

Hindsight in 20/20

All Souls, New London, Online

Sunday, May 31, 2020

Good Morning!

I greet you with thanksgiving on this beautiful day with the hopes that all are feeling safe and healthy and hopefully, optimistic.

This spring, we are missing the ritual celebrations of our culture, particularly graduations and commencements, weddings and for some, out door picnics and family gatherings as we turn to the season of long daylight.

I am missing my very regular three hours a week of swimming with my Y buddies and the occasional Happy Hour with friends. There is a lot of quiet time, time out I guess you would say, to think and reflect and remember. I am thinking that what we have to do in times of crisis is take on the challenge to make something new and resourceful and powerful to inform and fuel the days in front of us.

There is an old saying that “hindsight is 20/20”, suggesting that we forget the mistakes and errors of the past. When we remember, we think of only that which we miss, the things that are pleasant. We forget the challenges we have overcome. This morning I am offering a couple of strange and thoughtful vignettes that remind us to collect memories in this challenging year of 2020 and to promote and encourage our vision for the future as we remember what has sustained us in the past.

This quiet period of rest is perfect for remembering and taking time to put a positive shine on a life of work and study, active community engagement, relationships, national and world events, and personal history. In the normal workday, there was, for me at least, barely time to breathe. Breathing happened in those fleeting hours of sleep. Recounting the work or accomplishments of a day or a week or in my case, a semester or a school year was a task that was most often over looked. Now there is plenty of time to listen to the world and think and reflect, rearranging the puzzle pieces to make of life a time to consider the best parts of creativity, positivity and a hopeful future.

In September of 1964, a very long time ago, I entered a new school for high school. I had attended the same elementary school for eight years, with many of the same students and teachers in my everyday. St. Edmund’s Elementary School had a very familiar routine with mostly the same faces and friends for close to a decade. The new high school was in a different part of the city it was VERY much bigger, way more diverse and totally intimidating, sitting at the edge of one of the great world universities. We were an experimental school surrounded by a graduate school of

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education. On that first day of high school, I was wearing my very first pair of glasses. For the first time in several years, I could see.

Anxious and very nervous about the new school environment, three floors of a new building, hundreds of students rather than dozens and class change times requiring no non-sense and no recess, I could actually see clearly; 20/20, for the first time in years. Forward movement requires excellent vision.

In this time of personal home lock down, there is not much to do other than all of those egregious household and personal chores that one puts off until there is time...now is the time. A few days ago I repotted the houseplants that were being choked out by the root because their containers were too small although they were sitting in prime sunlight with plenty of water. I waited a few days past the regular watering so that it would be easy to remove the plants from their clay pots to separate and repot with space to grow.

The first plant, with gentle movement, easily came out of a clay pot in tact. With gentle back and forth movement, I separated the roots pulling apart the large plant easily creating two plants. Each portion of the plant, after the dead leaves were removed was placed into a new pot and fed and watered. It stood up, sturdy and strong, ready for new growth in a new vessel.

The second plant was tough. Gentle movement would not separate the roots. After struggling with the leaves and the bound roots, I literally had to rip roots apart to separate it into two new sections. In order to grow, the original plant had to endure the painful act of tearing the roots in order to avoid the death of the entire enterprise and to insure new growth.

The metaphor did not escape me! As I packed the clean fresh soil around the two plants, I realized that this task of renewal is the same task that we face in education, neighborhoods and cities, families, and communities of faith. Looking back to our roots and origins, knowing from whence we have come and working to sustain growth, requires our individual and cooperative response to renewing our growth by working carefully and with care to make things new. It is just a part of the nature of life that we have to repot now and then in order to survive. In the days to come we have to remember that survival requires growth and change that is sometimes uncomfortable, but most of the time calls for a new way to contain our growth.

Outside my kitchen window the trees in the neighborhood are all alive with the new leaves of spring, all except for two trees in the yard next door. They are young trees, maybe only ten years old. For weeks, the Japanese Cherry in my yard blossomed, shed the flowers and produced new leaves. The giant trees in the adjoining yards, several generations in age turned green and full.

My neighbor's trees offered only bare winter branches making one think of death amidst the leafy spring renewal. For weeks the young trees have stood in their naked hibernating space, no leaves and no apparent response to the new season.

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Then, I noticed the first peek of tiny leaves on the new young trees. I remembered that growth and change do not occur at the same rate for all things in the natural world. Moving into a new season is required for all living things, moving at the same pace is never a lived reality.

Slowly but surely we will live into a new season of growth. It will not be the same for all of us, in all regions, or ages and stages. Our movement to health and safety will require our patience and the endurance of hibernation and consistent faith that a new season will come. We will endure.

With time, comes the memories of sooo many seasons, challenges and crises that we have endured and survived. More than even hope, we are offered, when we remember, the sureness of our resilience when we make of our experience, our history and memories a tapestry of the possibilities of life. This is not our first bad time. This is not our first time of crisis, or challenge or change. This is not our first time of regard for the world beyond our vision. This is a time to remember, remind, re-do and move forward.

I invite you to join me and,

Come to your life like a warrior
Nothing will bore you
You can be happy
Let in the light
It will heal you
And you can feel you
And sing out a song of the soul!

For these times and all of the times and places, challenges and fears, rewards, consolations and successes to come, I offer these blessings:

From Audre Lorde,

History is not kind to us
we restitch it with living
past memory forward
into desire
into the panic articulation
of want without having
or even the promise of getting.

And I dream of our coming together

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encircled driven
not only by love
but by lust for a working tomorrow
the flights of this journey
mapless uncertain
And necessary as water.
From Thich Nhat Hanh,
Our true home is in the present moment
To live in the present moment is a miracle.
The miracle is not to walk on water.
The miracle is to walk on the green Earth in the present moment,
to appreciate the peace and beauty that are available now.
Peace is all around us-
In the world and in nature-
And within us-
in our bodies and our spirits.
Once we learn to touch this peace,
we will be healed and transformed.
It is not a matter of faith;
It is a matter of practice.
Let it be!