

Friday of Lent Week 5



Recently an unmanned research vehicle plunged to the deepest level of the ocean, seven miles down I think. To the scientists' surprise they found abundant life there feeding on the detritus that had sunk down from higher levels of the ocean.

The emotional and neural patterns which determine our behaviour and responses to events run very deep too. We can be aware of a process of change starting when we undertake a spiritual practice deep enough to address these patterns of our mind and lifestyle. But real change happens slowly.

Real change means irreversible as well as positive. When it happens we no longer snap back like an elastic band to our old settings when we are under pressure or when off our guard.

There are two levels of motivation then that we have to cultivate. At the first level, for example, we accept that there are patterns that it is not desirable to continue. We eat or drink too much. We indulge fantasy too often. We cannot control our anger. Sadness overwhelms and disables us. We push away the people we love and need, preferring to be isolated. Aware of these patterns a motivation develops to change. We probably thought of these five weeks ago as Lent began.

Then we find hope from sources and we trust that change is possible. And we start to do something about it. Meditation is a major catalyst for change. It is rather like the unmanned research vehicle. Unmanned because the ego? what we think we are and what we are when we think? is not in charge. Someone else is pulling the levers. We entrust ourselves to the spirit.

But it is a long journey and it gets murky. (I won't push this analogy any further.) What happens is that we notice changes in ourselves or others point them out. But things look and seem to remain pretty much the same. The patterns may shift and reduce but they still click in. I once had acupuncture on a bad knee. The intrusive and over talkative acupuncturist seemed to want to find a childhood trauma to explain it. But he was my best hope at the time

and eventually during the treatment I noticed change ? the pain persisted but it only moved further down my leg. The tropical sun, my next stop, finished the job more silently.

It is when we see a change in the patterns but we are disappointed that they are still there, that the second level of motivation needs to be cultivated. This is where we move from technique to discipline in the practice. And when faith becomes evidently the power of transformation and healing. ?Your faith has healed you?. And it is by faith ? this powerful but elusive quality of consciousness ? that we see the one who once taught this and continues to be the source of deep motivation.

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