

A World Moving Beyond Borders

Truth-telling, wind-blowing, life-giving Spirit –
We present ourselves now
For our instruction and guidance;
Breathe your truth among us,
Breathe your truth of deep Friday loss,
Your truth of awesome Sunday joy.

Breathe your story of death and life
That our story may be submitted to our will for life.
We pray in the name of Jesus risen to new life –
And him crucified.¹

Show me a new face of God!

“I swim to the shore, only to find you have enlarged the sea. Then you strengthen my muscles so that I swim again to you.” [Hildegarde of Bingen]

Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads!
Whom do you worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shut? Open your eyes and see your God is not before you!
God is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground
and where the pathmaker is breaking stones.
God is with them in sun and in shower,
and his garment is covered with dust.
Put of your holy mantle and even like her come down on the dusty soil!

Deliverance? Where is this deliverance to be found?
Our master himself has joyfully taken upon him the bonds of creation;
God is bound with us all for ever.
Come out of your meditations and leave aside your flowers and incense!
What harm is there if your clothes become tattered and stained?
Meet God and stand by the Divine in toil and in sweat of your brow.²

Tolkien's book, Lord of the Rings.

Frodo glanced around at all the faces. Still no one spoke. They all sat with eyes downcast. An overwhelming longing to rest and remain at peace in Rivendell filled his heart. At last with an effort he spoke, and wondered to hear his own words, as if some

I want to say something about Charism and where it springs from, and how we allow it to guide us in a world that is unrecognizable from the one we grew up in.

¹ Walter Brueggemann, *Prayers for a Privileged People*

² Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali*

other was using his small voice. 'I will take the ring and go', he said, 'though I do not know the way.'

All our Founders and Foundresses can be numbered among this group. They feel the call and answer it from deep within, not even stopping to count the cost.

“When the wild ducks or the wild geese migrate in their season, a strange tide rises in the territories over which they sweep. As if magnetized by the great triangular flight, the barnyard fowl leap a foot or two into the air and try to fly.... All the ducks on the farm are transformed for an instant into migrant birds, and into these hard little heads, till now filled with humble images of pools and worms and barnyards, there swims a sense of continental expanse, of the breath of seas and the salt taste of the ocean wind. The duck totters to right and left in its wire enclosure, gripped by a sudden passion to perform the impossible and a sudden love whose object is a mystery.

Even so are we overwhelmed by a mysterious presentiment of truth, but we can never put a name to this sovereign truth... The call that stirred you must torment all of us. Whether we dub it sacrifice or poetry or adventure, it is always the same voice that calls. But domestic security has succeeded in crushing out that part of us that is capable of heeding the call. We scarcely quiver; we beat our wings once or twice and then fall back into our barnyard. We are prudent people. We are afraid to let go of our petty reality in order to grasp at the great shadow.... There is a day of the year when the eels must go to the Sargasso Sea, and come what may, no one can prevent them. On that day they spit on their ease, their tranquillity, their tepid waters. Off they go over their ploughed fields, pricked by the hedges and skinned by the stones, in search of the river that leads to the abyss.”³

Come the Time

*There comes the time for each of us
to break out of who we have become
our life a chrysalis
inside now cramped for meaning
and restless for the more.
dare we let go the known or cling on for dear life?
Comes the time
we pass a point of no return
with memories erupting from our core
life straining to open wide, its new wings in us
our struggle to resist*

³ Antoine de Saint-Exupery, *Wind, Sand and Stars*

a betrayal of that deafening inner cry to fly.....

*Ahead -
a way untried
known deep inside
with trust our only guide⁴*

"We are always torn between the wish to regress to the womb and the wish to be fully born. Every act of birth requires the courage to let go of something, to let go of the womb, to let go of the breast, to let go of the lap, to let go of the hand, to let go eventually of all certainties, and to rely only upon one thing: one's own creativity. To be creative means to consider the whole process of birth, and not to take any stage as a final stage. Most people die before they are fully born. Creativeness means to be born before one dies."⁵ Erich Fromm, *Creativity and Its Cultivation*

Blowing through heaven and earth, and in our hearts and the heart of every living thing, is a gigantic breath-a great Cry-which we call God. Plant life wished to continue its motionless sleep next to stagnant waters, but the Cry leaped up within it and violently shook its roots: "Away, let go of the earth, walk!" Had the tree been able to think and judge, it would have cried, "I don't want to. What are you urging me to do? YOU are demanding the impossible. But the Cry, without pity, kept shaking its roots and shouting, "Away, let go of the earth, walk!"

It shouted in this way for thousands of eons; and lo! as a result of desire and struggle, life escaped the motionless tree and was liberated.

Animals appeared-worms-making themselves at home in water and mud. "We're just fine here," they said. "We have peace and security; we're not budging!"

But the terrible Cry hammered itself pitilessly into their loins. "Leave the mud, stand up, give birth to your betters ! "

"We don't want to! We can't!"

"You can't, but I can. Stand up!"

And lo! after thousands of eons, man emerged, trembling on his still unsolid legs.

The human being is a centaur; his equine hoofs are planted in the ground, but his body from breast to head is worked on and tormented by the merciless Cry. He has been fighting, again for thousands of eons, to draw himself, like a sword, out of his animalistic scabbard. He is also fighting-this is his new struggle-to draw himself out of his human scabbard. Man calls in despair, "Where can I go? I have reached the pinnacle, beyond is the abyss." And the Cry answers, "I am beyond. Stand up!"⁶

⁴ Noel Davis

⁵ Erich Fromm, *Creativity and its Cultivation*

⁶ Nikos Kazantzakis, *Report to Greco*

What is this thing we call 'charism'? I do not believe that we possess 'charism' as if it is something we own. A Founder's charism is built around the prophetic insight into the mind of God that allows him/her to see the poor in a whole new way.

Listen to what the German writer, Lindworsky, says:

Attention must be drawn here to the danger of illusion. Anyone entering an ecclesiastical order so as to live according to a rule approved by the saintly founder of that order, does not by that very fact automatically take over the religious aim-form of the saint, but only such external manifestations of it as are legislated for. The inspiration that animated the saint, and was the most important thing in his foundation of the order, cannot be transmitted by verbal formularies or an external refrain of conventional catchwords. This inspiration must be experienced anew by the novices and must be applied by each individual; each one to a certain degree must become the founder of the order, grasp the ideal of the founder, animate oneself therewith and apply it to oneself and one's particular conditions. Each individual member is then an order by oneself, with one's own aims, and one's own particular method of actualizing the ideal which the order envisages. If this be not the case, then instead of true disciples, we have mere empty husks of people, whose enjoyment of the style and title of their Order makes them so satisfied with themselves that they do not recognize anything more as demanded of them.⁷

The Rising

One day your soul will call to you with a holy rage.

"Rise up!" it will say...

"Stand up inside your own skin."

Unmask your un-lived life...feast on your animal heart.

Unfasten your fist...let loose the medicine in your own hand.

Show me the lines...I will show you the spoor of the ancestors.

Show me the creases...I will show you the way to water.

Show me the folds... I will show you the furrows for your healing.

"Look!" it will say...the line of life has four paths -

one with a mirror,

one with a mask,

one with a fist,

one with a heart.

One day, your soul will call to you with a holy rage.⁸

Ian McCallum

⁷ J. Lindworsky, *The psychology of Asceticism*

⁸ Ian McCallum, *The Holy Rage*

Charism is a cry for authenticity, for following one's deepest longings, even unknown to the person himself/herself until that moment.

*And we know when Moses was told, in the way he was told
Take off your shoes
He grew pale from that simple reminder of fire in the dusty earth
He never recovered his complicated way of loving again
And was free to love in the same way he felt the flames
licking at his heels loved him
As if the lion earth could roar and take in, in one movement.
Every step he took from there was carefully placed,
every thing he said mattered
As if he knew the constant witness of the ground
And remembered his own face in the dust
The moment before revelation.
Like the moment you too saw for the first time your own house turned to ashes
Everything consumed so the road could open again
Your entire presence in your eyes
And the world turning slowly to a single branch of flame.⁹*

All of us know the moment when our world turned to ashes.

These are revolutionary times. All over the globe men are revolting against old systems of exploitation and oppression and out of the wombs of a frail world new systems of justice and equality are being born. The shirtless and barefoot people of the land are rising up as never before.¹⁰

Over the past months we have grown accustomed to seeing images of unrest on our TV screens: pictures from the Arab Spring or the Occupy Movement show the dissatisfaction of people with the current system of affairs. People are saying, 'enough is enough!' They are looking for change, and they are being incredibly brave about it. What sacrifices they are ready to make for this! Well, our Sacred Story too tells of such times. Allow me to remind you of one such time.

God said to Samuel, "Listen carefully. I'm getting ready to do something in Israel that is going to shake everyone up and get their attention. The time has come for me to bring down on Eli's family everything I warned him of, every last word of it. I'm letting him know that the time's up. I'm bringing judgment on his family for good. He knew what was going on, that his sons were desecrating God's name and God's place,

⁹ David Whyte, *Fire in the Earth*

¹⁰ Martin Luther King, April 4, 1967, Riverside Church, NYC

and he did nothing to stop them. This is my sentence on the family of Eli: The evil of Eli's family can never be wiped out by sacrifice or offering." (1 Sam. 3:11-14)

*We speak easily and glibly of "regime change."
We imagine it is some regime other than our own;
We imagine our rightful capacity to make such change elsewhere.*

*But then you in Scripture,
You making regime change,
You overthrowing long-established priestly power;
You moving against things holy and treasured among us;
You causing endings that we had never thought possible;
You making newness beyond our conjuring.*

*And just behind old Eli and his loss of regime
Comes this Other Voice from your inner circle,
Summoning to radical newness,
Summoning to "repent", and then,
A new regime: "The Kingdom of God is at hand."*

*And all our old regimes –
Of heart and of mind,
Of money and of power,
Of privilege and of entitlement –
All are in one instant placed in jeopardy.*

*Give us courage to hear your summons;
Give us freedom to relinquish old regimes that have gone stale
In hardness and disobedience;
Give us ease to receive new governance that reshapes everything,
Even our deep treasures.*

*We live by your word; we await your news,
But we do so tentatively, reluctantly,
Knowing the cost to all that is settled and old.
So, Power of newness, come here, come soon.*

"In the course of history, there comes a time when humanity is called to shift to a new level of consciousness, to reach a higher moral ground. A time when we have to shed our fear and give hope to each other."¹¹

¹¹ Wangari Maathai's Nobel Lecture, delivered in Oslo, 10 December 2004.

We are living at the hinges of history. These are the moments when the old gives way to the new.

Johannes Metz in *Followers of Christ* says about the origin of religious congregations: “They are more apt to appear in times of turmoil and disorientation. These are the historical times when pain is deeper, aspirations more acute, when a settled world’s values are up-ended, in short, when an old world order is dissolving and a new world is in the making.” Charism is at its most active here.

The Story of Satish Kumar....