

Theme for February - Dance:
The Practice of Relationship

To dance, put your hand on your heart and listen to the sound of your soul.

~ *Eugene Louis (Luigi) Faccuito*

Introduction

Rainer Maria Rilke talks of relationship as “the strengthening of two neighboring solitudes.” Relationship is only possible if we surrender to a form of otherness, if we let go of part of ourselves. In the process of relationship we learn to know who we are and to be true to who we are. Relationship can be compared to a dance - we are required to compromise, surrender, trust, and blend. In relationship we establish boundaries of our own self-understanding and self-differentiation, and hopefully through this process we move and grow, become integrated and whole.

When people speak of relationship, the language of unity is used. It is often said that we “become as one.” Just as harmony brings diverse sound together and makes it as one, the art of dance brings two bodies together to join as one. In relationship and in a dance, we create something beyond ourselves. We come together, offer ourselves to one another, and become more than we were. There exists incredible power in relationship which relates to the powerful and miraculous force of love, the spirit of our church.

To experience true relationship, we are required to pay close attention, practice, and be willing to be vulnerable, to melt our defenses. Such is true with dance. Modern dance choreographer, Martha Graham, says "Movement never lies. It is a barometer telling the state of the soul's weather." Perhaps this is why, Mr. Miyagi says in the Karate Kid, "Never trust spiritual leader who cannot dance."

Spiritual experience is closely related to the intimate connection we feel when we are in relationship with others. For instance think of the moment you first looked into your child's eyes, or when you look across the room and catch your lover's quick glance, or when you sit together in a holy place and experience the mystery of music shared. Theologian Wendy Wright says, "Joy arrives when divinity dances in us."

Carl Scovel talks of the close attention required in relationship. He emphasized that, “beyond the vague, unfocused sense of 'something more' lies the focused spirituality of a path and of a spiritual discipline." This compares to the kind of shift that happens when we move in our lives from casual conversation into a relationship. Close attention and the need for community help to remind us that connection and relationship are crucial to our well-being.

In order to create a harmonious relationship and dance, we must pay close attention to detail, trust others, respect integrity, and have faith in a unique and original creation. There will be times when our choices or the choices of those with whom we are in relationship create dissonance. It is at these times that we must engage faithfully and grow in the direction of beautiful dance. There are times when we have to let go of relationships that are no longer healthy, that are diminishing us; but we must not let go of our faith in love. With faithfulness to

the possibility of love, we will be able to bring something more to relationship, to make us something more, something beautiful, like a wonderfully choreographed dance performance

Questions for discussion and discernment on your own, around the table, or with each other:

1. How are your relationships with others like a dance?
2. Do you think your relationships are like a specific type of dance?
3. How does dance require authenticity? And how does being in a relationship require authenticity? How are they related?
4. What conditions make dancing most enjoyable and what conditions make a relationship most enjoyable?
5. What do you do when you step on someone's toes in a relationship?
6. How did you learn to dance and how did you learn to be in relationship?
7. What is it that keeps you off the dance floor/ out of relationships? What brings you onto the dance floor and/or lures you into relationship with others?
8. With whom and with what are you in relationship right now (people, pets, environment, food, an addiction, yourself, God, space/time)?
9. How do you transition from once dance to another, from relationship with the self, to relationship with others, with community, with your environment, with God, etc.?
10. Do you dance differently in various relationships?
11. Why does it take two to tango?
12. Do you need a relationship before you can dance or do you need to dance to establish a relationship?

Reading and Quotations:

We human beings are social beings. We come into the world as the result of others' actions. We survive here in dependence on others. Whether we like it or not, there is hardly a moment of our lives when we do not benefit from others' activities. For this reason, it is hardly surprising that most of our happiness arises in the context of our relationships with others. ~ ***Dalai Lama XIV***

From all this, my friends, there arises an insight which the poet must learn through other people. There is no insurmountable solitude. All paths lead to same goal: to convey to others what we are. And we must pass through solitude and difficulty, isolation and silence, in order to reach forth to the enchanted place where we can dance our clumsy dance and sing our sorrowful song – but in this dance or in this song there are fulfilled the most ancient rites of our conscience in the awareness of being human and of believing in a common destiny. ~ ***Pablo Neruda***

Only through our connectedness to others can we really know and enhance the self. And only through working on the self can we begin to enhance our connectedness to others. ~ ***Harriet Lerner***

Intimate relationships cannot substitute for a life plan. But to have any meaning or viability at all, a life plan must include intimate relationships. ~ ***Harriet Lerner***

Billy Idol's song "Dancing with myself": Billy got the idea after watching Japanese kids at a Tokyo disco "Dancing With Themselves" in a nightclub. The kids would dance in a pogo style up and down, and there were mirrors in the club so they could watch themselves doing it. This song is about more than just dancing. Idol told Rolling Stone: "The song really is about people being in a disenfranchised world where they're left bereft, dancing with their own reflections."

Dancing with the feet is one thing. Dancing with the heart is another. ~*Unknown*~

I salute you. I am your friend and my love goes deep. There is nothing I can give you which you have not got; but there is much, very much, that while I cannot give it, you can take...

~*A beautiful greeting from Fra Giovanni written in 1513*

A tortoise carries a stranded scorpion across a river. The scorpion stings the tortoise who demands indignantly: "My nature is to be helpful. I have helped you and now you sting me." "My friend," says the scorpion, "your nature is to be helpful. Mine is to sting. Why do you seek to transform your nature into a virtue and mine into villainy?" ~*Rumi*

As the African proverb goes: "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

Heaven and Earth give themselves. Air, water, plants, animals, and humans give themselves to each other. It is in this giving-themselves-to-each-other that we actually live. Whether you appreciate it or not, it is true. ~*Kodo Soak*

In many shamanic societies, people who complain of being disheartened... or depressed would be asked, "When did you stop dancing?" ... This is because dancing is a universal healing salve. ~*Gabrielle Roth*

What do you dance?
~ *Bantu greeting to a member of another Bantu tribe* ~

Everything in the universe has rhythm. Everything dances. ~*Maya Angelou*

Dance like no one is watching. ~ *Maya Angelou*

There is a bit of insanity in dancing that does everybody a great deal of good.
Edwin Denby

It's everybody's duty to give the world a reason to dance. – *Kid President*

Link to a video of kid president: <http://www.jjennajane.com/?p=349>

When I dance, I cannot judge, I cannot hate. I cannot separate myself from life. I can only be joyful and whole; that is why I dance. ~*Hans Bos*

I praise the dance, for it frees people from the heaviness of matter and binds the isolated to community.

I praise the dance, which demands everything: health and a clear spirit and a buoyant soul.

Dance is a transformation of space, of time, of people, who are in constant danger of becoming all brain, will, or feeling.

Dancing demands a whole person, one who is firmly anchored in the center of his life, who is not obsessed by lust for people and things and the demon of isolation in his own ego.

Dancing demands a freed person, one who vibrates with the equipoise of all his powers.

I praise the dance.

O man, learn to dance, or else the angels in heaven will not know what to do with you.

-Saint Augustine (A.D. 354 ... 430)

Most primitive languages don't make a distinction between the words "music" and "dance."

And we can see that in the brain.

When people are lying still, listening to music, the neurons in the motor cortex are firing.

~Daniel Levitin, in: "The World in Six Songs: How the Musical Brain Created Human Nature"

Dance is the hidden language of the soul.

~Martha Graham

Dance is your pulse, your heartbeat, your breathing. It's the rhythm of your life. It's the expression in time and movement, in happiness, joy, sadness and envy.

~Jacques D'Amboise

To dance is to be out of yourself, larger, more powerful, more beautiful. This is power, it is glory on earth and it is yours for the taking.

~Agnes de Mille

To watch us dance is to hear our hearts speak.

~Hopi Indian Saying

Thank God that you are able to dance...Remember there are those who cannot even walk.

~ Unknown

If you can talk, you can sing. If you can walk, you can dance.

~ African Proverb

We're fools whether we dance or not, so we might as well dance.

~ Japanese Proverb

Let us read and let us dance - two amusements that will never do any harm to the world.

~ Voltaire

Dancing is not getting up any time painlessly like a speck of dust blown around in the wind.

Dancing is when you rise above both worlds, tearing your heart to pieces and giving up your

soul.

~ *Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi*

How can we know the dancer from the dance? ~ *William Butler Yeats*

And finally, to end with humor, please check out the link to a youtube video of “Contemporary Eric”:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qQyALIEydbc>

Worship Associate Testimonials

In November, I took a personal growth class. It was 4 1/2 very long, very challenging days of peeling back layers of neuroses, fears, hurts and unconscious anger. Each session I walked into the room, knowing that there was more of the same self examination in store. Each session I walked in to the same peppy music from a 70's movie (I've forgotten it now), and it sounded pretty good. Somehow, knowing that I was about to do battle with a demon in my subconscious made the fear of what people might think of my dancing seem so trivial that I just got my groove on for those 2 or 3 minutes. Dancing, I found, only requires letting go of fear.

~Julien Lafleur

For me, dance is a form of liberation; and being in relationship with others is a form of liberation, freedom from the self and the ability to be part of something bigger, something spiritual, something that connects me to the divine. When I dance, I often feel like I am “in flow”; I lose track of time, I lose myself. I feel that ‘joy arrives and divinity is dancing within me’. I have a need to dance on a regular basis, at a party, with a few good friends, with my children and husband at home. Dancing is tremendously therapeutic for me, as is connecting with others. Relationships and dance make me feel connected, and both are food for my soul.

~Alex Businger

I do have one dance-based memory. It's of watching my father-in-law dance with his mother at our wedding. Emily's grandmother was 86 at the time, and actually looked much older, but she positively glowed.

~Penn Young