

October 1, 2020

Now that the days will be shorter and time will hang around, I am going to try to be more regular with these posts, maybe, not every day but more than once a week.

I am spending time with Fanny Howe's writing these days, she is a bit older than me, a writer of poetry and prose, but more recognized for her poetry, she has taught poetry and creative writing at some of the most influential schools, Stanford, Yale, Columbia, Georgetown and the like, and she considers herself to be a Catholic, a Catholic atheist in one account of her faith.

She believes that doubt "allows God to live." She exercises extreme care to make sure that she remembers that that word "God" signifies nothing that she can understand, she relies on what she calls relics of "God" which are people, places, objects, ideas, music that have opened a pathway for her into the mystery that she encounters in her own life.

She only "stops for the Eucharist in churches where there are sick, vomiting, maimed, screaming, destroyed, violent, useless, happy, pious, fraudulent, hypocritical, lying, thieving, hating, drunk, rich, poverty-stricken people."

She teaches "bewilderment" as a way of life, "a poetics and a politics" of life, a manner of seeing and living that does not try and give an account for everything, a way of inhabiting life that accepts and acknowledges that there is NOT a reason for everything.

For Howe, "meditation, contemplation, prayer indicate that there is an emptiness already built into each body."

Therefore, she is not without crosses to bear, depression, panic attacks, sadness, losses, deaths, failed love and other affairs, disappointments in maintaining relationships, all of the things that we all can trip over as our lives unfold, beset her and us from time to time.

In these strange days of the year 2020, the mood, the spiritual climate, if you will, very much reflects the rage and unsettledness of nature in the fires, the hurricanes, the droughts, the floods, the weatherly chaos.

It is painfully obvious that we are having a terrible time of it, coping and managing, so much that we who are citizens of a country dedicated to control and we find that we cannot control.

The “god” of our youth, the “god” that we thought so blessed us with prosperity and peace, singling us out as exceptions, is not working as expected and some are enraged, literally filled with rage at the vulnerability that that exposes us to, the weakness, the failure.

We live in times of great disorientation, a kind of social and cultural vertigo, an opened Pandora’s box, a Humpty Dumpty fallen from the wall.

There is enormous effort being spent trying to put Humpty back together again with visions of perfection crafted in the minds of wounded and damaged men, mostly men, as is the custom, hell bent on trying to restore what so many of us assumed to be balance and to regain control but, I think force and power are useless here and will only prove to be the source of more chaos.

The absence of any complexity in the preaching and teaching of many Christian officials which admits of no doubt about practically anything is folly in the face of fear or denial in the face of doubt.

To sanitize our wonderful Catholic Tradition with shallow bowls of pablum and eliminate any hints of complexity and to eliminate all doubts with rigid and narrow categories is not at all what I read of Jesus in the Gospels.

I really believe that we need “meditation, contemplation, prayer” and not knowing how to do that is no hindrance if we but try, try to “be still and know that I AM God.”

Be still and know that I AM.

Be still and know.

Be still.

Be.

Spend just 5 minutes with only those words on your plate, 5 minutes a day.

Peace!