?"

-Isaiah 43:16-21

"Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair..."

John 12:1-8

"Try not to get worried, try not to turn on to problems that upset you- don't you know everything's alright, yes, everything's fine? And we want you to sleep well tonight? Let the world turn without you tonight. Close your eyes, and forget all about us tonight." Mary Magdalene croons these soft reassuring words to her beloved in Jesus Christ Superstar right after Judas Iscariot confronts him over why money was spent on anointing oils.

Nuance is lost in a story's repetition for two millennia, simplified to good versus evil, mercy versus betrayal. Enter Broadway's take on the complexity of devotion, friendship, desperation, and the immense pressure of the establishment over rabble rousers. The show opened at a time when American conscience was fraught- still relevant, right? In Jesus Christ Superstar, Judas isn't the villain- he's a friend of Jesus's driven to despair. He feels that the

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message has been lost, and to ensure his vision is retained, Jesus must become politically captive, martyred. It's gut-wrenching, but Judas trusts it is right.

Unfortunately, our right choices often become dark nights or blights on history. Conscience will cause good results to arise after the pain has passed. Our conscience, the organ of wise choice-making, grows when it is fed time and perspective. We can listen, and commune with the stories of those across from us, as well as beside us. Someone finds a new way to look at an old pain, and a hopeful song prepares us for the transformation to come.

April 10th - Palm Sunday - Let the Day of Wonder Begin

Psalms 118:24 This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

All who wander are not lost, and all who wonder are not confused. Wonder is curiosity or a state of awe. It is at the heart of wonderful: to be full of wonder! We can almost hear Louis Armstrong crooning "...and I think to myself, what a wonderful world." Trees of green, red roses too. The Earth is alive, filled with symbols of wonder, like donkeys and palm fronds and people like Christ living and dying for love. The ancient sacred stories of Easter in the Christian tradition, Ostera in the Pagan tradition, Holi in Hindu ~ the signs & symbols of Spring ~ remind us of our connection to all living things: Earth! Creation! What a wonder-full world indeed!

April 17th - Easter - Let the Day of Resurrection Begin

"The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone..."

-Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

"Two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with 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; he has risen!'"

-Luke 24:1-12

The egg shells were blue, so it must've been a robin, though the baby bird was so little that there was no way to be sure. A young boy who had not taken a particularly humanitarian approach with insects might not be trusted with the

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care of a fallen baby bird, but something was different. This flipped a switch. Those eyes that seemed too big for its little head, but waiting to open, its meager chirps, the distance it had fallen.

The boy was determined to save this bird's life. Cupping it in his grubby hands with grass clippings to cushion the fledgling, he rushed from the oak tree, up many flights of stairs, to his dresser, scrambled for a shoe box, and turned on a light. This is where the questions started. What do you even do? His father was not amused; of the books in the house, there were none even remotely relevant to the task. The library was closed, it was the weekend. Solemnly, his father said "The best thing you can do is to pray about it." Only religious on Sundays, this struck the boy as odd, but he did. He prayed and he prayed. He tried to keep the little bird warm at night. The next morning, the little boy cried. The prayers didn't work. He went back to the tree to bury the bird, to ask for Mother Bird's forgiveness, and be angry at God. Wouldn't you know it, though? He could see the nest from up high, and hear chirps. There were other birds.

It was spring, and his grandmother would start to teach him everything she knew about birds. By summer he would have his own binoculars, and a kids' Audubon field guide. He learned the robin's song first. Each year, upon their return, he smiles ear to ear. Prayers are answered in the darndest of ways.

April 24th - Earth Day - Let the Day of Spirit Begin

"The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good."

-Genesis 1:9-10; 11-12

"Jesus told him, 'Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.' Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book."

-John 20:19-31

Spring is upon us once again. Seedlings are stirring inside their pods of nurturing and are ready to expand into the world's garden. The inevitable warming winds that will carry pollen, butterflies, and bees, to beautify their surroundings, are steadily making their way toward the season of growth ahead.

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All around us the signs of awakening stretch easily into our consciousness. The soft purring of the wind, Mother Earth's gentle yearning and anticipation of a long awaited yawn that comes from deep within the depths of a dormant memory...

The arrival of the full moon and its feminine birthing energy stir the nights. Its rosy red glow invites us to witness the sacred alchemy of tidal energy and the ebb and flow of Mother Earth's life giving water. Raising and nurturing awareness of her needs is paramount.

We as a tribe are being called upon to finely tune our efforts so that we truly become one heartbeat and one voice. To be one Indigenous Tribe of Earth, to join our heartbeats and raise our prayers to the wind so that Creator will bless and pollinate our gardens of visualization, realization, and actualization. Bless them with Love, Honor, Compassion, and Abundance. We are being called to bask in the moonlight and reflect back to Grandmother Moon the life giving light that grows us even in the dark of night.

Be the seed. Create a blessed Earth Day.

May 1st – Let the Day of Restoration Begin

You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy.

~ Psalm 30:11

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep."

He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."

~ John 21:15-17

Today marks Beltane, May Day—the point halfway between the spring equinox and summer solstice, and if nature is any guide we are very much in the midst of things. *In media res* is a storytelling technique in which we are dropped into the middle of things. Every episode of *Breaking Bad* begins *in media res*. So too

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does the Jesus story this week. Peter and the boys are experiencing well, a bit of a let down, and decide they may as well go back to fishing. But, in maybe the tenderest moment of the gospel, who should they happen on but 'ol JC himself eating breakfast. Just an ordinary day. Just an ordinary God.

Remember, Peter denied Christ three times in the hour of his death, but after breakfast together, this Christ in the flesh uses the power of love, to establish Peter's gig. We can relate to Peter in this, can't we? How many times have we set out to do something extraordinary only to doubt ourselves as we encounter setbacks? How many times has our faith been shaken? How many times have we thought 'I might as well go back to fishing'? Sometimes all it takes is a nice meal and trinity charm from a dear old friend to restore us to our faith and our higher, truer purpose. Sometimes we are Peter, and sometimes we are Christ.

I think I'll go dip my toes in the river . . . maybe light a fire.

May 8th – Let the Day of Compassion Begin

“You shall nurse, you shall be carried upon her hip, and bounced upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you.”

-Isaiah 66:12-18

“Let your gentleness be evident to all...”

-Philippians 4:5-8

“True compassion does not come from wanting to help those less fortunate than ourselves but from realizing our kinship with all beings.”

-Pema Chodron

Rarely do legislation and compassion interact in any way that causes the entire world to take notice, and perceptions to shift. It can happen though. In 2017, the Whanganui River in New Zealand was determined to be a legal entity, entitled to all the protections and rights to thrive that are accorded to all people. On the Māori principle that “I am the river, and the river is me,” the Whanganui, along with other river systems, were acknowledged as living beings of whom as are ancestors. What does it take, then, to deem a thing

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protected, and worthy of care? Laws? Religion? These have not always done the best job.

What would Mama do? Well, she might say “be good to each other.” But what if we’re not? “Don’t make me come down there!” Compassion is proactively kind as well as strongly instructive. It’s a hug as much as it is a push. If compassion was on such a narrow spectrum that it could only be warm-n-fuzzy, would all that is cold-n-jagged become... unkind? Mama might say “Life is hard” because it is, and telling the truth is a compassionate act. The next right compassionate act is doing something about it.

May 15th – Let the Day of Love Begin

Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.'
I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."
~ John 13:33-35

If I ever gave a poetry workshop here are some key factors I would elaborate upon, hoping to give you your money's worth.

**** Watch out for the word flower. It can be lethal.*

**** Be equally on your guard for the word rainbow
And its – for the most part – assault on serious literature.*

**** And the words butterfly or star, I love them, but I think they are best left off the page unless you are desperate and/or have not reached puberty.*

That about rounds out the general holy trinity of don'ts in poems, from my perspective.

*And if you ever succumb to using the word flower,
Rainbow, or the b or s word more than twice in one book unless it is very cleverly done – well,*

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well, you should really invite someone to shoot you.

~ Hafiz, A Poetry Workshop trans. Daniel Ladinsky

I began writing poetry just as I entered puberty.

I had good reasons to do so: I found myself suddenly filled with feelings and emotions I couldn't explain, my family was enmeshed in a spiritual community - a cult of personality- that made it difficult to speak frankly, especially about these new powerful emotions. And well . . . chicks dig poetry, and I was far too insecure to share how I feel about certain of my female friends without the veil of verse to hide behind.

By the time I made it to AppState and a proper creative writing class I had reams of drivel to hide behind.

I remember the day our instructor outlawed the word love.

"Use action verbs!", she commanded.

Just as the embodied Christ commanded our instruction is to show, not tell.

Show, don't tell.

May 22nd - Let the Day of Mercy Begin

"You rule the peoples with equity and guide the nations of the earth"

-Psalm 67

"Jesus asked him, 'Do you want to get well?' He replied, 'I have no one to help me.'"

-John 5:1-9

Tom and Jerry cartoons have likely not been studied extensively for theological value. However, I recall one such retelling of the Greek tale Androcles and the Lion. Of course, it's a very loose retelling, and it's a splinter in the paw that holds our dramatic attention. The courageous mouse, at risk to his life, faces complex decisions and moral conundrums. Of course, he pulls out the splinter, and because it's Tom and Jerry, there will be complications. In the end, is there regret for mercy? Nope. Mercy is still the just act, even when there's a power imbalance and you could still end up on the losing side. Mercy dissolves questions of rightness or wrongness, for the sake of alleviation of suffering. You have been a lion, and a mouse. You've had the splinter, and you've shaken before those in power. You have considered the options, and in your time, you

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have also chosen mercy, no matter what. Hopefully, hijinks ensued... or even better days.

May 29th – Let the Day of Sharing Begin

*“If you have a candle, the light won't glow any dimmer if I light yours off of mine.”
–Steven Tyler*

We learned about sharing when we were little kids. One of the first rules of playground etiquette is that we must share with one another in order to get along. And implied in the sharing dance is that there is always enough to go around. One thought about the miracle of Jesus feeding the 5000 is that when the little boy was willing to share the loaves and fish of his picnic lunch, others did the same with their lunches and there was enough for everyone.

Good things happen when you share. Jesus asks that the love of God for him be shared with his disciples and from that love comes unity. According to Revelations, anyone who wants water or something to eat is given it. Seems there is a lot of sharing going on as things come to fulfillment. And why not? After all, what is the Kingdom of God but the condition where all have what they need? Maybe it starts with us. When we share love, money, food, shelter with and on behalf of others the world tilts in the right direction and we realize we need one another. Each one is essential to each one.

June 5th – Pentecost – Let the Day of Courage Begin

Now the whole earth had one language and the same words.

And as they migrated from the east, they came upon a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar.

Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth."

The LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which mortals had built.

And the LORD said, "Look, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them.

Come, let us go down, and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another's speech."

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So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city.

Therefore it was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

~ Genesis 11:1-9

This is one of those passages a good Sunday School teacher would advise us to read the before and after chapters.

Before: A massive flood depopulating the earth.

After: Well, that remains to be seen as yet, but James Baldwin reminds us it's *The Fire Next Time*.

So we have this common people, with a common language, and a common {traumatic} experience. They come off the ark and stretch their legs a bit until they find this lovely rich plain. They are scared, they want to stick together. The tower of Babel was a watchtower, cornering the plain, the centerpiece of a massive border wall. A major hiccup in the Lord's plan to repopulate the earth. We don't know the nature of the fire next time, but is it perhaps too much of a coincidence that *Corona*, as in Coronavirus, can be translated as *fire*? Is it perhaps too much of a coincidence that technology has brought us as much together as it has driven us apart? What is the Lord up to now and what courage will we find to stretch our shared humanity to the challenge?

June 12th - Let the Day of Humility Begin

“And the best thing you've ever done for me, is to help me take my life less seriously...it's only life after all,” the Indigo Girls croone. Eaten a slice of humble pie lately? I have. They say if you don't humble yourself everyday, the world will have a funny (ie: more painful) way of doing it for you. To be humble is to bow low to the Mystery, to remember our personal story is not the Main Thing, and to take solace and comfort in our connection to Creation over our connection to Self. Humility is at the root of peace. It helps us get out of our own way so that the Mystery can flow through our PVC pipes to the Divine. Perhaps a slice of humble pie daily, like a multivitamin, will help keep the Cosmic fountain of Source ~ Divine Love, Grace, & Truth ~ flowing through us with ease. *It's only life, after all!*