



Staying Connected to our spirituality during difficult times?

by Matthew Fox

***If I am a spiritual being having an earthly experience,
how do I stay connected to my spirituality
during these chaotic and changing times?***

One stays close to one's spirituality during chaotic times first by staying connected to one's body. And therefore the earth and the cosmos. It is very important to put things into context and the context for our existence is *not* the chaos and even evil that is swirling about us. The context is that we are here. Where? Here in the universe of 13.8 billion years that is expanding and is two trillion galaxies large each with hundreds of billions of stars.

That is the context, that is our home, that is the womb in which we swim, move, have our being. Draw on that, as the psalmist says "look up to the mountains" and to the stars and to the vast universe that has invited us here, prepared the table so to speak. This puts everything else—including human folly—into context. The bottom line is that we are here—"existence is a miracle" says the poet Rilke. Drink in that miracle.

It is not so hard a thing to do. Every bite of food we eat and drink is a cosmic event, it all has a 13.8 billion year history. It is sacred, this eating and this breathing and this existing. It is all a Eucharist of the Cosmic Christ or Buddha Nature or Image of God. A Thank You therefore.

It is by drinking in gratitude for existence and the awe of it all that we are grounded—grounded in gratitude which is why Meister Eckhart teaches: "If the only prayer you say in your whole life is 'Thank You' that would suffice."

Grounding yourself in the *Via Positiva* is the starting point for the journey. This includes appreciating your existence and your body (which actually carries the history of the universe within it). So exercise. Walk or run or swim or do yoga or...use your body while you can. Reflect on the miracle of it all ("miracle" meaning "marvel" or "wonder"). Ground yourself therefore in the Earth. Let Earth speak to you and all her creatures, trees and grass and garden and plants and of course animals. They have plenty to say at this time.

Enter into your moral outrage at indifference or lies or violence or folly. But steer it, use it as a fuel, not for venting but for feeding your imagination and strength to help transform self and others and our institutions which are dying from being married to a modern era when we are living in a post-modern era.

Call on the wisdom of the ancestors, especially pre-modern wisdom, where the human does not come first, but the cosmos and the earth come first. Of course this means praying to the premodern mystics such as Hildegard of Bingen and Meister Eckhart, Francis of Assisi and Thomas Aquinas as well as Jesus and the entire Wisdom tradition of Israel. Learn from other spiritual traditions too, all of which are pre-modern in their origins and consciousness. The Tao te Ching, the Vedas and Upanishads, Buddhist teachings, indigenous wisdom and practices are all rich with wisdom.

Prefer wisdom over knowledge. Dance and paint and laugh and cook and make friendship a value and marry love making to mysticism.

And enter the fray justice demands of our time whether about racism or sexism or economic imbalance, and of course the issue of Climate Change and the Extinction of species calling us. Listen to that call. What can you contribute? Who are your allies with whom you can link up to be agents of transformation in your community, in your place of work or profession, in your citizenship? Find them. What talents and creative visions do you bring to the battle? (And it is a battle and you need to develop your spiritual warrior for times like ours.)

Be generous.

Be courageous.

Laugh a lot.

Pursue truth. Eschew lies and falsehoods.

In short, practice the four paths of creation spirituality—the *via positiva* (awe and joy and gratitude); the *via negativa* (silence and also grieving); the *via creative* (creativity); and the *via transformative* (justice and compassion and celebration). Ground yourself there and you will have deep roots and you will bend and bow in the winds of the wildness of our days but you will also grow and give back and will not break.