

# An experience of relatedness

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**An excerpt from Laurence Freeman OSB, “Letter Four,” THE WEB OF SILENCE (London: DLT, 1996), pp. 38-39.**

As we meditate, alone or in groups or in communities, we can hardly not grow more aware of the deep relation between meditation and the world in which we live. Out of this awareness there grows an experience of relatedness—the ground of being in which we are all rooted—which expresses itself in a heightened sense of responsibility. Our natural conscience then guides us to act responsibly in the appropriate area of our life and in this we celebrate the marriage of contemplation and action. The power that drives this process is love. Compassion is love uniting those who suffer. It is redemptive because, against every expectation, it strikes a light in the darkest depth and releases the joy of being at the heart of the worst of tragedies.

The collective reaction to a national tragedy can reveal the universal capacity for compassion in human nature. While this capacity is fulfilled we are able to see life in perspective. True values displace false ones. The impatience and intolerance that arise from fear between peoples die down and we treat each other in those moments of grace with sympathy and respect. The kingdom, Christians would say, is at hand. Its interiority has become manifest in human relationships. But we know sadly that such moments of peace do not last long. . . .One meaning of suffering and evil is surely that it does draw

us, however briefly, into the shared awareness of the reality of communion. We see that the kingdom. . .is not a product to be produced and consumed but the timeless and boundless ground of being. Provided we have not become desensitized to suffering, we glimpse in tragedy not only how distant but how close God is to us.

***After Meditation, Lacy M. Johnson, Asst. Professor of English, Rice University, Houston, TX, Harvey update for family and friends, Wednesday evening edition,â August 30, 2017, Facebook post.***

Water destroys what it touches: carves canyons out of deserts, swallows people, ice, whole cities and continents. It also destroys the trivial things we spend our lives worshipping: our houses, our streets, our pride, our temples to bigotry and greed. I have heard now a story of a man who had escaped his flooding neighborhood, only to row back in his kayak to save one more person or one more thing, and capsized in the current. He was missing all night and in the morning they found him holding on to a tree. A teenager was swept away in the current of the bayou and caught the grate of a bridge and held on there for dear life until rescuers found her in the morning. An infant was taken from her mother by the current and the current offered that brand new life back to the churning sea.

But water also washes, gives life, makes new. The water has destroyed this city there's no two ways about it but the outpouring of love I have witnesses here among neighbors and strangers and coming to us from all over the world, is the most beautiful thing I have ever seen.

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