

Retrieving the Sacred 7-25-08

The most fundamental dimension of shamanism is the intentional relationship with the Sacred. Some kind of spiritual practice is necessary, and it is in the experiences and expressions of worship, prayer, giving thanks, and being of service that we connect with the Divine. It is part of our nature. There is what Jung called a ‘religious instinct’ and we are not whole without giving it room to express itself. “Worship”, the philosopher Whitehead said, is “evoked by” the one who is worshiped.

We can always find the Sacred at the heart of things, at the heart of any situation or life process because it is always present there, in the heart of each creature, and in our own hearts. It is our orienting axis (axis mundi). To be without connection to it is to be without connection to our center and core of aliveness. It is to be without purpose, depth of satisfaction, and the sense of a meaningful life. Such a life has no inward unity but is dispersed, our energies scattered amongst the 10,000 things [distractions], as the Chinese sages call it.

One of the first tasks of a shamanic healer or shamanic psychotherapist is to help put the patient back in touch with the Divine Spirit—opening or re-opening the heart. It is the root of the shamanic vision quest.

No soul healing is complete if the relation to the Divine Spirit is neglected. Connection to the Spirit is what life in the world is about. If we miss that, we miss life’s meaning and purpose. A soul without that is cut-off from the very source.

A life that manifests ultimate purpose is soul-full, and has energy, joy, direction and thrust.

Who or what is in the driver’s seat of your life?

You? Your therapist/ the opinions of others? God?

To drive means to direct, take control

What are you driven by? What has taken control of your life?

Guilt? Avoidance of fear? Judgment? Anger and Blame? Hope? Love?

Are you seeking approval and acceptance?

Jesus said “No one can serve two masters.”

Either you are letting Spirit do its work in your life or you are letting someone or something else drive you.

We are made for a purpose. To manifest Spirit in the world, to actualize divinity in our lives, right here in the field of space and time, right here on this earth, in our neighborhoods, in all our relationships. The experience of being fully alive in the world, and promoting fullness of life in others, human and non human, is the root of a purposeful life.

Knowing your purpose in life clarifies and simplifies your life, letting you know where you are headed, and where you are not going. It helps define what you will not do as well as what you will do. It gives you a standard by which to evaluate your ideas, impulses, and choices. You are better positioned to tell which activities are essential and which are not.

Knowing who you are, why you are here, and what you are to ultimately do here greatly focuses your way of living. A focused life is a potent life.

What is your view of life? What is your view of your place in it? By what metaphor or myth or directive image are you living? This is what a Vision Quest tries to help you clarify.

We are each here to enjoy life and help others enjoy life. This is one way of saying we are here to make a contribution. To give, not just receive. We are each, as Whitehead said, something for ourselves and something for others.

We are created to give as well as receive...there must be reciprocity. We aren't just here to get the most out of life, as many self-help and achieving your goals books suggest. We are here to give, to be of service, to add to the earthly life, not just take. This is how enduring joy and fullness of life arises. It can never come through riches and the good life you have created for yourself, or are trying to create.

There can be no final meaning to life where we are not giving and being of service. We must transcend ego-centricity.

We each come into the world with gifts given to us by the Divine Spirit. These gifts are to be used not only to delight ourselves, but to be of service. One purpose of a Vision quest is to clear a space in which you can notice your natural inclinations, loves, and gifts—these things which bring you joy, beautify, satisfaction, and make life feel worthwhile. Noticing these things, you can also inquire into your proper relationship with them. If the Spirit is gifting you with them, what does the Spirit want you to do with them? How does it want you to use them?

There's an old 8th century Gael poem that became a hymn: "Be Thou my vision O Lord of My Heart, naught be all else to me, save that Thou art. Thou my best thought, by day or by night, Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light."

The very things your heart loves and is drawn toward (predilections) are exactly those things given you to use in service of.... Where do such things come from? You don't create them, you find yourself being drawn towards something, or you find yourself loving to sing, or care for students, or your community, or about what is going on at the local landfill. They are gifts of the Spirit arising in your heart—You are the one who feels them, responds to them, acts on them, or fails to honor them but you do not create them. They just come, They are gifts. Your job is to notice them, receive them, enjoy them, and share them, put them to use in service of...

Whenever you serve another creature, you are serving God, and fulfilling your life- purpose. You fulfill your calling in life by putting your gifts into service, in helping others.

The Spirit has given us gifts not for serve-us, but for service. Each ability, talent, gift, and predilection (being drawn towards something) you have is intended to be personally enjoyed and also shared, given away, put to use for others.... To simply enjoy it and not express or share it with others is only doing half the job. Paradoxically enjoyment deepens as soon as it is selflessly given away. We must each be something for ourselves and something for others and neither half of this equation must be lost sight of.

If we know how to listen to the heart, to its inner promptings through the NGS, we can find out how exactly the Spirit wants us to use our gifts. One sure way to know you are serving the Divine Spirit is that you come alive and feel yourself tapping a deep wellspring of energy, and you experience passion...because you are doing something you love to do. This has the felt-quality of 'following your bliss' as Joseph Campbell famously put it, and when you do that kind of following of the inspirations that arise in the heart, doors open for you. Synchronicities that make your living and serving effective come into place sometimes effortlessly, because you are 'on the beam.' You are doing what the Spirit is directing you to do, through your loving.

Mikkal