



Living in the Balance

April 2015

I struggle with the word “forgiveness.” I confess I’ve held some grudges through several decades and I’m still waiting for a couple of people to come back from the grave and say, “Gosh....I get it now....I am so sorry....can you ever forgive me?” And while I haven’t committed any murders, I’m guilty of acting unconsciously and sometimes with malice and forethought and struggled in the 3:00 a.m. dark to forgive myself as I whisper for others to forgive me.

Yes, I know the red lined verses where Jesus says to forgive seventy times seven or let he who is without sin cast the first stone, but I’m totally bumfuzzled by people on the nightly news who say they have forgiven the drunk driver who just killed their child. Pass me a rock, please.

And I’ve gone to plenty of rock throwings slinging everything from pebbles to the big as I can heave ho! Vengeance is mine says the Lord, but if you need any help with the judgment thing....I’m your girl.

And here is where the middle of the night light came on; I realized that for me forgiveness was all tangled up with the word “judgment.” Somehow forgiving included judging that “you” were a jerk....nut job...abuser... unconscious... stupid.....on and on... and maybe in reality “you” are, but in “forgiving” does that somehow stand me on higher ground? Make me “better”...more conscious...nobler? I found that donning that robe of judgment sunk me low into a pit of despair, anger and resentment. True forgiveness cannot be married to my being prosecutor, jury and executioner or come from some holier than thou pedestal.

All this “other focused” grudge holding, anger, hurt, and resentment had captured me with a spiny grip and I was hanging on to your transgressions like a smoker with the very last cigarette wedged in her fingers. And then there was the whole...if, if, if, I *forgive* you we will **have** to be all kumbaya together. I just couldn’t go there either. I was at an impasse. I needed a new word.

So I slept on. And literally in the middle of the night in my half sleep came the word and the word was RELEASE. In that liminal space I knew I had to release *me*.

Now this may seem like a huge “duh” experience, but for me...epiphany. I could only free myself from the hurt, pain, anger that someone else had caused me by unhooking “me” and letting “you” go. Not in that skipping away Scott free, letting you off the hook way....but in my withdrawing my gerbil wheel, going nowhere energy from the situation and heeding Ann Lamott’s advice to “take my hands off your throat.”

And I know in my core that compassion has to be part of the releasing. Compassion means to “suffer with” and the first person I have to suffer with is me. Exploring my own inner landscape....walking around in the rubble....picking through the debris....has to come first. And I can’t do any soul work while I’m shackled to the thoughts, words or deeds of someone else. Release. Turn loose. Breathe.

By divorcing judgment from forgiveness, I have a shot at unhooking...releasing seventy times seven... not casting stones.....leaving the dead buried. And I hope that others I have harmed will find grace to release themselves from me and my transgressions....both the ones I know and the ones I don’t. And that we...each and all...can find Grace and Compassion to make peace with our shadows and release the ghosts that haunt us in the night.

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Calendar considerations.....

Southern Dharma Center

In Nature, Our True Nature, April 8 – 12
A Heart's Awakening, April 16 – 19
Awareness Now, April 22 – 26
Aging and Awakening – April 30 – May 3
A Marriage of Yoga and Meditation, May 12 – 17
Beginner's Mind for Everyone, May 22 – 25
For more information www.southerndharma.org

The Anchorage in Greenville, SC

Spring Quiet Day: Merton's Quiet Place Within, Thursday, April 9 from 9:30 until 3:30
Mepkin Abbey Directed Retreats offered in April and July
For more information: <http://www.theanchorage.org/>

The Sophia Institute, Charleston, SC

Engaging Wholeheartedly as Women Leaders with Margaret Wheatley, May 8 and 9
The Endless Practice: Becoming Who You Were Born to Be with Mark Nepo, May 15, 16 and 17
www.thesophiainstitute.org

Valle Crucis Conference Center

Sighs Too Deep for Words: A Right Brain Theology, Friday, April 24
Women Writer's Workshop 1, May 21 – 24
Men's Work: A Journey to Discovering your True Self, June 12 – 14
Women Writer's Workshop 2, August 20 – 24

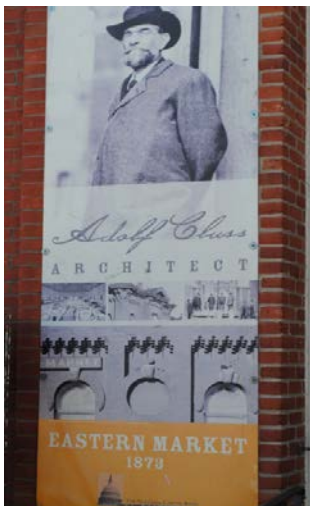
Montreat Retreat Center

Praying with Julian of Norwich
A Columbia Theological Seminary Spiritual Formation Program
April 23 – 26
www.montreat.org

The Haden Institute

Summer Dream Conference and Spirituality Conference
May 24 – 29
www.hadeninstitute.com





Calendar considerations.....

Intensive Centering Prayer Retreat

Eight Day Intensive and Post Intensive, May 31 – June 6
Eight Day Intensive and Post Intensive, August 2 – 9
St. Mary's Retreat Center, Sewanee, Tennessee
<https://copnc.org>

Women's Retreat with Dr. Lauren Winner

September 17 – 19
Lake Junaluska Conference Center, North Carolina
http://www.lakejunaluska.com/events/spiritual_enrichment/signature_series/

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr's Unfinished Agenda

Intergenerational "teach-in." Speakers include Leonard Pitts, Yvette Flunder, and Bishop Vashti McKenzie.
August 21 – 23
Montreat Retreat Center, Montreat, NC
<http://www.montreat.org/MLK/>

Kanuga Conference Center

Enneagram Conference, October 4–7
Lansing Lee Conference October 18 – 20 featuring keynotes
Rev. Dr. George Carey and Rev. Canon John Petersen
Icon Writing November 15 –21
www.kanuga.org

Abbey of the Arts

Offering a number of on-line self-paced courses.
<http://abbeyofthearts.com/classes/self-study-online-classes/>

*May we have the courage today
To live the life we would love,
To postpone our dreams no longer
But do at last what we came here for
And waste our heart on fear no more...*

John O'Donohue





About Spiritual Direction —

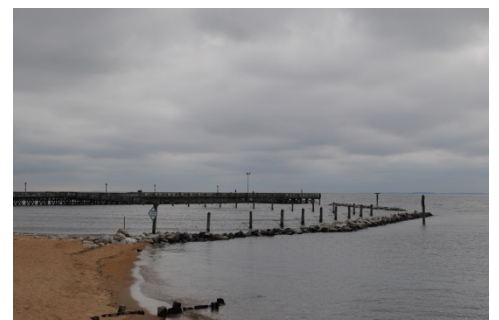
- Offers a space and time for you to explore, reflect upon, and deepen your relationship with God.
- Provides a haven from the daily busyness of the outer world and opens a time to be still and to reflect on your inner journey.
- Is a companioning relationship grounded in dialogue and discernment.
- Explores ways you may integrate spirituality into your daily life.
- Is not limited to any one spiritual practice or tradition.
- May involve one or two meetings or multiple meetings over time.

You may wish to consider spiritual companioning if you are —

- Longing for a deeper relationship with the Divine
- Looking for a place to dialogue about spiritual questions
- Seeking ways to connect with the Spirit in a more intentional way
- Discerning ways to live in a more integrated and whole way
- Standing at a crossroads in your life
- Exploring new or fresh ways to be in relationship with God

For more information about Spiritual Direction, please feel free to contact me by phone
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*The photos are my work. The photo on the opening page was taken in the Four Corners.
The others were taken in Washington, D.C., Baltimore and Annapolis.*