

May I walk in beauty. May I walk in peace. Through the seasons may I walk.

As someone who for years has grumbled about the cold and dark of winter, I've slowly, slowly been drawn to recognize the gifts found in each season. I still Do. Not. Love. Cold.

And yet, if I truly believe that we are one with ALL of creation, then I can listen to the wisdom found in the slow passage of one season into the next, I can listen to the rhythm of cold and warmth, light and darkness, growth and fallow times.

Today's message is a two fold journey. One part is an invitation into the sacred wisdom of nature, of Spring and to revel in the joy of increasing warmth, light, color in the world, and yet to also notice the mud and rain and wind that also herald spring. Can we hold both aspects of spring's truth at the same time? Because that is also the wisdom of creation...

And one part is an invitation to look inward and recognize how we are "watering" the seeds of our inner Self-- our capital S-- self. This part of my message grew out of my own read-think-pray-think-read- pace-write process this week, and a two part article my friend Rev Sue shared. I'm still "chewing" on the concepts-- and the hefty title-- that Otto Sharmer lays out in "Putin and the Power of Collective Action from Shared Awareness: A 10 Point Meditation on Our Current Moment."

Sharmer is co-founder of "The Presencing Institute" and is a Senior Lecturer at MIT. His research and innovative work about transforming our complex human systems stems in part from these guiding questions: *"In the face of accelerating social and environmental breakdowns, how can we build our collective capacities for transformation? How can we regenerate our outdated economic and social institutions from egosystem to ecosystem awareness?"*

What struck me in the challenging, thought-provoking article is that Sharmer looks at *this current moment*-- and all that we know of its cataclysmic disruption-- but he writes

too about the “more important and largely untold story of our time.” (his words). That untold story has everything to do with “the principles that *mind and world are not separate, that self and other are not separate, and that self and (capital S) Self are not separate.*”

Those principles sound pretty familiar! What I’m “chewing on,” as I read is how Otto Sharmer describes the “Social Grammar of Destruction” and the Social Grammar of Co-creation” AND the powerful social fields of Absencing and Presencing. (cue the slide)

Absencing has everything to do with being frozen: frozen will leads to fear; frozen heart leads to hate; frozen mind leads to ignorance. Presencing has everything to do with opening: open will leads to courage; open heart leads to compassion; open mind leads to curiosity.

My Holy Imagination is fired up, and I will be praying and considering the implications of this work for some time-- but for today, I am going to start at the end of Otto’s 10 point mediation, as he writes:

The future on this planet depends on each and all of us and our capacity to to realign *attention* and *intention* on the level of the whole.... Co-holding and co-creating that emerging path to the future puts us in a very personal relationship with our planet and with our shared future. I think of that future as a set of seeds. These seeds already exist. But what does not [fully] exist is the soil-- the *social soil*-- without that, no seed can grow. What generates that fertile soil? It’s our collective capacity to *bend the beam of attention back onto ourselves*. It’s our capacity to see and recognize our own shadows in the abyss that we face, and-- if we are able to hold the gaze steady-- to transform that shadow. To open up our field of awareness and to begin to serve as a vehicle for the future wanting to emerge.

### **A world transformed by the spiritual awakening of all...**

How are the seeds of our attention inviting us to transform our relationships to the “ecological, social and spiritual” ecosystems in which we live? How are we generating

fertile soil for ourselves and our world, in the present moment-- the only moment we truly have-- and yet, still holding the vision of a world transformed. *The future wanting to emerge...*

Let's go back to the questions we considered earlier: What has formed the fertile soil that is the garden of your life? What seeds have you planted-- Compassion? Trust? Joy? Friendship? Are there weeds of doubt or fear that need to be thinned out? Can you feel the Source of all Light-- of all Love--shining on all of it, shining on you, and in you, and through you?

As people whose hearts, minds and lives rest in Oneness, whose hearts, minds and lives bend toward our inherent goodness as fully human, fully divine beings-- we are called to walk in those truths. Our very lives become witness to how to grow the fertile soil required for transformation.

Take a moment with *your* "seeds" and "soil"... how has your life been a witness?

For 39 years, I've been thanking my beautiful daughter for being my favorite sign that spring always returns, and for turning me into a mother. I recognize my privilege in being able to be a mother, and hold that privilege with great joy. AND I know that some of my ugliest moments as a human, have been as mom-unhinged. This relationship with my children over the years has pushed me to grow my capital S self in ways I couldn't imagine on that morning when I first held that tiny babe.

But even before I fell in love with that baby girl, she was transforming me. Pregnancy is one of those trajectory shifting moments of life-- whether it happens, or can't happen, whether it happens after careful planning, or like in my case is very much unplanned, and unexpected. My beautiful girl happens to be the first moment when I really had to look at my life and answer, "now what?"

And for me the answer to that question in that moment, and in most of the moments that have come since-- was a simple *YES*. A simple, but not always easy yes. Other lives make other choices in that situation, for their own compelling reasons. Certainly, my

“yes” caused ripples in the pond of my ecosystems. And yet, my “yes,” for me, *as I see it now*, came from a life stance of remaining open: open in heart, open in mind, open in will. Compassion. Courage. Curiosity.

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The word Lent means Spring. The invitation in Lent, like the invitation in Spring, is to open our eyes, hearts and lives to the energy of Yes, to the energy of renewal. It’s an invitation to shed anything that chokes off our growth-- and to see the paradox that EVERY circumstance, even those some might look at as weeds, EVERY circumstance, if we nurture it with openness, allows our attention and intention to bend towards growth and transformation.

So we nurture the soil of our life’s garden by doing the hard work of recognizing our shadows, our blind spots. We hold the gaze steady, and open ourselves to truly see our beauty *and* brokenness as a paradoxical gift. We pray and meditate. We journal. We dance. We create. We muck about in gardens. We sit amongst the trees. We do that as individuals in communion and connection with our Source.

And then, because we know we are each but a single cell in the Whole of Creation, *we hold each other* in that clear eyed gaze, in compassion, in curiosity, with courage. And we recognize and heal the blind spots in our complex human “ego-systems” and we transform the world.

Let me close with a poem, as I love to do, with thanks to Roger for sending me “Spring” by Mary Oliver, with the commentary by Parker Palmer to frame it:

Parker Palmer, author and activist writes:

This Mary Oliver gem may be the finest poem about spring — and how we live our lives — I’ve ever read. There are no cardinals or crocuses here. Only a black bear awakening from hibernation, coming down the mountain, showing her “perfect love” by doing what bears do.

“There is only one question,” says Mary Oliver: “how to love this world.” ...

For me, the poem opens into mystery. How could it not, since it's about the  
"dazzling darkness" that's forever coming down the mountain toward us?

But this much seems clear. Loving the world means paying attention to its simple  
gifts, and receiving them with simple gratitude in every moment of our waking  
lives.

## **Spring**

by Mary Oliver

Somewhere  
a black bear  
has just risen from sleep  
and is staring

down the mountain.  
All night  
in the brisk and shallow restlessness  
of early spring

I think of her,  
her four black fists  
flicking the gravel,  
her tongue

like a red fire  
touching the grass,  
the cold water.  
There is only one question;

how to love this world.  
I think of her  
rising  
like a black and leafy ledge

to sharpen her claws against  
the silence  
of the trees.  
Whatever else

my life is  
with its poems  
and its music  
and its glass cities,

it is also this dazzling darkness  
coming  
down the mountain,  
breathing and tasting;

all day I think of her—  
her white teeth,  
her wordlessness,  
her perfect love.

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May we fall in love with the world, and  
in that way transform it. Amen.