



Living in the Balance

July 2012

At the pool, my husband....their Uncle Rex.....and my brother....their grandfather Pop Pop....become sharks at the command of my nine and ten-year-old great nieces. And they transform into mermaids.

Two weeks have passed, and the joy of this day lingers.

"We have the power to stop you, sharks! We have mermaid power. And mermaids can do almost anything in the sea! We can stop the waves or churn them up! Watch out, sharks. You cannot overcome our powers!" In addition to mermaid power, my nieces also christen themselves with new Mermaid names. "We are Ricci (aka Madison) and Emma (aka Kaci)!" They proclaim.

After conquering the sharks at the pool, they sprint to our shower together. "Yes, Uncle Rex, make the jets steam" and "Wow....what do these sprayers do?" When Granna (my sister-in-law) checks on them, we hear squeals of laughter. And as they emerge they proudly report, "We tried all the sprayers and turned all the dials and, Aunt Wanda, one time everything came out cold!"

Kaci and Madison dismiss the offer of a hairdryer sniffing, "we prefer our hair to dry naturally." But they are not too old for art, and I have transformed the dining room into an art space. The late afternoon sun pours through the shutters. I have spread magic markers, paper, scissors, glue, stickers, clay, masks, and paper bags across the craft paper. I tell them, "You have an hour before dinner to make whatever you want." The unadorned black and white masks capture their attention first, and they decorate them quickly with stickers. Donning their masks, they set to work. Madison calls to me in the kitchen, "This glue stick doesn't work good, Aunt Wanda. We need scotch tape and a stapler, please." A pile of magazines did not draw their attention. Magic markers spilled across the table along with paper scraps. "Blue is best, I think. Do you have the red? I need red for this part." I peek in and they are both hovering over their work. "Don't look, Aunt Wanda, these are surprises!" Kaci chides me. "You'll see later after dinner!"

As dinner draws closer, the art supplies go up, and the girls carry plates and utensils in and out to their former shark now turned grill-chef Uncle Rex. "He needs a clean plate, please." "I don't like potato salad, but I love macaroni." "I can only eat corn cut off the cob because of my braces." "I want cheese on my hamburger." "No cheese for me! Only catsup!" "I can eat a couple of green beans, but no more." "Oh, I love brownies! Yeah!" "Why can't we put our feet in the garden pond, Aunt Wanda? The birds drink there!" "They also poop there," I reply. "Uuuuuuggggg," they chorus.

At dinner, the girls give us a detailed report of the meeting of the mermaids and the sharks. "And you'll see the surprise we've planned when we get to the living room! But first it's BROWNIES!"

Madison and Kaci usher us to our seats in the living room and announce, "We're presenting a puppet show! So if you need to go to the bathroom now would be a good time as it will be several minutes before the show actually starts. And if you do go to the bathroom, don't look behind the sofa!"

My great nieces turned puppeteers begin the show having transformed the paper bags into an array of characters complete with costumes, eyes, hair, and mouths. Their little hands squish the bottoms of the bags making the folds move up and down revealing crayoned lips and tongues. The dialogue between the characters dissolves into a gaggle of giggles. The puppeteers appear only to change the paper moon to a paper sun so we'll know day from night. In the end, they surrender to silliness and tell us that the play ended well. They take their bows to an enthusiastic crowd.

Thank you creations are presented to everyone in the audience. "Here's a mask for you, Granna" and "Pop Pop, here's a glue stick so you can keep it all together." "Uncle Rex, here's a design I made. It can be whatever you like, since I'm not sure what it is myself." "And here's a blue butterfly for you, Aunt Wanda....for cooking for us...especially the brownies."

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Calendar considerations.....

The Sophia Institute

The Second Half of Life: Opening the Eight Gates of Wisdom, July 6 – 8
A Time of Awakening: Mindfulness Training and Heart Callings, July 23 – 26
Beauty, Eros and Wisdom, August 3
Charleston, South Carolina
www.thesophiainstitute.org

Southern Dharma Retreats, Hot Springs, North Carolina

Insight Dialogue and Metta: Opening to Life as It Is, July 6 – 11
Vipassana and Diversity: Courage to Love, July 17 – 22
Mindfulness: The Path to Freedom, July 26 – 29
Gateway to the Profound Mind of Enlightenment, August 2 -5
The Nature of Awareness: Insight Meditation for Experienced Meditators, August 10 - 17
For more information contact Carol Meyer at southerndharma@earthlink.net

Spirituality and Practice

Two e-courses coming up....
Ways to Pray from Around the World, July 9 – August 16
Practicing Spirituality With Thomas Merton, July 9 – August 17
www.spiritualityandpractice.com

The Asheville Jung Center offers CEU's and online courses and programs.

For more information go to <http://ashevillejungcenter.org>

Anderson School of Theology for Laypersons

John Selby Spong – Saturday, August 4, at 3:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.
Dr. James Carroll – Sunday, September 30, at 3:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.
ASTL Pre-Lecture Symposium: The Future of Progressive Theology – Saturday, September 29
Dr. Carroll will be presenting a lecture on Saturday morning as part of this symposium. More details to come.
For more information www.astlonline.org

Machu Picchu and Peru's Sacred Valley – A Pilgrimage

August 8 – 20, 2012

Offered by Jerry Wright, Jungian analyst, and Diana McKendree, Jungian psychotherapist.

The pilgrimage will include Peruvian teachers and guides.

For more information, contact Jerry Wright at jwright@morrisbb.net or call 770-656-3818

Abbey of the Arts

On-line courses for the fall....

Women at the Threshold: The Wild Heart Longing – dates to be announced

Way of the Monk, Path of the Artist, September 3 – November 25

Live It to Give It: Soul Nourishment and Self Care – dates to be announced.

For more information <http://abbeyofthearts.com>





Calendar considerations.....

Welcoming Prayer Retreat

October 5 – 7

St. Francis Springs Prayer Center, Stoneville, NC

For more information 222.4thdayjourney.org

Rabbi Rami Shapiro

“Biblical Wisdom for Post-Biblical Times: Learning to Read the Bible like a Mystic”

October 12 – 14

The Episcopal Convent of Saint Helena, Augusta, Georgia

For more information <http://www.osh.org>

(Rabbi Shapiro writes a monthly column for Spirituality and Health Magazine and is the author of numerous books.)

Lansing Lee Conference with Eric Metaxas

October 28 – 30

Kanuga, Hendersonville SC

For more information www.kanuga.org

2012 Lake Junaluska Peace Conference, Love in Action: The Transformative Power of Nonviolence

November 8 – 11, 2012

2011 Nobel Peace Prize winner, Ms. Leymah Gbowee will headline the conference.

www.lakejunaluska.com

Advanced Centering Prayer Retreat

Becky Hannah, facilitating

Sunday, November 25 – Sunday, December 2

Valle Crucis Retreat Center, Valle Crucis, NC

www.highsouth.com/vallecrucis

Looking into 2013!

Transforming Trauma: Contemplative Approaches to Spiritual Healing, Friday, April 12, 9:30 – 12:30 p.m.

Led by James Finley at St. Michael Archangel Catholic Church, Cary, NC

Through the Narrow Gate, a silent retreat led by James Finley who will let the mystic teachings from Christianity, Buddhism and other traditions be the guides.

Friday, April 12 at 5:00 p.m. until Sunday, April 14 at noon.

St. Francis Springs Prayer Center, Stoneville, NC.

<http://jamesfinleynorthcarolina.org>

A friend has just returned from a retreat at **Well of Mercy** in Hamptonville, NC (north of Statesville and west of Winston-Salem)

A ministry of the Sisters of Mercy, the retreat center offers space for individuals to retreat and renew.

www.wellofmercy.org





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 —

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- 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 on the opening page were taken by my nephew of his butterfly daughter, Kaci, and by my niece of her disguised daughter, Madison.....aka the mermaids and puppeteers. The other photos are my work and were taken in Seattle in the area where the World's Fair was held.

