

Imaginal Activism

Well, hello to all of you and welcome, and I add my greetings on this very special and I think significant day in the life of one of the great religious traditions, Christianity.

It is the day of Pentecost, the classic day where unitive and unity were wrapped together as everybody spoke in the same language, understood each other in a deep unity, as the Holy Spirit came fireballing down to kickstart the whole thing in high gear.

What a great day to be having the second go-round at our wonderful conference and gathering.

I think it's a sort of spiritual think tank exploring what next, what do the times and what do our own consciences collectively and united really call us to do.

So I want to come at this from another corner of things, and it's kind of been inspired by the wonderful, wonderful summons that Marianne Williamson delivered to us at the last conference where her resounding line was, "Pray in the morning, kick butt in the afternoon."

And I think that conference was a surprise to us all, and a very, very welcome surprise.

I don't know what people were expecting in the start, but I suspect they were expecting that all these so-called enlightened teachers were going to give people self-calming techniques to talk about how to rise above it, and this too will pass, and just use your mind to calm your anxiety.

Wrong.

Instead, what we got was from teacher after teacher, from Andrew and Matthew and Marianne and Sherry and all on it, a profound, united summons to say, "No, what is going on now is a violation of conscience.

It's a disfiguring of the face of the human being before God, if you can stand the God language.

And to the extent that we are supposed to be made in the image and likeness of God in the Judeo-Christian tradition, it's a disfiguring of God's good."

So the question is not if we act, but it's how we act.

Act we must, leadership must be a part of the mix.

The question that any of this can bring from the spiritual sector is a perspective on it, so that action doesn't simply become judgmental, reactive, and angry, so that it's suffused with skillful means, and in that sense, reaches its target without ripping up the planet in the process.

So I think that's the goal, and I think that's the goal that would be shared by almost all the people you'll be hearing and interacting with here.

We want to do it.

We know we have to do it.

We know we have to gird up our loins.

We don't know how to do it.

Many of us are baby boomers.

We've never known such insecurity before.

So in that sense, I'd like to start by just saying that praying in the morning and kick butt in the afternoon for all of the power of it does, too, underestimate the power that is contained in prayer.

And I'm not going to go back to the old religious rap here, but I think that prayer is one of our most powerful ways of kicking butt, if we know how to use it rightly and apply it strategically.

One of the reasons that that whole thing, that the whole kind of idea of contemplation versus action has gained traction is because of these desperately paternalistic and outmoded ideas of God that come from the Judeo-Christian tradition, where we all sort of picture this little old man up in the sky who's a judge with a few good days.

And so we whine and we plead, and a lot of grown-ups say, "To hell with that."

But I think that this idea that contemplation or prayer is a private activity usually used for self-replenishment, for self-restoration, for a restoring of a confidence in the face of fright or in the face of hardship, it's partway in the door, but it can get all the way in the door when you start from the assumption that prayer has to connect to something.

And what it connects to for me is the wonderful map of the Ray of Creation.

It occurs in many, many traditions, but my own most influenced model is from Gurdjieff, where he devised, he took the old great chain of being model that Ken Wilber and so many people have talked about, and turned it into many, many realms reciprocally feeding each other, giving each one receiving, each one on the chain operating under different conditions and in higher and higher degrees of intensity, spiritual coherence, purposiveness, and agency.

And so here we are, human beings down on the chain, toward the bottom of it, not quite at the bottom, in a world that's dense and coarse and linear and mechanical, but just beyond us, and the next one really in association with us is the Imaginal Realm, World 24, under half as many laws and capable of all sorts of wonderful, neat things at a higher, more intense electromagnetic level than we can even imagine down here in our conceptually bound earth.

So prayer is really the lifeblood and the lifeline and communications network with this realm from which we give, receive, and deploy.

And so that's the nub of what I've been teaching in my group, which is Imaginal activism, which is really engaging this thing.

When prayer operates at high speed within the spirit of Imaginal activism, it comes under new and higher laws.

We gain, first of all, instant bi-location.

I mean, you know about quantum entanglement, something that's going on in one part of the cosmos is going on in another.

And you gain not linear timing, first this, then after this, post-hook, after proper hook, but instant, simultaneous, synchronous connection, which allows action to be placed anywhere at any time and reach out and connect with everything else at that same level without having to go through all these organization and motivations and committees.

It's just the power of pure intention instantly communicated around a web.

And it's very real.

The other thing that we gain, we gain the multiplication of knowing that our efforts are joined with not only with everyone else along the planet at that level in weirdly wonderful ways, but we can receive from the spiritual teachers that have gone beyond us and are no longer on this planet all the way back to the Buddha, Jesus, if you want, St.

Francis, you name it, Eddie Hillsome, they're all here.

And if they are in the higher realms, they are still fulfilling something of a bodhisattva function, concerned for us, knowing even better than we do how precious this planet is, how crucial it is to the cosmic equilibrium, and prepared to exchange help.

So as we learn to purify the prayer, purify the motives in the ground of our beseeching, as Julian of Norwich once famously said, prayer becomes a powerful agent.

It's almost like a secret lifeline of the exchange of energy at a far higher level, electromagnetic and beyond, of pure intention.

So if we know how to deploy it and move beyond it, beyond just personal replenishment and private devotion, into strategic Imaginal activism, this would be for me a way that we will eventually find our way to bridge the gaps through the thorny paradoxes and conundrums of this particular courageous operation we're embarking on.

So in conclusion, I would like to just mention about maybe a half dozen skills and mindsets that I've been working with around my wisdom network to help people become Imaginal activists.

And we've done as many as three in a few ceremonies at one time, but we will eventually work this up into a full course, I think.

But I start, the first is Centering Prayer or any form of strong, good meditation that will allow a person to detach from their emotions, feelings, provisional reactivity.

It can be Centering Prayer, that's mine in honor of Thomas Keating, my teacher.

Any other form, Vipassana meditation, whatever.

It needs to be a bedrock because personal reactivity is, as the ancient traditions have said, a blur of awareness.

We get all up at personal reactivity, agendas, ego issues, judgment, blame, and then we cannot act with the kind of clear impartiality that's forceful.

So that is the bedrock.

The second piece comes from G.

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Gurdjieff, which is Three-Centered Awareness, which is the realization that we have within us three discrete, three separate systems of intelligence, all operating at their own speed and giving their own perspective on the world.

And these are the intellectual center, our thinking brain, our emotional or feeling brain, but also our moving center, which is intelligence and movement, the ability to explore the world through sensation and movement, particularly rhythmic.

So it's a wonderful energy equalizer so that we don't get stuck in our emotions.

And it is also through sensation the gateway to our subtle inner body, which already lives perfectly comfortably at that Imaginal level.

Eckhart Tolle was the first to pick that up years and years ago in his book, *The Power of Now*, and it still is not a significantly acknowledged point.

So the third after that is a quality I've been speaking about quite a lot lately, which is called metis.

The word comes from the Greek, and it was first called to our attention by Peter Kingsley, who actually gave us a seminar here in Aspen many years ago, wonderful British philosopher.

And Peter pointed out that this Greek word actually means shrewdness.

But what it means is skillful timing.

It knows how to act, how to act in a way with exactly the right force and exactly the right timing so that it strikes its goal.

It's like, how do you deliver the karate chop?

And I think that there's no lack of metis, at least in this group, or no lack of willingness to employ it.

But there is generally a lack of skill in how to, because once again, our emotions and our judgments and our anxieties get so loud that we miss timing, just like you can never react skillfully when you're angry or when you're in a rage or when you're reactive.

You're always going to hit it just slightly off center.

So that's the third.

The fourth is conscience, which is learning how to act and to see beyond the subtle, beyond our kind of templates of right and wrong, seeing beyond judgment, seeing beyond what we think is right and wrong, seeing with humility, but acting absolutely in straight alignment with our conscience, which is our connection.

It's the eye of the heart, as far as I'm concerned.

It is the rod in us that aligns with Imaginal causality and even beyond.

And when our conscience is clean and is listening and is motivated, it will inevitably align with right, with the higher order, with the higher coherence, without judgment, without blame, without fear, and without fear for its own well-being.

It's a kind of deep sense of unity with and in the infinite.

And I think the restoration of conscience is one of the crying needs of our own skill-building
The fifth is courage, which is in the old French, cour-age, the way of the heart.

Again, courage is to follow the path of conscience without fear.

It's not bravado, it's not in your face, it's not reckless.

Sometimes you're scared shitless, but you will not fall out of alignment.

It's that kind of courage.

The courage of Jesus on the cross, who certainly didn't like it and probably was quite intimidated by the pain that he was going to suffer and the injustice.

But step up to the plate.

When you know you're not going back, when you know that you are doing what must be done.
it's that which provides the interior composure to walk forward gracefully, resolutely, even in fear.

And finally, compassion, which is deeper than pity and deeper than love.

Compassion is ground on equality, and equality is ground on seeing that we're all one.

I'm not looking down on somebody or imposing.

Compassion is that we could easily be in either person's shoes.

Compassion for ourselves, compassion for our planet, compassion for those we consider to be our enemies, compassion for all of us stuck in this horrible loop that was nobody's making.

It's come by forces and by needs and by years and years and decades and maybe even centuries of misattention and misdirection.

A course correction that may be required from points beyond ourselves.

But compassion is what will allow us to go through it, keeping our hearts open and soft to one another, to our planet.

And only with that softness of heart can any of anything that I've said in the last 25 minutes or so find a place to land.

So in the spirit of compassion, courage, conscience, metis, three-centered awareness, and meditative prayer, I send you all forth with a blessing and deep gratitude.

Thank you.