

Counselor's Corner: *Loosed From Our Moorings*

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I have been re-reading a favorite book of mine, *Going to Pieces Without Falling Apart*, by Mark Epstein, a psychiatrist and Buddhist. He writes about how our thinking minds rule over and imprison our spiritual selves. He quotes D.W. Winnicott, a British psychoanalyst: "Perhaps not enough attention has been paid to the mystic's retreat to a position in which he can communicate secretly with subjective phenomena, the loss of contact with the world of shared reality being counterbalanced by a gain in terms of feeling real." Winnicott is suggesting that our intellectual grip on "shared reality" or our day to day pragmatism about doing and getting done, walls us off from our real selves where we can and need to communicate with the world of the spiritual, the quiet spaces from which we open ourselves to being moved and touched by God.

Epstein says that we are imprisoned by habits of thinking and doing, and by our fear of the unknown. Our over-involvement in thinking things through, analyzing, understanding, and achieving overwhelms us and there is no room to be free of knowing and doing.

Those moments of unknowing when the mind is naturally loosed from its moorings are said to be special opportunities for realization...At the moment of death, or while falling asleep or ending a dream are times when the veils of knowing are spontaneously lifted and the underlying luminosity of the mind shines through. But we have a powerful resistance to experiencing this mind in all of its brilliance. We are afraid to let ourselves go all the way. To set ourselves adrift requires a trust that for most of us was lost in childhood.

I am reminded of a story Marcus Borg tells in *The Heart of Christianity*. A three-year-old girl asks her parents if she can be alone with her newborn brother. They over-

hear her saying to him, "Tell me about God—I've almost forgotten."

The adult demands of our cultural, educational, social and economic lives promote a fear of relaxing our grip on what we know. Even prayer becomes rote and habitual. Worship can become merely an opportunity for entertainment and social interaction. I remember a Maundy Thursday at Westminster some years ago when my intellectual fatigue rendered me defenseless, and the convergence of music, dance, scripture and ritual culminated in an experience of Christ's Passion that was beyond anything I had felt before.

One of the great joys of being a pastoral counselor is in providing others a safe space in which to experience one's real self, unguarded by the sentinels of fear that keep us enthralled with only what we know. Letting go of our knowing minds frees us to discover ambivalence, mystery, the peace of not knowing, the trust to not need to know. In those moments we can access emotions that have the power to open us to new life. Even disturbing emotions can resurrect us out of the walled up spaces in which we keep ourselves. We can allow ourselves to experience our emotional depths in a safe place, not having to understand them, fix them, or act them out in destructive ways. We simply tolerate them and let them be, which then frees us from their bondage.

May you find the places and spaces in the slower days of summer when *doing* is relaxed and *being* is embraced, when you can let down your guard, be loosed from your moorings and feel the exquisitely peaceful presence of Mystery.



Margaret McCray



Third Graders Receive Bibles

Photo by Tom Northenscold on May 14, 2006

Welcome New Members!

Photo by Tom Northenscold on May 18, 2006

