



*White Robed Monks
of St. Benedict*

Network News

Volume 11, Issue 1
May 15, 2007
*Nondual: things remain distinct
while not being separate.*

Abbot's Notes

Peace be with you and yours.

What's the difference between the printed word and life experienced? What's the difference between a belief in oneself or another or God and the experience of oneself, another or God? The printed word and a belief are intellectual and an experience is — well, right-on experience in the moment. (The remembrance of an experience is intellectual—it's in the head and, hence, made-up.)

In March 10 of us took a gentle walk in the Kumba Glacier National Park, "whimping-out" at 18,000 feet, Everest Base Camp 1. This was my third experience. Each time a part of the walk was a definite challenge with the thought, "Never again!" Back just five weeks, I am again looking forward (in the head) to yet another gentle walk in the park.

Absolute Reality is the experience in the moment. Real Reality is making-up what we think the moment is now or was like. We can compound reality with Ideal Reality—our projected fantasy of the way we wish or hope reality would be or would have been. (Perhaps, to some, the "gentle" in the gentle walk?)

How often do we make our decisions not based upon our experience in the moment, but upon our fantasy of the way we think reality is or could be? How do we come across to others and how do others come across to us? Our communication with our own self and others—are we speaking from our experience of our self/other in the moment or from our delusions—the way we think or hope we are or the other is in the moment?

Unnecessary pain and suffering is the hallmark of human experience. *Unnecessary* in the sense that we

really invite pain and suffering because we are not coming from our experience, but more so, from our thoughts about ourselves and others in the moment. Hence, we err and pain and suffering ensue.

What is pain but the brain's interpretation of sensation? We can let past traumas fade into the background. A new mother 3 years ago swore, "NEVER AGAIN!!" Her newest was baptized a few weeks back.

What we experience and what we believe are really two sides of the same coin, the rim is Reality Itself. We vacillate between our experience and our belief as we continue to roll through life. How then do we reconcile experience with belief and belief with experience?

We can become ever more aware of our own M.O., our own way of doing things. The more we look into the mirror of Life, we can see that we are but the reflected image *in* a movie of our own creation. Some say they were nurtured by and are what they are because of the environment. In fact, is it not so that we ourselves nurture the environment and make that environment what it is for our own self in the moment? What we are at our core does not change. Our experienced awareness of our core frees us from our self-imposed prison. It takes at least two to fight (even when that fight is with our own self: two conflicting identities vying for control). The more we let go of the what we think life is, the more we can be authentically who we are. Then the experience and the belief become one, nondual. **Be Peace.**

Enjoy the Merry Dance of Life.
Peace and joy!
+Robert OSB

True Forgiveness

by Lynn Woodland
<http://www.lightworks.com/MonthlyAspectarian/2000/May/500-20.htm>
Can we have love but not forgiveness? Or true forgiveness w/o love?

Without forgiveness we can't love. From the perspective of spiritual reality, the statements "I love you but don't forgive you" and "I forgive you but I don't love you" are impossibilities. Love and forgiveness go hand in hand. We can't have one without the other.

True forgiveness is not something we do for another person. I often hear people speak of forgiveness as something we give to someone else, something that must be deserved or earned, and sometimes needs to be withheld. The spiritual purpose of forgiveness is self-healing. As long as we are holding anger, resentment and grudges against another person, we are poisoning our bodies with toxicity, lowering our immunity to disease and on subtler levels generating thoughts, expectations and attitudes that repel our highest good. As we hold on to the belief that someone has harmed us so badly that we cannot, will not, forgive, we give power to the part of us that feels vulnerable and susceptible to being harmed. Our lack of forgiveness actually draws more circumstances that will feed our anger and victimization.

Lack of forgiveness has been related as a contributing factor to physical illness, excess weight, financial scarcity, failed relationships and a host of other problems. Lack of forgiveness inhibits love, which is the only true source of power. As we withhold forgiveness, we inhibit our power and our very life-force.

Medical intuitive Caroline Myss, who, through her gift of intuitive sight sees the energy patterns that lead to illness, says, "By far the strongest poison to the human spirit is the inability to forgive oneself or another person."

Now that we have established its importance, what exactly does it mean to forgive? What often makes forgiveness so difficult is that we tend to think of it as a sacrifice, as giving in, giving up, losing our "rightness." It's like giving up the chip that says "You owe me." It seems to discount the pain we felt. Forgiveness is sometimes experienced as letting someone who hurt us off the hook, no longer holding them accountable for their actions.

But forgiveness is not an act of negotiation between two people. It does not begin and end by speaking the words "I forgive you." Instead, it is an internal state, an ongoing process rather than an act. True forgiveness is

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It takes a lifetime to learn to become authentically present. It's a personal and professional pursuit based on truly knowing ourselves. Not the surface, ego-self that operates on habitual patterns and limited awareness. We need to know ourselves at a deeper level where our genuine character resides.

When we know ourselves in this way we discover a true self that is not bound and blocked from being authentically present. The "superficial self" is too focused on self gratification or protection to be authentic. Our true self is secure in knowing who we are, what we value and in having a sense of purpose.

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True Forgiveness (con't)

not about excusing someone's hurtful actions. It goes much deeper than this. It is the inner awareness that no harm was done, thus there is, in truth, nothing to forgive.

Most of what passes for forgiveness is rooted in the belief that we are separate and vulnerable and have been harmed. In this way, the act of forgiveness directs the attention of both people to the hurtful act. The forgiver feels self-righteous, the forgiven, guilty. The whole process strengthens both people's belief in the reality of separateness and harm, and in this way is disempowering to both.

True forgiveness is a shifting of attention away from the hurtful act, not in denial, but in release. It means identifying with the higher part of ourselves that was never harmed so we can see past the illusion of separateness to the reality of Oneness. As we understand ourselves to be one with the person who hurt us, forgiveness becomes self-forgiveness. As we transcend our belief in ourselves as victims, we are able to see the other person differently. Instead of seeing his or her "wrongness" we see the pain that motivated his or her actions. Living from a belief that doing harm brings personal gain is a prison of separateness, powerlessness and pain. Anyone who acts intentionally to harm another is trapped in this painful prison, even if he or she doesn't recognize it as such. When we understand this, we can more easily feel compassion instead of rage.

As with the idea of "love," I have heard the concept of forgiveness promoted in spiritual, metaphysical and psychological circles for years as the spiritual thing, the healthy thing, the right thing to do. And, as with teachings on love, I have heard much more on the benefits and reasons to do it than on how to do it. How can we coax our hearts into forgiveness when they feel hardened or broken? Words of forgiveness are worth nothing without truth behind them. Let following help you find a path into the process of forgiving.

Let Go of Victim Scenarios

Write a "victim" scenario. Describe everything that was done to you unjustly, all the ways you have been harmed, every way you are right and the other party is wrong. Next, describe the same scenario from the perspective that it was somehow a great lesson, gift or turning point in your life that served you in some important way. Write this even if you don't believe it. Take the first scenario of yourself as victim and symbolically release it: burn it, tear it up, bury it or flush it. As you let it go imagine that you

are releasing the need to feel victimized. Keep the second scenario and read it every day for at least a week.

See Reflection of Your Core Beliefs

Instead of focusing attention on the wrong thing that has been done to you, imagine that this painful experience reflects some belief or expectation you have about life. This doesn't mean you "asked" to be hurt. It means that you learned, probably when you were very young, to expect painful experiences. Release blame, shame and any idea that you have done something wrong and simply look at this situation as a mirror, giving you important information about your core beliefs. Every day for a month, pray to God or your Higher Self for help in stepping out of the hurtful dance you have created with this other person. Pray for help in releasing the beliefs and expectations that call hurt into your life.

If you are working on forgiving a parent or other person from your early childhood who helped to instill your limiting core beliefs about life, you can still see your experience with this person as reflecting some deep level of choice. Imagine that your Higher Self called this relationship into your life for a purpose. For example, if I look at all the pain my alcoholic father caused me in my childhood and early adulthood, I am tempted to feel rage and powerlessness. However when I think of the turns my life took as a direct result of this early pain, I realize that my whole life path with its focus of love and healing was because of my father. From this perspective, I see a higher purpose to our meeting and can actually feel gratitude for this painful experience in my life.

Get to the Root of Displaced Anger

When your anger is toward a group, an institution or society, rather than an individual, it is important to remember that anger is a much weaker power source than love. Many feel that anger is a necessary ingredient for creating change. While anger can motivate action, ultimately, when we give attention to victimization and abuse, we may achieve some sense of victory, but we also perpetuate a reality that includes victims and abusers. The more we motivate ourselves from a place of anger, the more we will continually have to fight victimization.

Being angry at a group often has a feeling of hopelessness built into it. While we may be able to create peace and resolution in relation to one person, doing so with all of society is obviously more difficult. When

we often find ourselves angry at "the system" in one form or another, there is usually a person or people from early in our lives we need to forgive. This early hurt, usually related to one or both of our parents or other significant adult care-takers, imbedded within us feelings of anger and powerlessness that we project onto other situations in our lives. We may also find that we have anger toward one or more of the important people in our adult life ¼ a spouse, friend or co-worker — and have displaced this anger onto an impersonal system because we fear the consequences of our anger. It may be easier to face the anger we have toward a faceless system than to deal with the true source of our feeling, which invariably comes back to personal relationships with individuals. However, it is far more manageable to forgive an individual than a system.

When you find yourself angry at a group, find the one individual you most need to forgive. If, for example you are angry at a company where you used to work, focus on the one person you feel the most anger toward. If you are angry at society or other such large institutions where there is no one single individual who stands out, then look to see who in your life you are holding anger toward.

Practice Self-forgiveness

If all approaches to forgiveness feel equally difficult, you probably have at least as much trouble forgiving yourself as you do others. In this case, begin the forgiveness process by forgiving yourself. Make a list of all the things you hold against yourself and begin to say out loud and as written affirmations, "I, (your name), forgive myself for _____." Louise Hay suggests looking at yourself in the mirror as you say affirmations of self-love. I find this mirror technique to be especially helpful in working on self-forgiveness.

Aim for Moments of Forgiveness

Think of forgiveness as an ongoing process rather than a one-time act. When we have felt deeply hurt, the feeling of forgiveness may come and go for a while. Aim for moments of forgiveness. Trust that eventually these moments will come more frequently and begin to string together until forgiveness is continuous and complete.

This article is adapted from Lynn Woodland's new book, *Power, Effectiveness and Spirit*. To find out more about Lynn's work, to order this book, or for free on-line spiritual healing and growth services, visit her web site: www.LynnWoodland.com or call 1-888-253-6212

Love

Humans beings care. Some care more than others. How about love? Well, whereas Eskimo may have several words for *snow* and English has one, Greek has four words for love and English one. *Eros* is sexual desire. *Philia* is affection between friends. *Storge* is the love between parents and children (and amusingly connotes "putting up with"). *Agape* implies regard rather than affection, as in the love of God for humanity or the love of one's self: regard or charity.

The first three are conditional, the latter, unconditional. Some of us love more than others in each sense of the word. The first three involve the human condition as "there is always an unwholesome bargain at the core: a sense of inner deficiency and failure to see the other(self) as (s/he) truly is." (188)

Agape, besides being *unconditional*, being free of the world yet in the world, is *conscious*, taking in the whole situation "apart from one's own blind self-interest. Such knowingness naturally does what is right." Agape is also "*dispassionate* love... beyond all feelings of like and dislike, love and hate." (188f)

The more we experience ourselves from the inside out rather than the outside in, we become more *dispassionate*: "Free from passion; not warped, prejudiced, swerved, or carried away by passion or feeling; judicial; calm; composed; not dictated by passion; not proceeding from temper or bias; impartial; as, dispassionate proceedings; a dispassionate view." We are: "calm; cool; composed serene; unimpassioned; temperate; moderate; impartial; unruffled."

Consequently, we experience through practice *equanimity*: evenness of mind; that calm temper or firmness of mind which is not easily elated or depressed; patience; calmness; composure; (bearing) misfortunes with equanimity.

"You have heard that it is said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes the sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and unjust. For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have? Do not tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your relatives only, what is unusual about that? Do not (all people) do the same. So be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matt 5:43-48)

How? ... perhaps an answer is on page 4—detaching from beliefs....

Ref <http://www.selfknowledge.com/> and *Inner Christianity* ISBN1-57062-810-6

I Am Responsible

Given the nature of True Forgiveness, we again share the following:

(Expanded upon & adapted from: *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*, Stephen R. Covey; NY: Simon & Schuster, 1990.)

Whether or not one speaks from "heart" or "mind," it is commonly accepted that no one else can do our own thinking, feeling, emoting, sensing, perceiving, or acting. We each source our own thoughts, feelings, emotions, sensations, perceptions, and actions. Ultimately, each of us is responsible for how we each configure and experience our worlds. The world itself – genes to the environs – may invite a reaction. Helen Keller was born blind, deaf, and dumb. Christopher Reeves fell off a horse and was paralyzed. It is each of us who chooses how we respond to life events. Like it or not, in a nutshell, does not such responsibility bespeak of the awesomeness of our humanity?

Our behavior is a function of our decisions, not our conditions – no matter what those conditions are or may have been: a alcoholic parent, an emotionally or sexually abusive parent, a marriage, a job, an environment. If I now am feeling happy, mad, glad, sad, depressed, enraged, abandoned, lost, gleeful, such is my choice, my decision. Situations and people may invite me to experience a particular emotion. How I choose – moment by moment – to behave in response or in reaction to that invitation is my choice. I am responsible. In short, I decide and source my behavior: what I perceive, what and how I think, what and how I feel, and how and what I act.

A responsive individual acknowledges and accepts that one's behavior is a product of one's own conscious choice. The responsive individual acts in accordance with values. The reactive person, on the other hand, re-acts to conditions usually in accordance with how one feels.

Do I empower the weakness of others – a parent, a boss, a child, a spouse, or even my own weakness – to control me? If I do, I tend to react. Eleanor Roosevelt said, "No one can hurt you without your consent." Gandhi, in the same vein, said, "They cannot take away our self-respect if we do not give it to them."

The responsive individual acknowledges and accepts that what really hurts is that s/he permits or gives consent to what happens or has happened. Thus, "**it is our willing consent to what happens to us, that hurts us far more than what happens to us in the first place.**" The hurt of our willing consent holds true for each of us at any age – infant, child, or adult. If we are an infant or a child, it is this hurt that we bring into our adulthood and which tends to be a base of our self-sabotage. In adulthood, this hurt is a basis for our (self-righteous, reactive) anger. In sum, the responsive individual realizes that the thought that the problem is "out there" is itself **THE** problem.

For example, fear is symptomatic of a belief system I maintain. The belief I maintain is the belief I cannot handle the situation. What I fear is not "out there." Because I believe I cannot handle the situation I grow fear. When I own my belief, when I acknowledge that I source both the fear and the belief, experience them both, then I can let them go. Only when I am responsible am I free.

Admittedly, to some, such responsiveness is very hard to accept emotionally. Such difficult acceptance is especially true if a person has had years and years of explaining his or her misery in the name of circumstance or someone else's behavior. "But until a person can say deeply and honestly, 'I am what I am today because of the choices I made yesterday (from the moment of my birth if not before)', that person cannot say, 'I choose otherwise.'" (p. 72) I am responsible.

Peace.

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**White Robed Monks
of St. Benedict**

PO Box 27536
San Francisco CA 94127-0536

Phone: 415-292-3228

E-mail: porter@whiterobedmonks.org

www.whiterobedmonks.org

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Peace and Joy!

How to Detach from a Belief—Why?

How to detach from a belief and experience freedom and peace of mind? Use a centering meditation taught by Tarthang Tulku in his *Hidden Mind of Freedom*:

"Working with thoughts (beliefs) by opening them as they arise can bring many pleasant feelings, which—without attachment—also become our meditation. We can even go into the thoughts that judge other thoughts, and, embracing this judging mind, become united with it."

"By relying on the light of awareness you can see that the difficulties you face are manifestations of your own concepts. Going deeply into your thoughts, you will see how you create your experience, how you alone are the judge who determines heaven and hell, good and bad."

"Whatever experience arises, stay with it, expand it, and heat it up. If you remain within the intense

core of the experience, the meditator unites with thoughts and emotions, and everything dissolves. Then awareness grows powerful and one-pointed. As thoughts and emotions are increasingly included within this field of awareness, they become more useful. Instead of being a cause of frustration or confusion, they become agents of well-being. . . ."

And why?

A Native American grandfather was talking to his grandson about how he felt. He said, "I feel as if I have two wolves fighting in my heart. One wolf is the vengeful, angry, violent one. The other wolf is the loving, compassionate one." The grandson asked him, "Which wolf will win the fight in your heart?" The grandfather answered, "The one I feed. (Thank you Michael Butler)

May all beings be happy.
Amen.

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And thank you. May many blessings be to you and yours now and forevermore. Peace and joy!

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