

CHURCH SERVICE

6 NOVEMBER 2022

OPENING WORDS

We live within a great circle – a circle of time, a circle of seasons, an ever-expanding circle of community that encompasses all that is here on this planet and all that exists in the farthest reaches of the cosmos which holds hundreds of galaxies. To honor this circle, I invite the powers of the four directions: The East – Spring, sunrise, the place of inspiration and new beginnings, and the home of Eagle; The South – Summer, midday, the place of childhood, the place of innocence and trust, and the home of little Mouse; The West – Fall, sunset, the place of adolescence, the place of the darkness and looking within, and the home of Bear; The North – Winter, night, the place of adulthood and bringing our gifts into community, the home of the ancestors and those yet to be born, and the home of Snowy Owl. Lastly, I turn to the Sun, the giver of warmth and light to our planet, and to Mother Earth from whom all life is born. I invite all these powers to hold us in sacred time and sacred space as we gather together.

WORDS FOR REFLECTION

We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

SERMON

RE-MEMBERING OUR WILDNESS

I want to begin this morning with a story.

Last July I joined a small group of women on a pilgrimage to Ireland. It was an opportunity to walk awhile in consciousness and to move into a place of union with the Divine presence of the Ancient Irish Goddesses of that sacred land.

One clear, bright morning we set out by boat on the lower lake of Killarney for the Sacred Isle of Innisfallen which once was a place of sacredness for the priestesses of the Goddess. Later it became a center of learning and healing. It is a very small island and once we landed, we were invited to do

whatever our heart wanted us to do for the next 45 minutes. I knew immediately what I needed to do – to walk alone on the path that encircled the island. I treasure my alone time and am most free and centered when I am alone in the natural world.

Leaving the group behind, I am immediately transported by the sounds – the gentle lapping of the waves upon the shore, the rustling of the leaves, the bird song – all bring me home to myself. My eyes continually search the trees, the tall grasses, the shoreline and the path ahead for signs of life – the great blue heron, the birds, the rabbit. My body feels the warmth of the sun, the light breeze, and the presence of often unseen beings – the tree people, the stone people, the earth - all are ever near.

I am feeling deeply connected to this environment. You can rightfully surmise that I am completely enraptured. Then this thought comes to me unbidden – I am Animal! I am Animal! Never before has this thought penetrated my consciousness yet it arrived with stunning clarity.

This singular thought has resonated in my being ever since. I had simply forgotten that I am something more than a talking head – a living body below my neck! But is this not what we humans have done? We have forgotten that we are animal! In claiming our humanity, we have separated ourselves from all the other beings on this planet. And that is exactly **the** problem. In separating ourselves, in assuming a mantle of superiority as humans, we have forgotten that we are but a strand in the web of life and that our actions impact the entire web. We have acted as if the planet – her earth, her waters, and her flora and fauna are nothing more than resources for us in our need to exert power and gather riches. And as a result, consider what we now face – all-consuming wild fires, ever rising temperatures, drought, and fierce storms which impact every being on this planet.

For a long time, I have been aware of this disconnect between us and the rest of life on this planet. I have wondered how we might move beyond this disconnect, how we might begin to listen not only to the indigenous peoples but to the other beings on this planet who have much to teach us about diversity and balance. The focus of my first book was an attempt. Still, I keep returning to this idea of Re-Membering Our Wildness.

What does that really mean? For a long time, I had but one answer and that was to put myself into the natural world and to meet it on its terms; however, now I can see more deeply. The question really is, “What qualities are needed to help us, you and me, to Re-member Our Wildness?”

Before I go there you might be wondering why I am even asking these questions. Fair point, so allow me to digress for a moment to set the stage. Some historians would say that we are living in an Age of Destruction. These are historians who are interested in understanding why cultures collapse. In their research, they discern patterns for cultures that are coming to an end – patterns like institutions no longer serving the purposes for which they were created and begin to implode, institutions like healthcare and education; the veneration of entertainers and performers which distract from the emerging concerns in the culture; and an emphasis on science and technology and a resulting loss of human connection. These cultures get ahead of themselves. These were cultures in which power and greed became the gods. This sounds all too familiar.

Given the present state of the world, it is difficult to see how we can avoid collapse. I have no idea what that will look like and it is frightening to understand that much we have come to know will be unalterably changed. Still, we must be ready to meet these changes, to be willing to go into an unknown world. So what qualities are we going to need to meet this unknown world?

- Self-knowledge – a willingness to deepen an understanding of one’s self so that one can remain connected to one’s inner core when all around is in flux.
- An Open Heart – there will be no one solution thus we must remain open to a variety of ways in which people will create this new paradigm and not allow ourselves to see “my way as the only way”.
- Courage – leaving the known for the unknown is never easy. We cannot allow fear to paralyze.
- Energy – there will be no quick fixes or easy solutions. It will require commitment to seeing this paradigm shift through all the ups and downs until some level of stability is achieved.
- Boldness – in breaking away from the old paradigm, each has to be willing to surrender beliefs we have carried about patriarchy, resources,

education, economy, money, loyalty, technology etcetera. There are people who are already doing this, us included, some in small ways and others in riskier ways.

- Action – thinking, re-thinking, re-memembering are important but they are only one-half of the task. Action is the other 50 per cent. Again, we and others are already acting but more will be required as old institutions and belief systems fall away.
- Humility – the reality is that Gaia has always acted through her laws and principles and she will continue to do so. Her ecosystems have always depended upon diversity. We must surrender our belief in our superiority to find what Gaia and all her beings have to teach us about life, community, death, and transformation. These are the bone and sinew of living a healthy existence on this planet.

These are qualities that every sentient being on earth possesses. They are not ours alone.

I have come to know that our ancestors are both the stars and the earth. We are the stars and the earth in human form. We hold the imagination, the creativity, the spirituality, the potential of both the stars and the earth. This we must Re-member. We are the perfect beings for living in this time and space. We can do this work of Re-memembering. We can break free from patriarchy and greed. We do not need to know what we are creating. We simply must set ourselves free from power and greed in our everyday individual lives.

I know this is a formidable task with many pitfalls and no easy answers. It is a planetary transformation fed by individual transformation. Here are some questions to ponder, to answer, and to put into action:

1. In what ways can I continue to disengage from patriarchy in my work life? In my family life? In my non-work life?
2. What beliefs do I continue to hold that are false and need to be In
3. What brings me real happiness?
4. What are the true sources of meaning and joy for me?
5. What do I need to Re-member that I have forgotten?
6. Why am I here in this time and place?

These are difficult questions with which to grapple. We cannot step back in fear of what we may meet in the asking. Of course, we have free will and we can avoid asking but we do so at our own peril. Remember, "We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience." And that human experience includes embracing the very qualities that every being on this planet possesses by being a member of this planet -self-knowledge, open heart, courage, energy, boldness, action, and humility.

CLOSING

In closing this morning, I want to re-member that I am Animal. You are Animal. It is critical to re-member that. Together with all the other beings on this planet, we are in uncharted waters and we need to re-member our animal nature to help us to repair the web of life and to embrace the challenges and the joy of living as One. I release the Circle. Go in Peace.