



Living in the Balance

May and June 2023

As I step through the cottage door, the late March wind blows straight through me. I shiver as I burrow down into my hoodie jacket and double check the zipper with my gloved hands. "The coldest days since January," quipped the weatherman, "And a brisk wind blowing about 25 miles per hour gusting higher!" The sand bites as it skitters and blows to the shore propelled by the high waves. The wind chaps my face.

The beach is deserted except for the galloping dogs dragging their owners along. A few sandpipers scurry in and out of the foam. Probing. I'm never sure for what. The cold does not chill my love of the solitude. I look out at the horizon. I feel the same sweet solace I felt as a child. I both marvel and sigh at how quickly the years have flown.

I discover several intact shells. A rarity. A lettered olive. A few angel wings still hinged. But most of the debris is a graveyard of crushed houses once occupied by soft little sea animals. A piece of whelk. The hard top of a long-gone horseshoe crab. The broken sunburned remains of a conch. And thousands of little bits and pieces crushed under foot or battered by the waves. Now there are only the remnants of what was once whole and safe and secure. I wonder what happened to the little sheltered lives once hunkered inside.

I continue wandering down the beach with the hope of finding more unscathed shells and perfect pebbles. I smile as I walk. This search reminds me of how my inner Crusader Rabbit always enthusiastically seeks everything in life for the flawless whole. Her voice echoes in my head. "Look Wanda, look! This is the perfect house! Theology! Job! Your true calling! YEAH! I have found it!"

Thank God for Crusader Rabbit enthusiasm that gets me out of bed. And in that same search for perfection, Crusader has never met a cause she wouldn't tackle no matter how flawed or hopeless. She charges confidently onward, tilting at another doomed windmill, "Wait! Wait! Let me see those broken pieces! I can fix that! You'll see! I have several tubes of Gorilla glue!"

Crusader never gives up. She remains ever hopeful for finding the beautifully unspoiled and sometimes she does. The perfectly shaped lettered olive sits next to the flawless whelk and the intact sand dollars on the entry way table of my home. And next to the perfect, rest the dried twigs and the shell pieces and the broken rocks and bits of fossil I've collected. I like the way they look and feel. So much mystery in the broken and unmendable. What was this nuggly little piece connected to? What creature marked this clay?

As artist Erin Smith says, "If you are always looking down for the perfect shell, you're going to miss the other perfectly fabulous crap on the beach!" As I walk, I take notice of the remnants of crab, sea urchins and sand dollars. Things left behind. Things once whole. And I think about my own protections and shelters that have come and gone. Sometimes I was brave enough to step out in vulnerability consciously leaving behind a place too small. Other times I found myself broken and cracked open by circumstances....an out of the blue "what the hell just happened?" leaving my bare rawness exposed. My boat swamped. And I am grateful to have "righted" myself....to have come to the surface....to be vertical again....to have survived the storm. I know that nothing is solid and that there will be another deluge.

Gratitude fills me as I come back to the cottage path and the wind subsides. I am thankful for all the shards and pieces of my imperfect, glued together life for it is all uniquely mine. I have stopped looking for flawless and try to find wonder in all the "perfectly fabulous crap" on the beach of my life. I have quit carrying my personal Gorilla glue. I have stopped my focus on perfection and embraced the cracked, the broken, the brave and the daring of my life and now have deep gratitude for the glue that is Grace.



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

I am no longer offering spiritual direction but will be glad to talk with you about the process.

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These photos were taken at the beach in 2016. I am always intrigued by what I find.

