

May 20, 2020

The flow of human living that we just took for granted has dried up and in many ways we find ourselves behind barriers of separateness not of our own choosing, to a greater or lesser degree, and it is neither natural nor normal to live like this.

The absence of physical touch that many of us are experiencing is even more disturbing and, on the other hand, I resent total strangers when I see them approaching me on my sidewalk when I am walking toward them.

I don't go out to anyplace other than funeral homes and cemeteries as I hear the stores and shops are filled with unmasked people that I know I would resent and worse.

I am making enemies in my mind out of ordinary people that have done me no harm because they might do me harm.

The uncertainty is what undoes me.

I hear that some people have decided that they have had a good life and if they die of Covid 19, so be it. That is all well and good but apparently there are many people without symptoms who can potentially be super carriers. It happened at a Catholic Church in Texas where they "reopened" for Mass, May 2, and by May 13 one of the priests was found dead in his bed and three others tested positive, all of them without symptoms. The church is, again, closed.

I know others have determined that this is an overblown reaction to what may be a hoax, but when you remember the images of the New York hospitals and those refrigerated trucks and you hear the testimony of survivors and you see the kids who have recovered from their terrible ordeals, who could be so cruel?

The logistics of the future are maddening to me in my small world, I cannot imagine the details and data that schools and colleges are finding on their plates as they look down the road toward the fall.

The magnitude of our grief at what we have lost or left behind us increases daily and so we have unrecognized and unacknowledged grief as another factor to contend with in isolation from so much and so many.

But you know all of that.

I offer you these words from Rainer Rilke who died in 1926, a very thoughtful and creative thinker and poet, found in letters that he wrote to a young man trying to find his way in the world:

“Try to love the *questions themselves*, like locked rooms and like books written in a foreign language. Do not now look for the answers. They cannot now be given to you because you could not live them. It is a question of experiencing everything. At present you need to *live* the question. Perhaps you will gradually, without even noticing it, find yourself experiencing the answer, some distant day.”

And from T.S. Eliot the American born British poet who died in 1965:

“Home is where one starts from. As we grow older
The world becomes stranger, the pattern more complicated
Of dead and living. Not the intense moment
Isolated, with no before and after,
But a lifetime burning in every moment
And not the lifetime of one man only
But of old stones that cannot be deciphered.
There is a time for the evening under starlight,
A time for the evening under lamplight
(The evening with the photograph album).
Love is most nearly itself
When here and now cease to matter.
Old men ought to be explorers
Here or there does not matter
We must be still and still moving
Into another intensity
For a further union, a deeper communion
Through the dark cold and the empty desolation,
The wave cry, the wind cry, the vast waters
Of the petrel and the porpoise. In my end is my beginning.”

Young and old, alike we are learning as if for the first time what it is to dance with the Father Son and Holy Spirit “just beneath the surface of our worldly eyes to music playing beyond the range of our worldly ears.” (Thanks to my friend, Jack Shea)