

A Different Zone



Every New Year's Eve as the clock strikes twelve I have this habit of going outside and standing on my veranda. In listening to the distant sound of fireworks and New Year revellers I find myself feeling 'at-one' with all those who are awake at this moment and who are welcoming in this New Year. When the noise quiets I am left gazing up into the night sky. I give thanks for the year that has past and utter a 'yes' to whatever the New Year may hold.

As I gaze into the star-lit sky I am drawn into something so much bigger than myself. I have a sense of my minuteness of Being in this universe, and at the same time my uniqueness. Both seem somehow to be meshed together. The best way I can describe the experience is that for a short while I am in a 'different zone'. The whole exercise of my mid-night gazing on New Year's Eve would seem to have been but for a few minutes, yet when I return inside my little home I find that a good hour may have passed!

There is an inner silence, a movement beyond us, a drawing into a 'More', which happens when we gaze into the night sky. I believe this to be true for all people all over the world regardless of age. The gaze draws us beyond ourselves, it touches a place of transcendence. There is a connection with something so much bigger, and for an instant in time we can find ourselves immersed in it. I call it a 'different zone'.

I have also observed this 'different zone' in many of my friends when they have been confronted with a new crisis or trauma in their lives: the news of a terminal illness, a sudden loss of a loved one, the surprise of experiencing sudden, unexpected abuse or violence, the letting go of a hope or dream. When this happens, my friends seem to enter into a different place within themselves. I can be present, supportive, caring but I cannot enter this 'new zone' in which they now seem to be. I remember watching one such friend as she stood alone by the sea listening to the waves and looking out into a star filled night. Where she was I could not be. I could only be a silent presence, a shadow, standing in the background and watching. I sensed a sacredness in what I was observing. There was a deep union between her and her Cosmic God. It was Holy Ground.

We all at times take for granted the present 'normal' flow of our lives. We can sometimes be consumed by so many small, insignificant occurrences that we become blind to the gift of the present moment. It is often when we are catapulted into a 'new normal' that we find ourselves grieving for what was. When we are in a place of control we can speak glibly or lightly of wanting change, but the true cost of change is very hard. All evolution requires a 'letting go' so that a newness can arise. This often happens through experiences of crisis and trauma, like the diagnosis of my friend or through the sudden loss of security and of all one's possessions in a war torn country. All of these people have somehow been invited or drawn into a new zone.



In this time of Lent I am left pondering the life of Jesus as he journeyed towards Jerusalem. He too was entering a new zone, one which his followers could watch and observe but not enter. The journey into Jerusalem led ultimately to the Garden of Gethsemane. Here he was alone, it was night, the sky was dark, the stars - whether seen or not seen - were present. His cry and the cry of my friend centuries later are the same: *"Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done."* (Lk 22:42). Then, for both, in the silent darkness there is a drawing into Oneness, a surrender that we, who are not in this zone, can but behold with reverence and awe.

Jesus experienced huge trauma in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross. In that place of trauma no one else could enter. It was an alone with God place. This seems to suggest that all new stages of life require a deep, personal and intimate transformation that can only be entered into at the right evolutionary moment. We can behold and sense this different place or 'zone', but we cannot be drawn into it before our time. (*"You will search for me, but you will not find me; and where I am you cannot come."* Jn: 7:34)

Resurrection cannot be without the trauma of the cross – we all know that. Jesus shows us the way by allowing himself to be catapulted into this other zone and surrendering to it in utter faith. We like the disciples are left with wonder, awe and a new, deep knowing, that one day we too will be drawn (or catapulted) into a new zone.

We now know that the beauty, gift and blessing of life, love and suffering is that, as we experience our own inner traumas and vulnerable life-changing moments, we are in truth flowing into a new zone of Becoming. As we hold this for ourselves we are also invited to recognise and hold this movement, this transformation in others – those both close to us and far from us.



When my time to be catapulted comes I hope to be able to gaze upon the stars - the stars that draw me and mirror back to me who I am. These same stars drew Jesus and mirrored back to him his very essence. Those same stars now draw us all to gaze into the universe, into zones beyond ourselves.

Lent is a time that calls us, as CEN members, to see again the oneness and interconnection of life, love and suffering. It calls us to trust and believe in the continual evolution of new zones beyond our comprehension.

Perhaps the invitation this Lent is to gaze often into the night sky and to let ourselves be drawn, one with Jesus, into its magnetic force of 'Being'. Then in that moment of union may we too, surrender to Love and utter our 'yes'.

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