

The transformative dark night of the soul

Dr. Clarissa Pinkola Estés | Apr. 21, 2008 | El Rio Debajo del Rio

Refuse to fall down.

If you cannot refuse to fall down,

refuse to stay down.

If you cannot refuse to stay down,

lift your heart toward heaven,

and like a hungry beggar,

ask that it be filled,

and it will be filled.

You may be pushed down.

You may be kept from rising.

But no one can keep you from lifting

your heart toward heaven -- only you.

It is in the midst of misery

that so much becomes clear.

The one who says

nothing good came of this,

is not yet listening.

What do we owe to our kith and kin who have been injured by those who professed holiness, but who acted in egregiously unholy ways instead?

What do we owe those who were children and who were assaulted physically during fits of temper by those who professed to be consecrated?

What do we owe children and adults and groups of human beings who have had false aspersions cast upon their characters by clerics ... in writing, behind their backs, to their faces, or in public... as well as exhorting others that that child, that adult, that group ought be shunned, set upon, or bristled at?

What do we owe those who asked questions, or who supposed, or dreamed, or envisioned, or were told to build a new Ark and to take "the best of the best" through the storm of a dying culture, to a new way of thinking, a new way of Life... what do we owe those who'd hardly gotten the blueprints for the newest Ark unrolled, and were thence set upon, insulted, politicized negatively, and borne false witness against?

What do we owe those who have been purposely erased, made institutionally invisible, those who have been made to submit to abridgement of their thoughts or visions so they now live like a beautiful book with all its center pages cut out?

What do we owe to those who have been forced to agree to not pick up their pens in their writing hands ever again, to not hit the "print" button, to not use their vocal chords in vibrato to speak the inspiratus of their thoughts?

What do we owe to those to whom a church has covetously said, "Live your life not by your soul's sight, but by our say-so: We shall rule your body, your hands, your mind, your voice.?"

What do we owe our *familiares*, relatives in spirit, who have been threatened spiritually, betrayed, abandoned, turned away when they begged for spiritual food?

What do we owe to those who have been injured by religious, thereby having their natural religiosity and spirituality abruptly amputated... religiosity and spirituality being a sacred process inborn into each soul, meant to occur naturally, in its own rhythm, with the precious and gradual unfolding of one's very own spiritual gifts, life-mending insights, and ever deepening spiritual views?

What do we owe to those who are sickened by the thought of spirit now, who cringe to think of anything religious, who distrust and try to avoid anyone who carries religiosity? What do we owe those who don't know what or who to trust again... in some horrible version of what back home we call: Cat, once burnt, won't sit on a cold stove.

What do we owe to those waiting decades and even unto death, for even mere notice, or help, or an empathic response, heart understanding, or apologies that are made of real medicine for the wound, that truly reach to the depths to help mend what pains the soul?

What do we owe to those who have been given platitudes and patronizing placebos, or scornful disinterest, or ineptitude to the nth degree, or wily words said only in an effort to "limit damages"? What do we owe those who have "stiff upper lipped" it, who say they no longer care, and have no interest, or just gave up?

And, what do we owe the consecrated and the avowed souls who have suffered with the children and adults and groups who suffer, those consecrated and avowed who have been slung at with the offal that really belonged to their brothers and sisters and superiors? These religious have suffered two-fold; being scourged whilst protecting and holding in their arms those who have been scourged.

And what can we do for those who look upon those harmed with such impatience, wanting to be shut of it

all already, to ?move on already, wanting healing to be limited to an ?efficient? amount of time?? What can we do for those whose Samaritan robes fit too snugly, and all they understandably wish for... is to get out of them and into something more comfortable...and self-comforting?

And, what shall we do for those who harmed others, those who did so out of ineptitude, that being far different than those who did so out of inflation and gourmand appetite for power? Yet, for either and both and all, what shall we say or do that can contribute to healing two things: denial and shame... and thus help to reset the core self back into the *Arche*, ?the immaculate Source of All? again?

What might we do, you and me, those of us who live somewhere along *El Rio Real debajo del rio, the real River beneath the river?* .. our little catacomb community... that?s us... we who call *that* place our ?first home,? and planet Earth, our second one...

I think the Johannine words 4: 31-33 give a strong clue about how to proceed in our time. The disciples had gone off into a small town to gather food for repast for themselves and Jesus. When they returned they found Jesus sitting alone. ?... the disciples pressed him, "Rabbi, eat. Are you not going to eat?" He told them, "I have food to eat you know nothing about." The disciples were puzzled. "Who could have brought him food?"

I think the small voice answer is: We could. We could, each in our own ways, be some of the ones who bring non-worldly food that feeds here and now -- our own and others? spiritual need -- for sharpened sight and spirit blood transfusion and creative strength.

There is a wisdom set into us which proposes that a slightly different point of view, a more aerial view will reveal to us -- for the tri-jillionth time in our lives as we struggle along -- that things are not always as they seem ...

that a wound is not only a laceration, it may also be a door ...

Abre la puerta, Open The Door

?She?s 12 years old, -- going on 20-to-life.

She is God at 5 feet tall.

But, *abre la puerta*,

open the door and let her in.

Give her food.

?Old Florencia lives in the parking garage

at the university, with her bags and packs

on the floor all around.

She washes her 84-year-old body in the sink at the library,
with a piece of flannel from her deceased husband's pajamas.

Abre la puerta, she is God.

Florencia is God, the God named Florencia.

Remember that old abuelita,

your grandest grandmother?

how she staggered toward you

on legs so thin? You were just a baby then.

And she smiled all over your infant self,

as you rose young and steaming from the void.

That was God in her abuelita form

crying with joy just to see you.

Que, que, que, bebebepita!? says the grandmother God.

Look, she says, I opened a door in my belly for your mother.

¡Miré! ¡Look! your mother opened a door in her belly for you.?

Ah, this grandmother, you can see God through her.

God is a grandmother.

Remember that red room where you grew?

That was God.

Remember the warm hands that received you?

That was God.

Remember your father's hands holding your face

As though it were a jewel?

In that moment, God shone through.

?Maria Martinez tells me she dreams of chickens made larger
when she cannot find shelter.

She licks her hands, ?and they taste good,? she says.

She is God.

God is homeless, yet she has hope.

Abre la puerta, let her in.

?Your mate who snores, well, maybe God snores.

Your mate is God who can never find his socks.

Your lover who burns for things you cannot give,
your mate is God.

God is a housewife in mud-face and curlers
standing at the door in a housecoat
waving good-bye.

God wears a housecoat once in a while.

?Oh world who is young, and has loved so deeply,
and been so betrayed,
whose skin hangs like rags,
whose arms have no muscle,
whose eyes have lost luster ?

Open the door of your heartache,
step through the door of your betrayal,
pass through the hole in your heart,

Pass through!

It is a door.

¡Abre la puerta!

Open the door?

?Oh the world is a thing whose lover disappoints,
who is tired of the news that is no news,
who toils for silly people doing silly things.

Pass through the eye of the needle that shreds your skin.

¡Abre la puerta! it is a door.

Your only hope -- step through the break in your own broken heart.

¡Abre la puerta! open the door.

?Do you remember that your legs are *el anillo*,
the ring that circles your lover?

Your legs make a door.

Pass through the door.

¡Abre la puerta! pass the bolt through.

Open the door, the most sacred of doors,
the trail through your belly

The road up your spine.

?Remember, fire is a door.

Destruction is a door.

Song is a door.

A scar is a door.

¡Abre la puerta! Open the door!

?The forest on fire is a door.

The ocean ruined is a door.

Anything that needs us,

or calls us to God

is a door.

¡Abre la puerta!

Open the door.

Anything that hurts us,

anything we make holy

opens the door.

¡Abre la puerta!

pass through the door!

?All those years of seeming indestructibility,

and then, the grandfather of your world dies;

?his heart explodes,

and yours breaks into a thousand pieces.

Each tiny piece of your shattered heart is a door?

These are doors?

Open the doors?

Abre la puerta ?

Pass through these doors.

?Whatever has died and left its big muddy boots

cold and hard by the back porch door ?

put them on?

Walk through the door of this death,

the door that dying has made for you.

Walk in those boots that bend with your warmth.

You are the grandfather now.

You are the grandmother now.

¡Abre la puerta!

Open the door.

?The world is a tribe of one-breasted women ?

walk through the doors of the scars on their chests.

¡Abre la puerta! open the door.

Over the edge of the world you go,

into the abyss we all march in time.

Put the best medicine in the worst of the wounds.

¡Abre la puerta!

open the door.

?The lake in which you almost drowned?

That is a door.

The slap in the face that made you kiss the floor?

That is a door.

The betrayal that sent you straight to hell?

That is a door

¡Abre la puerta! open the door.

?Same old story, all strong souls first go to hell

before they do the healing of the world

they came here for.

If we are lucky, we return to help

those still trapped below.

¡Abre la puerta! open the door.

¡Abre la puerta! open the door.

Hell is a door that is caused by pain.

?Opening a flower,

rain opening the earth,

the kisses of humans

opening the hearts of the world,

These are doors?

No further lamentation required?

¡Abre la puerta! open the door.

?The scar drawn by razors?

that is a door.

The scars drawn by chain saws across forests?

those are doors.

These all are doors,

¡Abre la puerta! open the doors.

?The poem of New Life that comes every dawn,

the soaring of sun?that is a door!

The grave is a door.

The door to hell is a door to Life.

¡Abre la puerta! open the door.

¡Abre la puerta! open the door.

¡Abre, abre la puerta! open the door.?

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