

What the World Needs Now

From I to We to One

John 17:21—23

“ that all may be one, as you Abba, are in me and I in you; I pray that they may be one in us, so that the world may believe that you sent me.”

“I have given them the glory you gave me that they may be one, as we are one—I in them, you in me—that they may be made perfect in unity.”

Reflection

We come from oneness and we are called back into oneness. All separation is an illusion, as the mystics tell us. Yet we are living in a society that is increasingly mired in the illusion of separateness, a society that is becoming increasingly divided, divisive, violent and hyper-individualistic. Perhaps the deepest call to us, as women religious today, is to foster the return to oneness, the move from I to We to One. There may be nothing that the world needs more than a return to the vision and experience of original oneness.

In her remarks at the close of the 2017 National Assembly of LCWR, Constance Fitzgerald reminded us of the movement of evolutionary consciousness which we are experiencing, the move from I to We to One.



Relationality, mutuality, interconnectedness, communion, union with God: these are the facets of Contemplative prayer that claim my attention now. They coincide, I know now, with the movement within LCWR communities in recent years and your accent on contemplative dialogue and prayer and the theme and direction of this assembly.

We have spent many years interpreting the darkness and liminality, analyzing and understanding the transitions and purifications, and grieving over the losses—in our personal lives, in the lives of our communities, and in society, politics and culture—and that is not over, I know—but now is the time (as you, yourselves have asserted so strongly) to live into and decidedly influence a new evolutionary stage of consciousness: community—in every fiber of our beings.

*Constance Fitzgerald remarks
at the 2017 LCWR Assembly*

Consider: A Strange Predicament by Pavithra Mehta

When I stop to consider the facts they astonish me,
there you are, couched in your own skin, and
here I am in mine. No matter how close
we must each do our own living.
Your heart cannot be persuaded to pump my blood
my lungs will not consent to breathe for yours.
It is an odd arrangement.

Inside me, a mansion of memory and anticipation.
A place other people may visit, like a museum.
Inside you, a similar mansion, that I can visit
with your permission, gaze at pictures on the wall.
But only until closing time.

And is this not a strange predicament?
This seeming and inescapable individuality?
The hard shell of the 'I' that we live inside,
like soft-bodied sea creatures.
When did we choose this? On whose ill-advice?

How different the world would be
if we could waft through different identities
as easily as the wind inhabits the trees.

Then the woman selling flowers at the street corner would be me.
And the crumpled leaf of the half-blown rose in her bucket would be me.
And the man reaching into his back pocket to pay for the bouquet—me.
Me. Me. Me.

Then I would not be 'I' anymore. And neither would you.
No not at all and never again.



Once out of the bottle no genie of sound mind
ever chooses to return
to such cramped, uncomfortable quarters.

(Used with permission)



To Ponder.

The depths of our tradition call us to live out of this awareness of oneness. We pray to the “Source of all Being,” to the One from whom all comes and to whom all returns. Merton tells us that,

“ we are already one. But we imagine that we are not. What we have to recover is our original unity. What we have to be is what we are.”

It is the experience of this original oneness that impels us to care for creation, to tend to our brothers and sisters in need.

Can I identify moments and experiences where I have known (not with my head but with my whole being) my oneness with another, with others, with the rose and the leaf and the bear? What difference does this knowing make in my life?

Can I identify places where my world has become cramped because I have lost the awareness of this oneness of which I am a part? What are some ways in which I can heighten and expand my awareness of and presence to that oneness of which I am a part?

Some further thoughts from Constance Fitzgerald

The Dark Night of Contemplative prayer is about being grasped by God, transformed; it’s about having the familiar boundaries of our souls stretched and stretched so that we become more and more capable of holding within ourselves the full relational life of Jesus Christ. The conflicts, misunderstandings, losses and dyings, together with our myriad embodied experiences of Christ in prayer and ministry these past years, have all been and continue to be at the service of our becoming Christ, his identity shaping our graced identity, our becoming humanized and divinized by the human and divine Christ, his knowing and loving becoming ours, our becoming conscious with Christ’s very consciousness, his whole relational life becoming ours. This is breathtaking!

It means being drawn into the mutual dynamic relationships, the communion, that constitutes Trinitarian life. The identity of our God/Trinity is communion. Just imagine knowing Abba, the Source of life, as Jesus Christ knows Abba, experiencing being under the sway of the Holy Spirit the way Jesus Christ experiences being with the Spirit’s persuasive influence, being united with every human person, every living creature, the earth itself, the cosmos, precisely because we are in Jesus webbed into this Trinitarian dance of life and communion.

How might such an awareness concretely effect my relationship with my sisters, with those in need around me, with all of suffering humanity and our suffering Earth home?



Invitation to Contemplative Dialogue

Begin with some moments of quiet focused on the reality of Oneness. Then begin a conversation together:

- ❖ When am I most likely to experience the reality of my/our oneness?
- ❖ What are some things that help foster this sense of oneness?
- ❖ How might we continue to expand our experience of oneness to include ever larger circles?
- ❖ How might we structure our team meetings and our congregation meetings so as to foster the experience of oneness with each other and with the whole of creation?

Enhancing the awareness of oneness:

Pray the Prayer of Loving Kindness

May I be filled with loving kindness.
May I be peaceful and at ease.
May I be well.
May I be happy.

May we be filled with loving kindness.
May we be peaceful and at ease.
May we be well.
May we be happy.

May all be filled with loving kindness.
May all be peaceful and at ease.
May all be well.
May all be happy.



Go to You Tube and google Jan Phillips “One.” Listen to the chant and let yourself become one with it.

The next time you are having difficulty with someone—a personal friend, a colleague, a political figure—take some time to imagine them as a small child in need of love. Spend some time wondering about why they might act the way they do and consciously send love to them.

In moments when you are experiencing deep joy consciously widen the circle to include all who may be in need of joy in the moment.