

A LARGER VIEW

*A Commentary On How Current Events Reflect—
Or Not—Our Spiritual Search*

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*The pieces are reposted from some of the entries in The Inner Compass blog
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The Care of Illegal Immigrants

Whether or not to provide medical services to illegal immigrants has become a contentious political issue. But underneath isn't it more than politics? Some may say it's one of social justice, and it is that. But couldn't it be an issue even more fundamental? Could it be a matter of compassion, or as some might prefer to call it love or even charity? If so, what would compassion/love/charity direct us to do if a pregnant mother from Mexico here without papers was in labor and had a problem delivery? Would it direct us to let her or the baby die? Would it guide us to give care to a young worker who looked he might have swine flu? How about an elderly person here for years whose illegal status managed to be undetected and who suddenly shows signs of a heart attack, how would compassion suggest we act, what course would it map out for us?

A Role For Science

The new Hubble telescope has been sending awe inspiring pictures of space. Space is turbulent, complex, colorful, powerful, reminiscent of the bottom of the deepest oceans and yet vaster, more mysterious, more intricate inviting us to do more than gape or wonder. Pictures of space propel us to ask those questions for which there are yet no answers. Are we alone in the universe? Who are humans in this immense scheme? How do we and the planet really fit in? On an even deeper level those pictures so vivid, so compelling prompt us to ponder our relationship to our ultimate source, whether that source is called god or something else. And when we have pondered it all a while, some, like me perhaps, will be left with the notion that science is so often god's best friend.

The Power of Small Steps

There's a new campaign in rural India, "No loo? No, 'I do'." Young women and their mothers are insisting that a potential groom have a toilet or there will be no wedding. Getting people to have toilets has been an uphill battle and recent efforts have failed. Now that the campaign has reached the radio as well as TV serials, it is beginning to make an impact. One reason is due to the abortion of female fetuses. Though illegal, girls are seen as a drain since eventually they will need dowries. The result is there is now more male than females and many young women are feeling empowered. Add to that the experience of those women who have access to toilets. They no longer have to get up early to go relieve themselves in open fields, or use public toilets. The in house toilets, by being more sanitary, also prevent many chronic urinary tract and other infections. We think of progress as something having large impact, like computers or the automobile. But often progress is in the nitty-gritty of small things which make a large difference, its minutia being all the more inspiring and powerful.

From Luxury to Need

Across from the entrance of the old MGM, now Sony Studios, in Culver City, CA there's a gourmet tea and coffee shop. The Assam tea sells for several dollars an ounce and the coffee, which is not any cheaper, is roasted on the premises and sold no later than 10 days later. Most of it is sold much sooner. On the day I was there a batch was almost gone and had been roasted only four hours prior. The aroma was of course beguiling and in many ways symbolic of the luxury inherent in high quality teas and coffees. When I came home I did my usual reading of this and that paper and periodicals. A newsletter written by the World Bank caught my attention. Amnesty International issued an emergency alert for Sierra Leone where one in eight women risks dying during pregnancy or childbirth. It is a country where there are 78 doctors for 5.8 million people. How unreal luxuries must seem when basic necessities aren't within reach. We live with the world's inequalities, often forgetting or taking them for granted. Still they exist and it remains our task to lessen them.

What War Means?

Eric Holder, the U.S Attorney General has appointed John Durham as special prosecutor to look into the facts of the recently released 259 pages of CIA memos and reports on interrogation and torture. He is to decide whether certain individuals will be indicted for having authorized and/or conducted torture. An administration putting itself in a position to condemn a previous one is no light matter. No matter what Durham decides the issue is so fraught with politics that it will be used and seen in political terms. But there is a question underlying this kind of inquiry, one that is philosophical, ethical and spiritual, that goes beyond and above politics: that is what does war mean and what does it make us do? And if war makes us do horrible things, must we do them? It may not be a new question, but it is a necessary one. As such the inquiry, no matter what else it does, reveals our struggle with the consequences of war. That makes it as important as it is essential.

Reaction to Gratitude

For years now when people ask how I am, I answer, “grateful.” For years I have received a number of what I call cold shoulder responses. Today was no different. I was at the cleaners and the young woman at the counter asked rather automatically as she readied to take my clothes, “How are you today?” As usual, I said, “Grateful.” She went on asking for my name as if I had said nothing. Her face was impassive. Was she that concentrated on her work? It occurred to me maybe she felt she had nothing to be grateful about. Many do, without verbalizing it. Perhaps she was indignant thinking how dare she come in here grateful, she’s not the one who has to toil with dirty clothes for little pay. Then again she might have been tired, not paying attention the way she glossed over details which kept her from coping. I don’t know why she gave my “grateful” the cold shoulder but I walked away feeling she needed someone like me reminding her that gratitude is a powerful sentiment.

Website of Interest? www.whocanissue.com

There’s a new lawyer’s referral service based in Boca Raton, Fla and serving several states called whocanissue.com. There are many such services, and they can be quite useful when one needs a lawyer and doesn’t know where to turn. And yet there’s something about this one that is cause for concern, or at the very least thought. Does its name declare its intent? Is its name designed to appeal to a suing-hungry public, people who

hope that through a lawsuit or the possible ensuing settlement they will be that much richer? In the context of finding a lawyer, the name evokes the notion that what is legal and what is right do not always coincide. As such it makes one wonder whether the thrust behind this web site is to generate lawsuits or to pursue justice?

To Ponder On

“We must not allow the clock and the calendar to blind us to the fact that each moment of life is a miracle and mystery.”

H. G. Wells

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