

A Letter to the Women of the Church  
from Your Spiritual Growth Team



Charles Macey

If you watched 60 minutes Sunday night (March 29, 2020) you saw Brené Brown, psychologist, being interviewed after the update on the COVID pandemic. She expressed her irritation over the fact that her books are categorized as "self help." She went on to say that one of the biggest failures of our culture is believing that "self-help" is the way out of our troubles. She pressed further saying that as humans we are "hard-wired" for connection with one another. This fact of human nature is still true, even as we need to practice physical distance from one another.

We have the gift of connection with each other through our church family. The WOC spiritual growth team met online yesterday to discuss how we may offer help and support to one another - and even as we asked the question we realized that asking for help is sometimes the hardest thing for us to do . . . and yet, it may be the bravest thing we do.

The Monday book group, facilitated by Loretta Brown and Kathy Bragg, has been exploring the book, *A Clearing Season; Reflections for Lent*, by Sarah Parsons. She writes about Lent as a time of wilderness during which we encounter wild beasts and angels of the inner life. This language of wilderness has uncanny relevance now that we are living in a wilderness set upon us by a global pandemic. We may experience our emotions as "wild beasts", to which she instructs:

"To resist sorrow, pain, anxiety, and confusion is tantamount to refusing to be human, and we lose much rich experience **and closeness to God** when we refuse to be our full selves." P. 18 (italics are mine)

From our team discussion yesterday, I would add "anger at God" to the list of feelings that we may be tempted to resist. Your feelings, yes even your anger with or at God, can serve as a portal, an entry way to an even deeper closeness to God.

The pandemic has broken our routine way of approaching life. This gives us a new opportunity to look more clearly at the choices we make daily. Our choices come within the sanctions placed on us for our protection and well-being. These boundaries allow us to see the kind of choices we make with even sharper definition.

The choice that vibrates for me during these days of "pandemic wilderness" is the choice to accept the invitation from God to move closer to the Heart of the Divine as we each understand that Divine Heart. It may seem strange to view this time as an "invitation from God," especially since we don't believe that God would "send a pandemic" as punishment, but pandemic is where we are. I believe God is always, in every circumstance and time, extending endless invitations for a deeper connection; perhaps the invitation comes embossed in gold right now. And our feelings, the whole range of them - if we allow them space - are uniquely tailored and tuned to usher us in.

Your spiritual growth team is going to be considering some options for connecting with one another, some choices for spiritual practices to use during this profoundly altered time in our lives. So, please stay tuned for more.

In the meantime, be gentle with yourself, reach out to one another, don't resist asking for help, and practice acceptance of your feelings and reactions. You are a human being experiencing a human response to an abnormal event in the world. Offer the feelings that arise to the God that we understand as always present, always loving, arms outstretched, Divine Heart open wide.

On behalf of your spiritual growth team,

Janet Jones

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