

The Temple Artisan

October-November-December 2014

Behold, I give



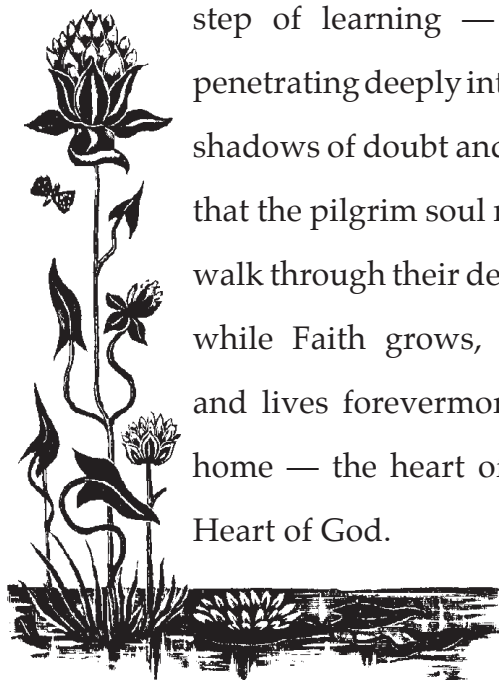
unto thee a key.

STAR OF FAITH

O THOU! Beautiful, illuminating Star of Faith, lighting the quiet stillness of the lonely Path of weary feet.

Guiding and sustaining each step of learning — Thy beams penetrating deeply into the lurking shadows of doubt and fearfulness, that the pilgrim soul may serenely walk through their deceptive guile while Faith grows, and thrives, and lives forevermore in its true home — the heart of man in the Heart of God.

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EDITORIAL MIRROR

In **From the Mountain Top** message entitled *The Christmas Rhythm*, we read “The message of the Christ — the Christmas Message to mankind — conveys the idea of Devotion above and through all else. Devotion to God, to Principle, to our fellow man even unto death, does indeed establish the Rhythm of the Song Celestial.” These words tell us that every great spiritual messenger ever called to serve humanity has preached the same message of devotion to God and each other. Only by so doing do we participate in the harmonies of the Universe.

The yearning in every human heart and soul for the connection to All-That-Is; God; the Holy Trinity; Matter, Force, and Consciousness; or whatever we can name the all-pervading force of the Universe finds many expressions at this time of year. Hanukkah, Winter Solstice, Christmas, Kwanzaa, are but a few of the high days and holy days marked during this season. But the real hunger of the human soul is for connection with the Song Celestial. We forget, in our mad dash for display, glitter and show, that we carry the true gifts of Christmas within our hearts. These are the gifts of Love, Gratitude, and Unity with all. We are never without them; we simply do not listen to their quiet voices that sing the Song Celestial to us without ceasing. May this Holy Season bring all humanity closer to that Song.

— Eleanor L. Shumway
Guardian in Chief



Lily Photo by Anne R. Dunbar

FEAR

Dear Temple Sisters, Brothers, and Friends,

Nearly everybody knows the temporary feeling of Fear. At the base of every negative thought there lies a Fear that can be identified and, if possible, be shaken off and overcome, in order to strengthen the courage that shall support us throughout our life, and enable us to fulfill its divine purpose.

“Weighty indeed hath been the karmic action upon the human race of that trepidation and ever increasing terror of the unknown (the result of the curse of Fear), first instilled by the selfish, ferocious, soulless enemies of man. Soulless, yet possessed of intelligence sufficient to feel the wish to desecrate, and if possible, to destroy the bridge between the higher and lower selves of the newly Christ-born – the evolving race which had already built up suitable vehicles for the incarnating of the waiting Egos of the spiritual plane.

“And by such destruction forever prevent the entrance of the mediatorial element into embryonic man, leaving merely replicas of their own impalpable, restricted lives. For it is to these denizens of the lower astral plane that man must look in his search for the veiling of intellect which cuts off from him the knowledge that the first awakening of the concept of God, whatever the thing or creature to which the concept may apply, is God; and to these beings he must look for the blasting of the reverential awe and intelligent appreciation of the truth which intuitionally teaches him that there is something, some being, some power, which is far in advance of aught that he has yet experienced; and also for keeping man in ignorance of the immeasurably great truth that good is God; God in form, (as much as God, who is all form could be confined in one form), whenever and however Good is being manifested [We need to remember] this illimitable, stupendous fact — the personal realization that God is surrounding, interpenetrating, informing them, folding them, as it were, within a garment of love, of power of expansion, of unification. . .” (TT 1, *God and Christ* p. 179-182)

Let us welcome God many times each day, by giving thanks for all good crossing our way. And by doing so it will manifest more frequently. In 1919 we were told as we could be told today: "Are you cultivating the powers of courage, assurance and endurance at the present time, or are you sinking down into a state of cowardice, Fear and indolence, when some realization dawns upon you the truth of the facts I have tried to impress on your minds during the last twenty years relating to the imminence of the great struggle between the powers of light and darkness for the salvation or destruction of the present human race? . . .

"If you allow yourselves to dwell on the possibilities of the destruction of cherished possessions, the slaughter of your kind, the overthrow of your governments, traditions and hopes, you will not only open some path by which those terrors may eventuate, but you will weaken your defenses, render inadequate your weapons and serve to cut yourselves off from the great army of the White Brotherhood which is gathering for the fray." (TT 1, *The Great Question*, p. 507)

"It is not because of my need of you that I urge you to stand firm and steady on any one of the Temple steps you have reached, but that you may have the combined support of all the forces that constitute that step, in whatever karma may have in store for you personally. Build a center, a fulcrum in your own inner self, where the Love of the Great White Lodge may rest; and Fear, the greatest of all stultifying forces in the universe, will have no more dominion over you." (TT 1, *Lest We Forget*, p. 197-8)

This is the way to work for the best of all mankind, according to our wishes. Every wish, we are told, may in its time become true, if we act accordingly.

"There never was a need created or a demand made by a man but that somehow, somewhere, that need could be met, that demand could be supplied. It is for us to find the way. If we need a Christ, be sure there is a Christ; if we need a God, a heaven or a hell, we may be sure they exist in some form, in some place. If we

need another life or other lives on earth, or in some other sphere, we shall surely live those lives. If we have need of human love and human sympathy, it is ours for the seeking rightly." (TT 3, *The Way Out* p. 32)

Let us in faith and certainty await the ways of the higher forces and already picture them lovingly in our hearts. We must remember that the Higher Forces constantly make progress even in a world where darkness, confusion, doubt, uncertainty and frustration rule. Let us give up the Fear that only mirrors former experience and prevents us from taking advantage of the opportunity presented by the present moment to tune the sound of the life-harp more harmoniously.

We may regret the lost years with their blossoms and fruits. They would have helped to make a garden in the hearts of all men, if only one tenth all the confidence that dwells in the heart of a child could be transmitted to the heart of a grown-up. Could our Fear of a burden be replaced by our readiness to bear a short time of suffering in order to give confidence a chance to do its perfect work?

But we shall not lose courage. "Do not feed and nourish that lower self by FEAR of its effect on you, or by yielding recognition of its power over you. Strive to realize the truth of the words, 'I am one with God and all Good; evil hath no power over me,' and, by making evil powerless, free yourself from its dominion." (TT 1, *The Lower Astral or Ka*, p. 298)



Rose Photo by Anne R. Dunbar

The man with a definite spiritual purpose “reaches the point in his life cycle where the lengthened periods between joy and sorrow leave him time and space for consideration, for pondering upon and assimilating the fruits of his experiences; he catches a glimpse of the great purpose behind all those fluctuations, and perceives that they are necessary to growth. He sees that when the pendulum of his clock of life has ceased its action to and fro there will come a time of rest and silence wherein opportunity is given for the coming of the ‘Holy Ghost’— the Illuminator — through Whom alone the vast mysteries of life are revealed. . . .

“Eventually he finds that he can do better work for the world, and incidentally for himself, if he can continue in the state of equilibrium indefinitely, and so he transfers his life energy to a higher plane of life, and does so consciously. . . .” (TT 1, *The Purpose of Life* p. 401)

Let us try to do likewise.

— Annegret Liebig



GRATITUDE GLEANINGS

I'm grateful for everything in my life.

I'm grateful for coming to an understanding of the truth on the other side. It has transformed my life.

I am grateful for the peace and ease of the universe – if I only LET it happen in its way, on its terms, not mine.

I am so much grateful for everything in my life! I am grateful for my family, friends, where I live, places I go, people I meet. I am grateful to be able to express my gratitude!

ACCEPTING WITHOUT JUDGEMENT, WITH YOUR ENTIRE HEART

The brain — is a vessel for the mind; the heart — is a vessel for the soul and the spirit. They are very close to each other on the material level. An impulse needs an instant to reach from the mind to the heart. It takes more than one year though and even more than one life for the indispensable truths that have been already accepted by the intellect to reach the heart and to be retained there. But this is the only way for a person to begin accepting their surroundings and their dear ones the way they are, without any condemnation and criticism.

The ancient wisdom says: if you desire to change the world, you should start from your own self. As soon as you have changed, the world will also never be the same. Our material world is inert. Habits, prejudices and stereotypes have a very heavy mass. It is impossible to instantly eliminate their inertia or to change the direction of this inertia.

In accordance to the law of conformity, the more you would like to change, the more effort you need to apply persistently day after day. That usually gets boring quite soon. It is much easier to consider that your own laziness and irresponsibility are somebody's else fault or to blame it on insuperable circumstances.

When a person has mastered the ability to consciously suppress the negative energy coming from outside and to radiate light and love directly from their heart, they will be able to see the same light and love flowing back to them from all over and will realize that the world will have changed.

— *Vladimir Meshkov, Saint Petersburg*



Bounty. Photo by Anne R. Dunbar

RECALIBRATING COMPASSIONATELY

My first encounter with Theosophy came through the Halcyon Store nearly twenty years ago. Initially, it may have been merely the act of browsing that led me through a Temple pamphlet or two. It would take another year or so, before I felt compelled to experience my first Noon Healing Service. I would like to share with you the evolution of my spiritual practice.

A metaphor has come into my mind recently that seems to be helping me get a clearer picture about the Universe and what is nearest at hand. It has to do with my relationship with the Divine Adjusters, the Lords of Karma. I have been using a thought tool I call “Recalibrating Compassionately.” I will try to articulate to you this “style of action,” as I find these two words to be a very powerful combination of verb and adverb.

A fascinating dichotomy can be found in this one word. According to Merriam-Webster, one definition of “caliber” is a degree of mental capacity or moral quality or a degree of excellence or importance. On the other side it can also be the diameter of a bullet or projectile. I would like to suggest that we are all created to a Universal Caliber. While the essence of that caliber is the same for each of us, it varies ever so slightly, to where none of us is ever exactly the same as anyone else.



Fireplace. Photo by Anne R. Dunbar

According to Merriam-Webster, “calibrate” is to adjust or mark some thing (such as a measuring device) so that it can be used to measure in an exact and precise way against a standard (or caliber).

So to recalibrate would involve returning to a functioning calibration, which by no means guarantees an intentional connection to a caliber that is in the best interest of us all. That's where the need for a responsible degree of compassion becomes ever so vital.

In my mind, a person of high caliber has been well calibrated. The sea turtle is a good example of a species that is born fully calibrated. Based on instinct alone, it is responsible for its own survival. There is never a parent or elder around to protect the hatchling or to show it the way. As life experiences enhance the survival chances of the hatchling, their instinctual calibration is fine-tuned, maintaining the existence of their species.

The first book I recall reading is “The Call of the Wild,” a novel by Jack London published in 1903. Interestingly, I later came to learn that Jack London was a Theosophist too. The story he tells is set in the Yukon during the 1890s Klondike Gold Rush, when strong sled dogs were in high demand.

The novel's central character is named Buck, a domesticated dog stolen from his home and sold into the brutal existence of an Alaskan sled dog. Buck is forced to adjust to, and survive, cruel treatments and fight to dominate other dogs in a harsh climate. Eventually he sheds the veneer of civilization, relying on primordial instincts and lessons he learns, to emerge as a leader in the wild. While this story is fiction, I've always found it to be quite realistic. I use it here as an example of the recalibration of Buck.

We human beings also have been known to be remarkably adaptable. In some respects our ability to manufacture just about anything we can think of has change the material caliber of our lives. There are a variety of manufactured conveniences that we now depend on that come with a factory-preset capability. As soon as you plug them in and turn them on, whatever the product may be,

it is preset to function in a way that pleases the majority of its users.

In a sense, we human beings are evolving from a Creator preset or spiritual Caliber, if you will. Our goal is to be at peace with our Soul. One could say this Caliber is the result of the Triple Key, the evolution of Matter, Force, and Consciousness and the Universal Laws of Unity, Centralization, and Balance, to name a few.

Teachings of the Temple, volume 1, begins with “A Master is one who has become as a little child, who has entered the Eye of the Triangle in the Square within the Seven, and who, by sore travail of Soul, has won his Robe of Immortality, which Robe he must keep unspotted, not for fear of the spotting but lest the mud thrown against that Robe rebound and strike the thrower.”

While this expression could be the subject of several Temple talks, I offer it as the Supreme example of recalibrating compassionately. In my mind a Master has recalibrated over many lifetimes to become One with the original Caliber, and in doing so has obtained the ultimate capacity for compassion.

I believe this bears repeating, “A Master is one who has become as a little child, who has entered the Eye of the Triangle in the Square within the Seven, and who, by sore travail of Soul, has won his Robe of Immortality, which Robe he must keep unspotted, not for fear of the spotting but lest the mud thrown against that Robe rebound and strike the thrower.” I use this definition of a Master as a guide to remind me of my spiritual aspirations as a member of the Temple of the People.

In May 1999, I delivered my first Temple talk based on “The Ten Commandments,” “The Sermon on the Mount,” and “The Ten Rules of Discipleship.” While I continue to draw from all three of these in my spiritual practice, it is the Sermon on the Mount that inspired my talk for today. I have never forgotten the instruction, that despite all of the great bodies of work at our fingertips from **The Secret Doctrine** to the **Bhagavad Gita**, if all of our teachings were to be set ablaze, it would be the “Sermon on the Mount” that we are to save. For the instructions given within

those few pages is the basis for Universal Sister/Brotherhood.

We are encouraged by the Temple Teachings to study the Scriptures and that we cannot study them enough. Being raised on the Old Testament and choosing to study the New Testament, I believe it is through my reverence for the Sermon on the Mount that I share with you my interpretation of the following three quotes from the Master Jesus.

These quotes are just a couple of the numerous arrows I hold onto in my Theosophical quiver as I endeavor to target recalibrating compassionately as an ongoing action within my life. I consider each of them a gateway thought tool that inevitably triggers deeper thinking in me.

They are:

1. "Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times,"
Matthew 26:34
2. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."
Luke 23:24
3. "Faith without works is dead." James 2:26

These quotes vary widely depending on the origin, yet they will suffice nicely as I briefly connect my interpretation to the Principles they reflect. They are meant to keep me present to my need for Fidelity, Humility, Obedience, and Courage; and to keep me alert to our collective need for Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, and Justice. They remind me that there can be no true religion without its scientific basis, and that there can be no right economic system not based on a science that is religious and on a religion that is scientific. They are meant to motivate me to take aim towards the ultimate Caliber worth aspiring for when it comes to my recalibrating compassionately.

The first arrow in my Theosophical quiver is an allegory for Courage, Loyalty, and Trust requiring a belief in a Power greater than ourselves. The quote comes from the Last Supper, the celebration of the Jewish Passover, when Jesus tells his disciples, in essence, that they will be unable to withstand the Testing Force heading their way.

"This very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." I believe this to be in reference to my connection with my Higher Self. Every day I endeavor to maintain my connection with my Higher Self as I struggle with my lower self's efforts to disown that relationship, with even the slightest temptation.

I believe that it is how we have evolved our calibration, as to whether or not we can sustain our connection with the original Caliber we are all preset to. This is by no means an easy task individually or collectively. Humanity has come to a point where there is fierce disagreement as to the meaning of the Universal Caliber we have all been preset to.

As I endeavor to accept my responsibility for advancing the common good, to be sure, I need to truly know myself and be clear on my motives. If I get lost or detached from my Higher Self, the Six Pillars of Character help me to recalibrate compassionately. If I am not trustworthy, responsible, respectful, fair, caring and an engaged citizen, I may have disowned my connection with my Higher Self.

We need common sense compasses to help us navigate and recalibrate. The Six Pillars of Character make for a fabulous compass. Finding connection with one's Higher Self is one thing; maintaining that connection is another matter. We're linked when we're grateful.

The second arrow in my quiver, which helps support my efforts for recalibrating compassionately, has to do with patience, suspending judgment, and sustaining an open mind. From the Cross we hear, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." I invoke this often, for myself and for others. It helps me to question my enemy image and to mitigate my fears and anger. This may be one of the highest callings and corresponds with the Masters' concern for the mud rebounding from Their Robes and striking the thrower. It is very difficult to forgive when not connected to one's Higher Self. Forgiveness is critical to our ability to heal and recalibrate our way back to a productive and useful life. "Judge not and ye shall not be judged" is the basis of forgiveness and makes room for love and compassion. It is very difficult to

move forward without forgiveness. Even here, in my mind, the reference to “Father” is a request to my Sacred Higher Self.

The third arrow in my Theosophical Quiver is “Faith without works is dead.” I think of this one as walking the talk, practicing what we preach, being the change we wish to see in the world. This requires us to be mindful, as our perceived charity may end up enabling, if not manipulating ourselves and others. What is the motive behind our recalibrating? Are we mindful of “Not my will but Thy Will?” Do we know when to save our breath to cool our soup? Are we doing what is nearest at hand and needs to be done? Do we accept that forgiveness is not a release from Karmic debt? Have we discovered the power of the placebo effect in our faith?

Edmund Burke's “The only thing necessary for evil to flourish is for good men to do nothing” rings true with me. Our challenge is to truly come to understand the meaning behind what is good and what is evil and to utilize that understanding to honestly measure our standing with the Universal Caliber.

Recalibrating compassionately, during certain cycles, can be possible with the greatest of ease. Regrettably, we can miss opportune times for recalibrating compassionately, as an individual or as a group in a particular cycle, which can lead to greater amounts of pain and suffering over additional periods of time.

For me these three arrows are interconnected and interdependent, for they are all for one and one for all. Without my mindful and intentional relationship with my Higher Self, it is difficult for me to forgive in a healthy and sustainable way and most certainly impossible, unless I'm willing to do the work. From another angle, doing the work can become a burden without my partnership with my Higher Self.

The end of a relationship, for example, can be a time for grieving and mourning. Eventually we can naturally overcome this emotional state of being. Although, still containing the essences of sadness when it persists for an extended period of time, we start to label this behavior as depression. This is when we really need to, at the very least, “act as if we have faith,” if we are to ease the

heaviness of our needed work. Is it time to hold on, time to let go, or time to leave our comfort zone? Our work is to recalibrate our connection with our Higher Self and initiate the process of forgiveness so we can have a chance to rediscover the love and compassion within our hearts.

Recalibrating compassionately is a strategy for turning discord into harmony and for realizing that selfishness is unaware of its Karmic consequences, yet for harmony to continue we must always be prepared for change; for nothing on this physical plane remains the same, save one, which is reflected in our Temple motto, "Creeds Disappear, Hearts Remain."

Endeavoring to realize the Avatar as a living Power in my life is all about my recalibrating compassionately. May I endeavor to hold true to the personality that is a reflection of the Principles that you and I believe we know and hold dear.

I would like to close with the following message **From The Mountain Top**: "There is no going back. You must go forward. It remains with you, however, whether or not you will win the Holy Grail, which is immortal life, or go back for ages. There is, as I say, no standing still, no peace; it is battle, battle, battle, with first one enemy and then another. The powers with which you are fighting are greater than you can conceive.

Be on the alert. Have your armor on. Be ready for the foe at any time of either day or night, or you will be taken unawares and swept off your feet. And, my children, after all is said, it is the simplest things that are asked of you — simple Faith, and Trust, and Love, and Work. You are asked to perform no great deed, nothing but your simple daily duty, one hour, one minute at a time. Nothing more nor less."

— Rick London

I WILL ENDEAVOR TO REALIZE
THE PRESENCE OF THE AVATAR
AS A LIVING POWER
IN MY LIFE.

THE DIAMOND SOUL

What boots it, the pain, the longing,
the weariness of the moment
— the single moment out of Eternities —
to him who sees each trial
as a gage of the great battle he is fighting
for the crown of self-recognition,
and knows that with every conquest a *white stone* is added
to the Crown of the Diamond Soul.
The moment with its burden will pass,
but the Diamond Soul
will hail the dawn of every new age,
'till Time is lost in Eternity.

— From *The Mountain Top*
volume 1, p. 178



Grape Harvest. Photo by Anne R. Dunbar

THE VALUE OF SACRIFICE

At the Feast of Fulfillment one Sunday, I became aware of the term “Fire Sacrifice” as it is used in our service. Never before had those words come to me so brilliantly, craving attention. We ask for a sacrifice from the fire elementals. We sacrifice the elements we burn. Indeed, the very altar and vessel we use to hold this fire and burn the incense also serve as sacrifices. Time, thought, creative fire, and effort are spent toward this end. Let us explore this experience further.

My upbringing as an Irish Catholic set me up to react to the word *sacrifice* powerfully, thus blocking deeper understanding. Visions of a near naked Christ bleeding on a cross flash across my mind immediately upon mention of the word. The perpetual suffering of the Christ was a core teaching in our church lessons. As a child I eventually became numb to the idea. It was too horrible to imagine. When I realized that I was being held responsible for his fate, I rebelled.

Thus, the meaning of the word sacrifice has been in reference to the cross and the suffering of a most holy man for the majority of my life. I was frightened living in a world where such a thing could happen.

On top of all those ideas, we were taught that this holy man was *capable* of saving himself from the cross and chose to endure unimaginable suffering. Obviously there was some higher purpose served in his choice to suffer. Sacrifice is often considered a “saving” in itself, so Jesus could have either saved himself *from* the suffering of the cross or saved himself *with* the suffering on the cross. He is referred to as our Savior so he was not only in a position to save himself but all of humanity with his suffering. What a confusion all this can be. It’s no wonder that an eternal mystery revolves around these ideas.

One point I am making here is that an understanding of sacrifice is often not served in religious teachings which focus on the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. I, and

countless others, react to the word so powerfully that the path which sacrifice offers can be hidden or lost. I seek clear understanding as I am aware that this is a pivotal point in spiritual life and our comprehension of its mysteries.

The dictionary definition of sacrifice is: “an act of slaughtering an animal or person, or surrendering a possession as an offering to God or to a divine or supernatural figure.” Well, not a lot of clarity or comfort here.

Shortly after my introduction to Halcyon, Willie Gommel defined the word *sacrifice* and its Latin roots during a Temple class. I was stunned as he explained that the word in its origins meant “to make sacred”. This definition shed light on this intrinsic piece of life’s mystery for me. It has become one of my personal keys to daily experience. With this key the Christ on the cross can make sense. Something was made Sacred on the cross. That opened my mind to new ways of exploration of this topic. I still had many questions but also had a new point from which to start.

If you think about it, sacrifice is in every simple living act. I can now see that to “make sacred”, we pray, we work, we breathe, we share, we ponder. To make sacred we hold ourselves silent or we speak, we observe, we bear. All can be an act of making sacred with a certain motive, intention and heart force. Anything can be made sacred as we lay some piece of our lives aside toward a “higher” goal. (I use the word “higher” here simply to describe vibration, not to express the sense of being better or right.)

To turn left one sacrifices or lets go of the right. To breathe in one sacrifices the out breath. To rise up one sacrifices lying down. During meditation we let go of thought. When a loved one goes away, we sacrifice holding on to them. When we listen to others, we relinquish or sacrifice speaking. Every act relinquishes another.

This is the way and the flow of life in accordance with the universal Law of Polarity. Thus all life is in constant motion. In this light sacrifice is a celebration of all life and living. It is an

honoring, a blessing and a universal flowing with every living act, intention and motive. Sacrifice, my friends, is life itself. It may be a chosen thing or it may come upon us, but it is life itself and there is no escape. Where there is no sacrifice there is no life. That may be why many of us are plagued with its inevitability. We all know this on some level, but we fear the suffering which seems so completely associated with this knowledge.

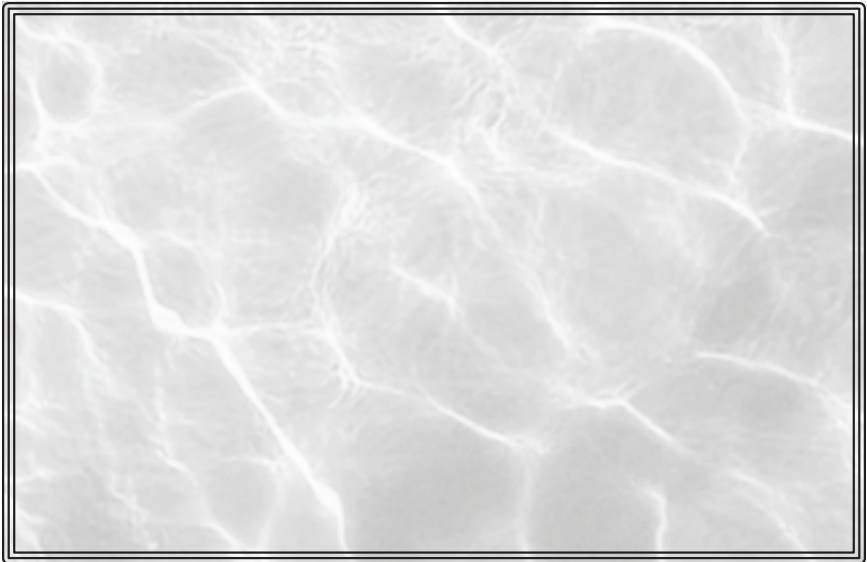
This story about my Dad may shed light on the relationship between sacrifice and suffering. As a child my father seemed the perfect embodiment of sacrifice. His eyes were always sad but they were supported by a bravely chosen smile. My father's eyes touched my heart. I knew he was lonely, struggling to keep his joy alive. Part of his story is that he joined the Navy at the age of 16 with the blessing of his parents. During the 2nd World War he was trained as a corpsman and assigned to a ship in the Pacific which received injured soldiers headed for home from the front lines. His experiences on that ship had a large impact on the rest of his life. He, a very sensitive fellow, was surrounded by a world of suffering. In the face of all that agony he became a full grown man at 16.

Before I was born my father had painted a giant crucifixion, the size of a fully grown man on a cross. No possible pain was held back in his work. He took all of the suffering he had witnessed on that ship in the Pacific and expressed it in the crucifixion, the suffering of the Christ. He spoke, on that canvas, of suffering with the only symbol he knew, perhaps in his effort to understand. The painting was given to a Franciscan college by the family. I imagine it is buried deep in the bowels of the school storage rooms, for the painting was neither a glorification of the sacrifice nor did it ease Christ's expression of agony. It challenged a doctrine perhaps misunderstood by the Fathers as well as the parishioners. I have never seen it myself.

We see sacrifice only in terms of pain and suffering. Of course pain and suffering is bad, right? Well, it certainly is scary. We want to run away, bypass it somehow, but we all know it is part of life.

Every moment that we experience any discomfort or see suffering coming our way, we avoid it or seek to change things. Did you know that Kahlil Gibran, in his book **The Prophet**, describes comfort as a smothering thing? I quote him, “The lust for comfort [is] that stealthy thing that enters the house a guest, and then becomes a host, and then a master.” Is comfort a healthy spiritual guide? I do not believe it is. Habitually seeking comfort, we are avoiding difficulty. We are missing a chance to make some aspect of our life experience Sacred.

Is it true that sacrifice is married to pain and suffering? Certainly it can be. With every sacrifice we either consciously surrender or unconsciously lose something. I am not sure that we always suffer though. Another meaning of the word suffer is “to allow”. That involves permission. Perhaps we have a choice about the suffering part of the equation. I imagine that two beings could experience similar events but each may not necessarily suffer the same way. Choice, intention, and motive determine the experience of suffering. Each of us can explore this idea to see how it fits into our lives.



Water & Light. 2014. Photo by Anne R. Dunbar

Another interesting idea about the sacrifice of physical manifestation has risen in my mind recently. The human spine is crossed with the bones which hold our shoulders and rib cage. It can be seen as an image of the crucifix upon which our bodies hang. In this light, again, life itself is a crucifixion! The sacrifice of spirit into physical form is painful. We human beings all struggle, no matter our circumstances, rich or poor, smart or simple, tall or short, and skin colors all the shades of the rainbow. We all have suffering, I believe, in equal measure throughout our many lives. The cross holds the secrets of ages of difficulty and struggle. Thus, as we meditate on the meaning of the crucifixion it can bear fruit towards making all suffering sacred.

Back to Daddy's story, I am reminded of Thich Nhat Hanh, the Vietnamese Buddhist monk, saying that if we can smile in the face of our pain then we have won over it. Just imagine yourself trying to smile in the midst of your worst nightmare. Powerful? Yes. Daddy smiled valiantly through thick and thin. As a young child I saw his pain and the courage in his smile. Perhaps it is my most poignant memory of him and my greatest lesson as it carries me through many trials even today. He did not say much of depth usually, but his silence spoke volumes. What could have been the value of it all?

The smile and the winning over his difficulties became very meaningful for me as a child. I was in awe of it. He sacrificed his need to express his anger, to foster his sadness or to be right. He remained silent as my mother took the family from him. He did not show anger nor did he ever speak badly of her. Many thought he was spineless, weak, and lacking depth, but I now know that his relationship with sacrifice was making his life Sacred. He lived in his pain and blessed the world with his smile. I saw it. He was my Dad.

Here's another angle on our choice in this matter. Anger, for instance, can be satisfying. Righteous anger especially throbs with energy. It's warm at first, even hot, and we get all charged up. Being fired up and angry can feel good!

Long-term anger loses its heat becoming ice, cold and lifeless. At that point it simply runs on a default program to hate or resent. We see the object of our anger and without thinking we react as usual; looking away, saying critical things, and closing our hearts again and again. Now imagine sacrificing that hot, energizing anger. Robert Johnson, a well-known author, wrote "Sacrifice involves the art of drawing energy from one level and reinvesting it at another level to produce a higher form of consciousness." To sacrifice our righteous anger and create new programs in our behavior will produce a higher vibrational consciousness. Try it. Let go and smile. Then you will know for yourself the value in the sacrifice.

It takes courage to let go and smile, but is there value there? The exercising of the will over our default programming, is it important? The choice to smile, to rise above, to accept, and to sacrifice is the gold, the highest form of human endeavor. "Long suffering" comes to mind, a phrase used less now than in days gone by.

Saints and Bodhisattvas quietly relinquish their anger, their rights and their judgments. The Christ silently bore ridicule and torture and finally gave up his physical life on the cross. A neighbor quietly bids "good morning" to a fellow they've shunned for years.

Again I ask, "What is the Value of Sacrifice?" It seems so futile, so pointless. It is much easier to say that something is wrong, or something should be different. This world should be better, people nicer and days longer. It's easy to blame, to judge and to shun in the face of our pain. We must work on acceptance and trust in spite of our fear.

With a little practice, it could be just as easy to smile in the face of the things we find distasteful. It might become easier to smile at others, to forget past actions we deem unforgivable, and to simply sacrifice our need to be right. What is so special about the magic choice to sacrifice the criticism, the complaining? Why let go of fear and sadness? Why sacrifice our chance to speak when others need to be heard? Why gently release our loved ones when they

must leave us? Why, in the face of our own pain, show kindness and surrender? Have you got an answer?

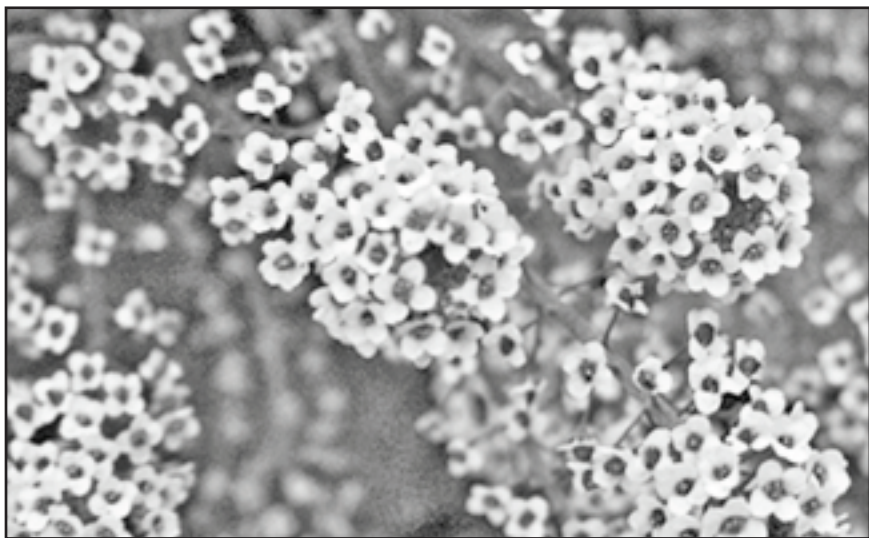
Your answer is the value of sacrifice for you.

Life seems a perpetual series of fine lines. We are always asked to walk the line, the path, even while forces seek to push and pull us either way. Today a sport known as “slack lining” has gone viral. People walk on a slacking line similar to a tight rope. Those folks are physically walking the line that every human being must walk symbolically. The elemental forces of wind and sun, as well as their emotions and thoughts continually affect their walk. It is a virtual expression of the line we each walk every minute of every day.

In the face of constant buffeting our sacrifices hold us strong on our path. Like a shining beacon of light they serve us; they help us clarify our intentions, our motives, and our heart strength.

I envision humanity holding hands, a chain of souls walking those fine lines together. It’s not so hard then. Will we take the hands of our fellow travelers and sacrifice our need to walk alone?

— *Anne R. Dunbar*



Allysium Flowers. Photo by Anne R. Dunbar



Coastal Hills.. Photo by Anne R. Dunbar

CHRISTMAS

THOU, O Son of God, the Christ Child, Who radiates
Light from Thy throne:

Thou, O builder of worlds, Who sendest forth that inner
energy of love and compassion that man may find his way
back to Thee through the maze and entanglement of his
lower creations:

Awaken man's heart that Thy Christly forces may enter
the dark places and bring hope, encouragement and peace;
that Thy children may hear the song of the New Day now
faintly dawning amidst the world's confusion.

Purify the hearts filled with hatred, envy, distrust and
jealousy, so that at this hour of the Christ's Day they may
hear, feel and heed the words,

“PEACE ON EARTH, GOOD WILL TOWARD MEN!”

— *From The Mountain Top*
volume 2, p. 46

TEMPLE ACTIVITIES AND NOTICES

Temple Groups: There are Temple groups in New York City; London, England; and in Moscow and St. Petersburg, Russia; as well as several locations in Germany. Anyone wishing more information about these groups can call the Temple office in Halcyon.

The William Quan Judge Library serves Temple members, residents of Halcyon, and friends with an interest in Theosophy or who are doing research involving some of our special collections. Our library is staffed by volunteers. Hours are Tuesdays, 9:30-11:30am. Other hours are by appointment through the Temple office.

The University Center Gallery is now showing *Vignettes from the Past*, featuring art and furniture from our community's rich history. Call the Temple office at 805.489.2822 for information.

The Temple Healing Service is held at Noon each day in the Temple. All are welcome to attend.

Sunday Services are held at 10:30am in the Temple. The *Feast of Fulfillment*, the Communion Service of the Temple, is celebrated on the first Sunday of each month. *Enter the Silence*, a prayer and meditation meeting, is held the last Sunday of the month. Speakers present programs on other Sundays. The public is cordially invited to all services.

Study Classes under the auspices of Temple Officers and various Temple Orders are held regularly at 5:30pm in the University Center on Tuesdays and Fridays. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Speakers in the Sunday Services were:

October 12, Eleanor L. Shumway: *Let's Keep Things in Perspective in 2014*; October 19, Nashoma Carlson: *Aids to Study*; November 9, Eleanor Shumway: *A Challenge*; November 16, Margaret Thyrring: *Margaret's Journey*; November 23, Special Program *Growing Up in Halcyon 1940's, 50's, and 60's*: papers by Susie Clark; Mona Lee Kelly read by Barbara Reed; Carl Carlberg read by Perry Pederson; Richard Lentz read by Chris Thyrring.

Information about the Temple, past issues of *The Temple Artisan*, recent talks, and other resources can be found on the Temple web site:

www.templeofthepeople.org

The Temple of the People

PO Box 7100 • Halcyon, California 93421-7100

Tel: 805.489.2822 • Fax: 805.481.9446 • ginc@templeofthepeople.org