

BIRTHING HOPE THROUGH DARKNESS

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“Why is there a war? ... Because I and my neighbour and everyone else do not have enough love. Yet we could fight war and all its excrescences by releasing, each day, the love that is shackled inside us, and giving it a chance to live.”

Etty Hillesum

Our world appears to be shrouded in darkness yet even in darkness there seems to remain, dwelling deep within us, an innate yearning for something beyond...something more, something that we call 'Hope'.

In our January reflection titled 'A Field of Peace' Madeline invited us to SEE with a new consciousness the world in which we find ourselves. She reminded us of Etty Hillesum, a woman deeply conscious of her environment at an extremely difficult time in history.

In the light of this month's theme, I would like to continue this reflection with Etty Hillesum. As we know Etty lived in a time that was shrouded in darkness. She saw something more, something deeper within, whilst living amidst the dangers, devastation and chaos which surrounded her. She knew and believed in an infinite Love and in that she trusted and hoped that this Love would overcome the darkness—and it did, although not in her lifetime.



When we love we hope. We hope for strength to endure, we hope for health, happiness, freedom, for safety.... We hope that what we have and love will remain forever. Sadly, we often take all that we have graciously been given in life for granted and it is only when we have lost it that we realize the loss and then yearn, long, hope for it to be with us once more.

When we lose our health, we yearn for its return. When we lose a loved one, we yearn for the times that we had together. When we lose our homes, our jobs, our lifestyles, we grieve

and yearn for what was. Eventually beyond the darkness of our grieving and yearning, new, deeper hope can begin to rise and slowly come to birth within us.

Sometimes, like Etty Hillesum, the longer we are in darkness and danger the deeper we can see, and in that seeing our conscious awareness silently grows. We become less superficial with our seemingly surface loves and our journey into true love begins to gently, quietly draw us beyond ourselves. Maybe this is our call today! A call to a deeper conscious awareness of the essence of Love within us and beyond us. A Love that dares us to hope through and beyond the darkness of life's sufferings.

Called to be people of 'Hope'—what does that mean? Our world today is crying out for 'Peace'. We yearn and hope for peace—but what does that mean? Does it mean we want the wars, injustices, greed, inequalities, all to be over so that we don't have to hear any more bad news? Does it mean we are fatigued with watching all the world's sufferings and do not want to see them anymore? Does it mean that we are weary and angry at our powerlessness in the face of what is happening around us and cannot cope with it anymore? Why do **you** hope for peace? What is the deeper call and hope **within you**?

Towards the end of her life Etty Hillesum wrote:

“Ultimately, we have just one moral duty: to reclaim large areas of peace in ourselves, more and more peace, and to reflect it towards others. And the more peace there is in us, the more peace there will also be in our troubled world.”ⁱ



Is that the Peace we are called to live today? Is that what I am hoping for? It would seem to me that Love and Hope are intimately intertwined. Both have an energy force of light within and beyond us. We love and our love can become severely tested, yet somehow, we love again and again, and through that process our love deepens beyond ourselves. The same seems to happen with our hope, it too has an energy force that deepens when what we hoped for is lost, and yet we inevitably hope again. Hope has an inner force, an energy that is within us and beyond us, and like Love, draws us into Itself...into God.

Sometimes the darkness can overshadow us, overcome us, leaving us in a dark empty state of doubt, depression, despair. We have all seen and experienced this within humanity. When I look at my own life, it was always at my darkest times, that the energy of others, their kindness, care, concern and very presence would somehow gently seep into my being and re-ignite my hope. At that moment, that instant in time, I would find myself drawn into a deeper consciousness of a truth, namely, that to hope is to trust in the evolutionary process, that life will continue to evolve, and that in time all will be well.

It is at that moment of deeper conscious awareness that I realise that all my hopes for life, love, and justice are so much bigger than me. I am simply left hoping and trusting that all that is Good in Life and for Life will come to be.

Like the waves on the seashore, Etty Hillesum did not live to see peace within her country, but she believed, trusted and hoped for it because she knew Love, she trusted her God. For her soul waves of peace did come and flow within her inner being. Now it is our turn to walk in her steps and continue the journey. We are called to believe more consciously in the cosmic evolution of life, to trust that life is always more than we can understand or comprehend and so can allow ourselves to flow with its tides. We are called to hope that we, through Love, can go beyond ourselves, trusting in Goodness and in Life's evolutionary process. Today too we are called to allow the inner energy forces of Love and Hope to come to birth through us in our times of darkness and so give forth life and light.

As we journey towards the season of Lent, may we remember that the darkness of Holy Week is endured because of our hope in the Light that lies beyond. Darkness can never overcome the Light of Love—this we innately believe and forever Hope.

Let us trust that

“The light shines in the darkness, and darkness will not overcome it.” (Jn.1:5)



May we grow in our conscious awareness of the inner call, to give birth to the energy force of HOPE gestating within each of us. May we be especially mindful of this during our quiet times of CEN contemplation together. Here we gather our individual hopes and longings for peace into one great HOPE—a hope which has the power to accomplish that for which it longs.

ⁱ Etty Hillesum, *A Interrupted Life: The Diaries of Etty Hillesum, 1941-1943 and Letters from Westerbork*, Henry Holt and Company, NY

ⁱⁱ *ibid* p.218