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# Living in the Balance

## July and August 2021

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When I was a little girl, I would get mad at my parents and through my tears I would announce defiantly to my mother that I was running away from home! She looked at me over her glasses and said, “Good....I’ll help you pack!” Hardly the response I was looking for. “YOU DON’T WANT ME?!” I shrieked while falling into a heap. How could my mother...any mother.....help HER child....her amazing, bright shining penny....run away?! And where would small me run to?

I frequently tell my husband that I want to run away. He’s good with it as long as we run away together. “Where do you want to go?” he asks hopeful for a fun adventure! “Somewhere not full of hateful, dumb asshats. Somewhere where people have sense and make sense. Somewhere over the rainbow....where bluebirds fly.... Hell, I don’t know. I just know I’m sick of here.” I’m not sure where “not here” is, but I’m confident that somewhere else is truly better. Different. New. Fresh. Rex looks at me and sighs, “I know. I get it.”

So when we are both in runaway mode he’ll do that jaw twisting thing he does and say, “We’re in the fifth fifth of life and maybe we should just say screw it.” The political mayhem. The hate talk. The crazy wingnuts. We don’t need a hot water heater with a 25-year guarantee. And we don’t have kids so what’s a little climate change or a grid locked government or homeless people on the street. We can just kick back and let the dervishes whirl. Sounds good in the moment, but neither of us is wired that way.

A friend recently announced that she was doing a weeklong self-directed silent retreat. That got my attention and held it. Hmmmm. I’ve done that but it was about 20 years ago. I had just left the school district where I’d worked for 30 years and most of those 30 years were spent listening. When people asked what I was going to do when I “retired” I replied, “I’m going to check myself into a monastery.” Peals of laughter and lots of eye rolling followed. “A monastery!? You?! Good one!” But that is what I did. I packed myself up and went to Mepkin Abbey and hung out with the monks for five days. This was long before their new retreat center. I had a desk. A lamp. A small bed. An umbrella. I vowed to not get distracted so I brought only one small Buddhist volume, my journal, and snacks (confess.....do you go on any trip without snacks?) It was June. The grounds were quiet and inviting. While I did not get up for 3:30 vigils, I was in the “choir” chanting with the monks at 5:30 for lauds. For me it was an easy, even pace. I spent my days walking the oyster shell paths among the old, old oaks. I sat on...and dosed on....a bench that overlooked the Cooper River. I watched the herons and the egrets pick their way along the water. And I meditated as I had been doing for many years, settling into the present and the quiet and the Now.

Honestly, I do not want to actually run away as “no matter where you go there you are.” What I long for are some moments....hours.....of Sabbath. These last few years and especially this past year, I have let those practices that sustained me slip away. Silence. Meditating. Wandering around with my camera. Instead, I am pulled down a hundred rabbit holes that lead to a hundred more. Thankfully, I have continued walking and, in that walking, “noticing” especially the juxtaposition of so much beauty in the midst of so much suffering. My heart cracks open. Tears. Every day is about beginning again I tell myself and, then I lean a little on Walt Whitman, *“That you are here—that life exists, and identity; That the powerful play goes on, and you will contribute a verse.”* And that is the mantra for this day.

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## About Spiritual Direction —

- Offers a space and time for you to explore, reflect upon, and deepen your relationship with God.
- Provides a haven from the daily busyness of the outer world and opens a time to be still and to reflect on your inner journey.
- Is a companioning relationship grounded in dialogue and discernment.
- Explores ways you may integrate spirituality into your daily life.
- Is not limited to any one spiritual practice or tradition.
- May involve one or two meetings or multiple meetings over time.

## You may wish to consider spiritual companioning if you are —

- Longing for a deeper relationship with the Divine
- Looking for a place to dialogue about spiritual questions
- Seeking ways to connect with the Spirit in a more intentional way
- Discerning ways to live in a more integrated and whole way
- Standing at a crossroads in your life
- Exploring new or fresh ways to be in relationship with God

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For more information about Spiritual Direction, please feel free to contact me by phone  
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*These photos are my work taken several years ago at Mepkin Abbey in Moncks Corner, South Carolina. It is a Trappist Monastery.*

