

Occupy as Spiritual Practice

by Karen Jeffery

One of my resolutions for 2012 is to follow my bliss. In considering this, I realize how important it is then to occupy my heart, to listen (really listen) to others...and to my own calling and my own inner silence. I do this as an activist, to call forth that which is best in myself...and in others.

Joseph Campbell wrote:

"People say that what we're seeking is a meaning for life. I don't think that's what we're really seeking. I think that what we're seeking is an experience of being alive, so that we actually feel the rapture of being alive.

If you do follow your bliss, you put yourself on a kind of track that has been there all the while waiting for you, and the life you ought to be living is the one you are living.

When you can see that, you begin to meet people who are in the field of your bliss, and they open the door to you. I say, follow your bliss and don't be afraid, and doors will open where you didn't know they were going to be.

If you follow your bliss, doors will open for you that wouldn't have opened for anyone else."

When I work with people, tabling for Occupy Ashland or just chatting with friends, I encourage them to find their passion, and bring it to the movement. What lights your fire? Homelessness, student debt, foreclosures? Money in politics, immigration policies, health care? Jobs? Conservation and sustainable energy? There are so many issues to draw one in. What issue touches your heart? And how can you take action to lighten the suffering of others?

There's a book by HHDL Tenzin Gyatso, "Ethics for the New Millennium", in which the last chapter is entitled "An Appeal", saying in part:

"As we have seen, compassion is one of the principal things that makes our lives meaningful. It is the source of all happiness and joy. And it is the foundation of a good heart of one who acts out of a desire to help others...."

We cannot escape the necessity of love and compassion. This then is my true religion, my

simple faith. In this sense there is no need for temple or church, mosque or synagogue, no need for complicated philosophy, doctrine or dogma. Our own heart, our own mind is the temple. The doctrine is compassion. Love for others and respect for their rights and dignity, no matter who or what they are.

Ultimately these are all we need. So long as we practice these in our daily lives, then no matter if we are learned or unlearned, whether we believe in Buddha or God, or follow some other religion, or none at all, as long as we have compassion for others and conduct ourselves with restraint out of a sense of responsibility, there is no doubt that we will be happy....

Therefore, with my two hands joined, I appeal to you the reader to ensure that you make the rest of your life as meaningful as possible. Do this by engaging in spiritual practice if you can. As I hope I have made clear, there is nothing mysterious about this. It consists of nothing more than acting out of concern for others....

I say this as neither Dalai Lama nor as someone who has special powers or ability. Of these I have none. I speak as a human being: one, who like yourself, wishes to be happy and not to suffer." (p. 234)

The sentiment expressed in these words from Tenzin Gyatso is central to how I wish to live, occupying my heart and loving others. May we all enjoy the continued blessings of family, community, perfect imperfect moments, amazing grace...and all the seasons of love.

Blessings for 2012

May you fall in love with each Moment
And each living being you meet.

May you Occupy your heart and live your dreams,
And may Love in every sacred form never cease to amaze you.

May you enjoy the blessings of family and friendship,

curiosity and passion,
gratitude and kindness,
service and remembrance.

amazing grace to you... and yours,
and endless blessings to us all