



Living in the Balance

December 2014

WINTER APPLE

Let the apple ripen on the branch
beyond your need to take it down.

Let the coolness of autumn
and the breathing, blowing wind
test its adherence to endurance,
let the others fall.

Wait longer than you would,
go against yourself, find the pale
nobility of quiet that ripening
demands, watch with patience
as the silhouette emerges and the
leaves fall, see it become a solitary
roundness against a greying sky,
let winter come and the first frost
threaten, and then wake one morning
to see the breath of winter
has haloed its redness with light.

So that a full two months
after you should have
taken the apple down,
you hold it in your closed hand
at last and bite into the cool
sweetness spread evenly
through every single atom
of a pale and yielding
structure, so that you taste
on that cold, grey day,
not only the after reward
of a patience remembered,
not only the summer sunlight
of a postponed perfection,
but the sweet, inward stillness
of the wait itself.

- David Whyte

Reflection on Winter Apple

I was introduced to this poem this fall on a retreat at Mepkin Abbey's Institute for Contemplative Aging where we experienced a variety of contemplative practices, each one giving us opportunities to develop practices that enable us to experience God. At the end of the weekend each of us was given the opportunity to be anointed as an elder. This anointing was a deeply transformative experience as we took on this deep second half of life calling.

Who is an elder? Does passing into grandparenthood qualify you? How about when a young person stands up on the tram to offer you their seat? Or when the bones creak with more frequency and aches are common? For me the slow passage into this chapter of my life has come about through learning to let go, let be, and let God be in charge. This has required a whole new operating system update and the battle to ever understand how to operate with this new "app" or perspective. Slowly though, primarily through silence and contemplative prayer, the rewiring is taking root. It is no longer about leading but encouraging; listening deeply versus speaking; working at being present and grateful for each day, my communities, the beauty of nature and ultimately..... letting go. Letting go to God's eternal presence and letting go of control of the outcome.

Leslie Flynn



Calendar considerations.....

Contemplative Outreach of Piedmont NC

Intensive Centering Prayer Retreat
St. Mary's Retreat Center, Sewanee, TN
January 4 – January 11, 2015
For more information on all events, <http://copnc.org/>

Fr. Thomas Keating and Cynthia Bourgeault On-line Advent Courses

Offered by **Spirituality and Practice**
Begins November 28
<http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/ecourses>

Anderson School of Theology for Laypersons

Barbara Brown Taylor
Sunday, February 22, 2015
Speaking at 3:00 and at 7:00 p.m. Two different lectures
For more information <http://astlonline.org>

Southern Dharma Retreats, Hot Springs, North Carolina

New Year's Retreat
December 27 – January 3
For more information about retreats and the schedule
<http://www.southerndharma.org>

On-line retreats with Abbey of the Arts

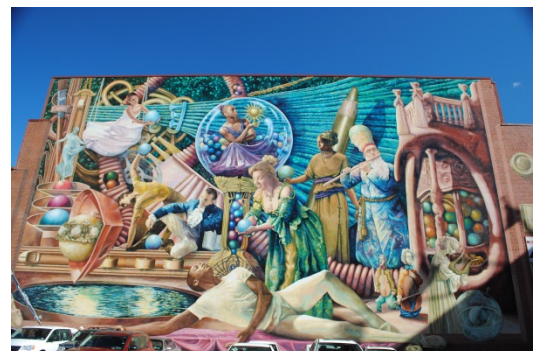
Birthing the Holy: Advent and Christmas Retreat with Monks, Mystics, and Archetypes
November 30 – January 15

Illuminating the Way: Epiphany and New Year Retreat with Monks, Mystics and Archetypes
January 4 – February 7, 2015

Many other on-line courses including the arts and photography.
<http://abbeyofthearts.com/classes/online-classes/>

Iconography: The Gospel in Line and Color

February 21 – 27
Kanuga Retreat Center, Hendersonville, NC
www.kanuga.org





Calendar considerations.....

Offerings by The Anchorage in Greenville, SC
Making Room in the Inn: Advent Retreat, Thursday, December 4 from 7-9 p.m.
Beach Retreat, Praying with the Holy Spirit, January 23 – 25
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/>

Oprah continues her Super Soul Sundays

Many great guests.....Pema Chodron, Marianne Williamson, Barbara Brown Taylor, Sue Monk Kidd, Elizabeth Lesser, Paulo Coelho....you can watch these on line.
<http://www.oprah.com/app/super-soul-sunday.html>

And some thoughts from Pierre Teilhard de Chardin which speak to me of waiting....Advent....winter...

*“Above all, trust in the slow work of God.
We are quite naturally impatient in everything
to reach the end without delay.
We should like to skip the intermediate stages.
We are impatient of being on the way to something
unknown, something new.
And yet it is the law of all progress
that it is made by passing through
some stages of instability—
and that it may take a very long time.*

*And so I think it is with you;
your ideas mature gradually—let them grow,
let them shape themselves, without undue haste.
Don't try to force them on,
as though you could be today what time
(that is to say, grace and circumstances
acting on your own good will)
will make of you tomorrow.*

*Only God could say what this new spirit
gradually forming within you will be.
Give Our Lord the benefit of believing
that his hand is leading you,
and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself
in suspense and incomplete.”*





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 opening page photo apples were taken at Sky Top Orchard. The other photos are from Philadelphia. The city is filled with these amazing murals that are painted on buildings and walls throughout the city.

