

“TRANSFORMATION...TRUE COLOURS”.



As we find ourselves once again in the season of Lent - a time to slow down, contemplate, ponder, a reflection that a friend once shared with me on the colours of autumn leaves gently floated back into my consciousness. It was titled *'The Autumn of Our Own Existence'* by Omid Safi. In it he writes:

“The hidden secret of autumn: the leaves don't actually 'turn' colours. With the winter season coming, the process of photosynthesis being without the key ingredients of warmth and sunshine, trees begin to break down chlorophyll. With the 'green' gone, the other colours that have been there all along – the magical reds, golds, and oranges – begin to express themselves.

That's the secret: there is no turning, no changing. There's only the death of what has been masking the colours inside. The beauty has been there all along. And we as human beings are like this.....”



These words leave me pondering and reflecting upon my own spiritual journey. For so long being 'green' has been of the essence for me as, with the sun's warmth, I silently grew. Green was good, it was all I desired to be, all I strived for in life and oh how hard I worked on the challenging 'bugs' and 'shadows' that would threaten my healthy green existence and growth! Now I find myself in my 'autumn years' joyously sensing and experiencing with wonder the stirrings of a new consciousness which is gently, yet firmly emerging within me. I hold with delight the new reds, golds, and oranges that are slowly transforming me. My drive to be 'green' has quietly faded. As the sun has silently distanced itself to allow autumn to release its cold, fresh cool energy flows upon me and I willingly surrender myself to this fading so as to allow the new energy to expose and reveal the hidden rich colours of my inner Being.

I sense that this may be true for all of us on our contemplative journey – we cling to the warmth, we hold onto what is seemingly our 'normal' for as long as possible, then when the mask quietly lifts, we gently or reluctantly, gracefully or destructively, are urged...nudged, to let go, to surrender, to submit. Like the seasons we find ourselves drawn into an immersion process of transformation, a process which we can only vaguely behold or dimly glimpse, yet we do so with a sense of wonder, awe and trepidation.

During this Lenten time I invite you to find an autumn leaf and to hold it gently. Focus on it and try to enter into its very Being, its essence as it undergoes its transformation. There is so much more going on within it than the outer revelation of beautiful colours. Inner energy forces are evoking transformation with the constant movements of life, death, life. So, as you hold your leaf, hold it with delight, reverence, insight and understanding.



As I behold my own 'autumning' and see the new colours of my life emerging I am constantly becoming more conscious of all that is happening within the leaf of me; I sense the active energy flow that is present in both the sun's warmth and autumn's frosty coolness. Love's Energy flow is constant with every season. The cost of submitting to transformation is only possible for us because of this energy flow of Love. It is a flow that, as Madeline so beautifully expressed in her January reflection on "Emergence", will ultimately rise like the Phoenix from the ashes of past seasons. This we deeply know and trust. It is akin to the flow of hidden "Presence" described so personally by Ann Morrison in her February reflection – a flow that reaches out to us in the seeming ordinariness of nature's gifts surrounding us.



But for now, as I lift my eyes to look again at the tree from which my leaf has fallen, I see a tree that reflects all of our humanity, a tree grown from the soil of our varying societies and cultures. I see the tree of Life! For now, it would seem that the autumn and winter of Life are descending upon us and that the sun is distancing itself. The 'green' of normality as we have known it has certainly faded. We find ourselves moving into the cold, frost and ice of COVID-19 which is still

ravaging our world. We find ourselves still struggling with the huge issue of Climate Change which continues to threaten our very existence. Yet sadly, many people still remain blindly resistant and in denial of this reality. It would seem that fear and the cost of 'unmasking' the true colours of what is happening is just too hard! Hence the inevitability and necessity of a transforming force beyond us! Whilst all of this is happening we also find ourselves still fighting in endless wars provoked by fear, power, control and greed. Oh, how hard it is to surrender, to submit so that transformation with its beauty, loss, pain and hidden new life can emerge!

These words of mine are just words unless they are followed up by some form of action. As I again enter into the unmasking of my leaf, I can almost physically feel the long hard struggle that transformation is asking of me and of all of us. Remembering my own journey, I know that the letting go, the surrendering and the submitting all hold pain, suffering, absence, loss and darkness. It has also required the fading of some of my own beliefs and old values that were no longer healthy, and all of this has a personal cost. The journey is hard and it moves in its own rhythm and time - just as it does for our larger world. Looking back, I do wish that at times I had been a bit more compassionate with myself and a bit more courageous along the way. Perhaps this is an invitation for all of us to be a little more compassionate, understanding and above all courageous in our responses now.

I say this because as we all find ourselves immersed in dark, challenging and struggling times, as the tree of life struggles and gasps for breath. And as it does so, we are called to allow the autumn

colours of compassion, courage, strength, understanding, kindness and wisdom to vibrantly and forcefully emerge and radiate through us...trusting that this assists the struggling whole in some strange and hidden way.

There is a purpose and a rhythm to the changing of our seasons. To see it we need to have:
eyes that see more...
a wisdom that deeply knows....
and a faith and hope that trusts... no matter what.

This time of Lent invites us to enter more deeply into the inner movements of our own autumn. It invites us to notice the struggle between our egos and their shadows, and to gracefully submit to Love's Energy Force, so that we may be transformed and our true colours gloriously revealed. It is also a time to actively draw upon these transforming energies within us as we endeavour to respond to a world groaning in its own process of transformation.

As CEN members, as we sit in contemplation or simply intend in a communion of mind and heart, may the significance of transformation be what we silently hold and contemplate in this most challenging yet beautiful season.

May we with active force and energy reveal the beauty of our autumn colours.

May we graciously surrender to the transformation process that is happening within us,
within our world,
within our cosmos.

May we know, believe and trust in the purpose of 'the autumn of our existence'.

Tess Veenker msc.

(March 2021)