Voices of Sisters
Coronavirus
Spirituality



The existential questions that are arising in us need to be responded to out of a new vision. Who am I in this world? Am I alone or are we connected? Is there meaning in life? Does what I do make a difference? Is this universe a vast empty space void of any purpose? (Dave Hoefler/Unsplash)



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What looked like a winter storm invaded the vivid blue sky of this spring morning. It seemed to capture what was going on in me. Earlier, before dawn, I awakened consumed with worry and fear about the future. I couldn't fall back to sleep as I tried to reconstruct the dream which awakened me and which I was sure held an answer if I could only remember. The past few days I had noticed a growing resistance to situations, people and ideas that I've responded to in the past with compassion and understanding. Now I found myself reacting, annoyed with everyone and everything. I found myself alone anticipating an impending storm without any sense of direction.

Perhaps it was the accumulation of what COVID-19 has wrought in my life and in our world that had to find a way out. Perhaps it was another moment when, in my spiritual journey, I was brought to the stark realization that I still crave certainty and feel it is up to me alone to find the solutions.

Being alone and feeling alone has permeated our lives these months. Many feel abandoned in the face of the death of spouses, siblings, children, friends and colleagues. Anxiety consumes us, overwhelmed in facing a future that is uncertain and not at all what was hoped for or imagined.

These are the feelings that can lead to depression, addiction and, in the extreme, suicide. All of which have been on the rise during the pandemic.

In the past, formal religions offered comfort and guidance in these situations. With more and more people leaving traditional religious institutions, that is no longer the case. The separation between religion and science begun in the 1300's widened over the centuries. Some people retained belief in what has always been taught in the churches, rejecting evolution and other insights of science that might have informed their faith. Many others saw religion as irrelevant to address the complex world of today, with its scientific and technological breakthroughs.

Today, the experience of the pandemic has revealed the underside of many of the institutions and systems that we have relied on over these last centuries, many of which are failing us and cannot bring us into the future. To paraphrase the quote attributed to Albert Einstein, we cannot solve the problems of today out of the same level of consciousness that created them.

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Today, these questions and the experiences that gave rise to them will not be addressed out of a past consciousness; rather the future consciousness will need to envision a both/and relationship between faith and science.

I don't think it was an accident that my "awakening" happened in Holy Week. I found myself, as I often do, drawn to the final discourse in John's Gospel (Chapters 14-17) There Jesus tells his friends, "Do not let your hearts be troubled; I'm going to prepare a place for you; I will not leave you orphans; you all are one; you will do greater things than I and you are to love one another."

The existential questions were being addressed. I found myself returning to my Christian faith, not simply as I learned it growing up, rather as informed by ancient wisdom traditions, interfaith perspectives and especially the insights of evolution and quantum physics to calm my fears and offer insights into moving forward.

Quantum physics is turning the classical scientific worldview upside down. The rational, linear, atomized, mechanistic worldview which shaped so many of our modern institutions/systems has run its course. Faced now with a greater sense of alienation and fragmentation, humanity knows at a deep level that there is something more.

What we are learning is that everything is connected at all levels of existence. Reality has many dimensions — most of which cannot be observed or measured. Consciousness is central to reality, and the human person is a participant in the evolutionary process. There are ways of knowing, other than the rational, that are

needed to grasp what is being revealed.

Such discoveries lend themselves to an openness to explore the spiritual dimensions of ourselves and our reality. The insights of quantum physics offer a new framework to express the religious impulse within us. It offers us a way of interpreting anew religious beliefs that touch into another way of knowing — of sensing what is — that have been lost these past centuries.

Cynthia Bourgeault explores these connections in her book, *Eye of the Heart*. She discusses the dimensions of reality as different but connected realms of various energetic densities. She draws on the ancient wisdom traditions and Christian beliefs to describe a "deeper order of coherence and aliveness flowing through this earthly terrain connecting it to the infinite wellsprings of cosmic creativity and abundance." These realms exist within a web of mutual nurturance. Each realm gives and receives from the other. This energetic exchange holds the whole created order together.

Such articulations stir my soul as new expressions of God's creation, of everlasting life, of life's purpose and implications for our role in the whole enterprise.

When seen within this context, Jesus' words to those he loved on the night before his death, reveal Jesus' cosmic mission. To paraphrase Bourgeault, in his death Jesus breathes in the pain of our common humanity: the human condition with all its brokenness and toxicity. He then breathes out from the depths the unjudging love, which releases us from being held captive by that pain. Jesus doesn't overturn the life conditions that are part of living here on this earthly realm but "he seals them with this heart. We do not endure them alone," writes Bourgeault.

We know we are not alone. We share a common earthly realm and are connected to other more subtle realms through which we experience Divine creativity and abundance. We will encounter storms and pain, as they are part of the human condition. But we will not be held captive by that pain, for we are released through Jesus' willingness to live and die aligned with Divine love. And Jesus assured us that we can live that way as well. Our choices do matter.

The pandemic may still overwhelm us, and I may still be awakened worrying about my future not going according to my plans, but the invitation is there to trust, to let go — deeply aligning with Divine love which permeates and embraces the many realms in which we live and breathe and have our being.