

Contemplative Musings

by Patricia Rome Robertson



The word contemplative originates from the Old French word contemplation, derived from the Latin contemplationem which means 'act of looking at,' from contemplari, meaning 'to gaze attentively, observe'. Originally it meant 'to mark out a space for observation' (as an augur would). In English, it meant 'religious musing.'

Wow! What a summer it has been! Political turmoil all over the country with recurring issues of exclusion, racism, hatred emerging along with violence and protest which has now spilled over into sports and debates about patriotism. Anger and victimizing continues to seem to be the currency in Washington. Hurricanes, earthquakes, fires, floods indicate that the planet is active as well and disrupting human and animal lives.

In the midst of all of that, there was an amazing “pause” on Monday, August 21, as folks throughout our country (even those not in the Zone of Totality), stopped what they were doing and went out into the streets, fields, farms, decks, rooftops, gathering with friends, neighbors, folks unknown to look up and for a couple of hours, we were all united in amazement, awe and appreciation for this grand creation we live in. We all joined in contemplation of the greater mysteries and beauty of life. Other creatures joined us as in many areas they became silent. It was as if our part of creation held its breath.

Such moments – when we experience ourselves - regardless of race, economic status, gender identity, immigration status – as human beings (not doings!) in part of a larger whole, are rare. We need to treasure and remember them. For such knowledge sustains our inner being and fortitude in times of uncertainty and unrest.

Since the beginning of the year, at Centering Prayer on Tuesday mornings, we have periodically read a prayer from the writings of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a Jesuit priest and scientist who lived and worked during the first part of the 20th Century. It is called **The Prayer of Trust**:

Above all, trust in the slow work of God.
We are quite naturally, impatient in everything
to reach the end without delay.
We should like to skip the intermediate stages.

We are impatient of being on the way
to something unknown, something new.
And yet it is the law of all progress
that it is made by passing through
some stages of instability . . .
and that it may take a very long time.

And so I think it is with you.
Your ideas mature gradually . . . let them grow,
let them shape themselves, without undue haste.
Don't try to force them on,
As though you could be today what time

(that is say, grace and circumstances acting
on your own good will)
will make of you tomorrow.

Only God could say what this new spirit
gradually forming within you will be.
Give our Lord the benefit of believing
that his hand is leading you,
And accept the anxiety of feeling yourself
In suspense and incomplete.

More is at work that we can see in all the distress around us. Just as the Eclipse of the Sun showed brilliance around the dark shadow of the moon, so may we see the brilliance of humanity and all of creation in our darkest hours. We get to be part of the great work of God.

May Fall Blessings abound in all of you,

Patricia+