

Letting Go or Tightening the Grip



Theme

Not a day goes by without being faced with situations of “letting go,” and we are faced with the choice to do so or not. However, often the only thing left for our choosing is how we will respond to the inevitable, as we struggle with the ebb and flow of life. Author, Annie Lamott puts words on this reality when she says, “Everything I’ve let go of has claw marks on it.” It is no easy deal!

We can choose to let go or tighten the grip, but the fact remains that we are ever confronted with change ... aging, death of those we love, ministry changes, relocating, re-purposing of buildings we no longer need or can afford, handing off cherished ministries. And the list goes on. Where is my heart in it all? What will allow me to let go?

“Are we “programmed” to walk through life with our head on backwards, looking always at where we have been? That is what grief is, you know – a backwards glance.” These words of writer, Donna Miesbach, speak of a healing that is necessary and ongoing whenever we are confronted with loss, but “when we can let go, its rewards are generous and we find a freedom and a joy beyond description.” (Reflections on Letting Go – April 24, 2013)

Reflection

Letting go can have meaning and be more “do-able” if we can engage in this on-going reality from a more contemplative place. Below are the five daily recollections drawn from the Buddhist tradition inviting us to daily reflection on life’s realities and to help ground our responses.

1. I am of the nature to grow old. I am not exempt from aging.
2. I am of the nature to have ill health; I am not exempt from disease.
3. I am of the nature to die. I am not exempt from death.
4. All that is dear to me and everyone I love are of the nature to change. There is no way to escape being separated from them.
5. My actions are my only true belongings. I cannot escape the consequences of my actions. Whatever I do, whether good or evil, that I will inherit. (Quant Tri – The Buddha Journey April 23, 2013)

Our Catholic/Christian tradition offers a similar message repeatedly in words that are familiar, but which invite an ever deepened, ever new response which can only result from contemplative listening, and heart-felt pondering.

“You must lose your life to find it.” Matthew 16:24-26

“Let go of all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another.” Ephesians 4:31-32

“Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.” Isaiah 43:18-19

“Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?” Matthew 6:27

Reflection Questions:

- ❖ As you ponder the selections above, what speaks to you at this time? Where is your heart?
- ❖ What are you noticing in your own life that is inviting you to a deeper “letting go?”
- ❖ Who or what can support you in that movement?



***Let go of the shore,
and let the water carry you.
Let go of the shore,
float into the mystery...***

Karen Drucker (Songs of Spirit 4)

Suggested Practice

How to Pray With the Eyes of the Heart

Adapted from the work of Kathryn Shirey

<https://www.kathrynsirey.com/pray-with-eyes-of-the-heart-visio-divina>

Visio Divina (Latin for “divine seeing”) is a method for praying with images or other media. While the Orthodox tradition has long practiced praying with images through icons, the western church is less comfortable with this type of prayer. To begin, choose one of the images below or another image that speaks to you of “Letting Go.”



- 1) **Prepare:** Close your eyes, breathe, clear your mind, and ask God to enter into this time of prayer with you. Ask God to speak to you through one of the images above that you have chosen.
- 2) **Lectio** (read): Open your eyes and scan the image. Note what draws your interest, but continue to scan the whole image. Close and rest your eyes a minute.
- 3) **Mediatio** (meditate): Open your eyes and let your eyes be led. Focus on just the part of the image that caught your eyes and name it. Close your eyes, seeing that piece of the image in your mind.
- 4) **Oratio** (pray): Open your eyes and look again at the piece of the image that caught your eye. Allow it to bring forth a word, image, or emotion. Close and rest your eyes.
- 5) **Contemplatio** (contemplation): Open your eyes and gaze at the whole image. How is God’s spirit drawing you through this image? What are you sensing about “letting go?” What response are you being invited to make? Pray/journal about it.

Contemplative Dialogue

The practice of Visio Divina can be experienced in a group. After each has had time for reflection and journaling, share any responses related to the questions below, allowing each to share, with a pause between speakers. After each has had a chance to share, engage in dialogue with one another building on what you have heard.

1. How is God's spirit drawing you through this image? What are you sensing about "letting go?"
2. What response are you being invited to make?

Song



Where is My Heart?

Where, oh where, where is my heart?
Where, oh where, oh where is my heart?
Donde está mi corazón?
Come back, oh come back, oh come back home

Are you hiding away in the past
Holding to memories that you thought would last?
Or have you flown to days far ahead
Where you think there's no sorrow
or ne'er a tear shed?



Are you locked up? And where lies the key?
Are you lost in the forest? Or tossed out to sea?
Or have you gone to lands far away?
Tell me where did you go when you shattered like clay?

Words and Music by Sara Thomsen
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Other Resources

Comfortable with Uncertainty, Pema Chodron; Shambhala Publications; Boston, MA, 2002

Cure for Sorrow: A Book of Blessings for Times of Grief, Jan Richardson; Wanton Gospeller Press; Orlando FL, 2016

Unbinding: The Grace Beyond Self, Kathleen Dowling Singh; Wisdom Publications; Somerville, MA, 2017