

Tears of Hope A Tear and a Smile

Ann Morrison RSJ

***We are born of the Universe,
made from stardust,
part of the evolutionary history of life on earth.
The web of life goes on:
this story is continuing.***



This mantra weaved its way throughout proceedings as we gathered to ritualise our ***Remembering, Thanksgiving and Farewell*** of our place of formation, ministry and our former home. The very soil on which we stood screamed out with us in deep pain. Immediately came the question of what to do with our loss, grief and pain? John Shea in his story of the Woman at the Well (which appropriately was the gospel used at this time) states:

***God is not on the mountain, but in your thirst.
God is not in the Temple,
but in the scream of your spirit, and it cries to me.***¹

It was the scream of my spirit that pulled me into the web of life and gave me the courage and the strength to keep going at this time. Since then, the tears are still there. It is hard to believe sometimes that this story is continuing – let alone believe that we are part of a continually renewing universe when one can't see that far ahead.



Richard Rohr, in the trailer video of his new book, ***The Tears of Things***, says:

*Where do we find a love big enough for our
outrage and our sorrow?
How do we hold our righteous anger?
How does it move through the body, express itself,
and invite us to weep, stand, speak and act?*²

¹ © John Shea, *Stories*, Acta Publications, 2008, 5559 W. Howard Street, Skokie, IL 60077, pp. 261-271.

² Transcript of video of the trailer for ***The Tears of Things*** by Richard Rohr to be released on March 4 2025 - <https://youtu.be/BgRvljbevAl>

What appropriate questions to ask as we let go the very soil that formed us – some from teenage years and boarding school, let alone into future adult life. How do we hold our sorrow? What do we really DO with our sorrow? How do we allow the tears to bring hope through the thick cloud of events that are not understood or even perceived as negative? This took me deep into my soul, stretching to the very depths within to find some way of moving through the darkness, grief and loss. It meant simply sitting with the tears and letting them flow, in that deep dark place, allowing them to be what they were, to come to some way of expressing what was happening. To find the strength and the courage to allow the tears to work themselves through my body, inviting me to listen to their voice coming from that deep place. Eventually that voice allowed itself to be heard, recognised and named for what it was, and is... deep loss and grief.

Strangely enough by honouring my grief and loss it opened for me the opportunity and the space of allowing the story to continue in its own unique and new way. It inspired me to move quietly and resolutely into a future that, God willing, brings some shape to hope. The helpful words of Lebanese- American artist, poet and writer Kahlil Gibran: *I would that my life remain a tear and a smile*³ became a source of hope and comfort. They certainly gave me the chance to ponder and allow my tears to do something positive and life-giving:

***A tear to purify my heart and give me understanding
Of life's secrets and hidden things.
A smile to draw me nigh to the sons of my kind and
To be a symbol of my glorification of the gods.***⁴



I soon came to see that if I could allow my tears, and my smile, to be transformative, however difficult that was; to deepen my human connection with the suffering of others, and the suffering of our world itself, and align it with and in the suffering of God, the universe might open some of those 'secret and hidden things.'

My tears have very much become a cleansing of my heart and given me insights into some of those 'hidden things' that are not available until clarity happens; and some form of 'hidden' transformation is taking place. My tears have been able to lay bare my vulnerability and allow it to be 'okay' – to allow those tears to be both privately and publicly seen. They began to purify for me the depth of my connection that threads its way back beautifully through time to the very beginnings and to notice how our good God has been present and has worked secretly and magnificently in bringing things, almost unseen, to maturity.

"A tear to purify my heart – a smile to open connection..." is that not what we desire as we come together in CEN...to make a difference and to change our violent and hurting world? To see the beauty, the goodness, the connection, the 'hidden things' that bring a smile and hope to a painful situation. To recognise that we are indeed made from stardust – all of us – and that we are part of the evolutionary history of life on earth, part of the very web of

³ Kahlil Gibran poem ***A Tear and a Smile***

⁴ Ibid.

universal life. The story that we are part of at this moment is continuing and will eventually find its way back to God through the ocean of Love and Beauty⁵ that we bring through the very screams of our spirits; through our tears; and through our smiles.

The ritual of closure took me to a deep place where it was almost possible to experience the invisible stretch of that delicate thread that danced back to the beginning... to the place of being made of stardust and the very fabric of the universe. The many strands of our history, exquisitely woven from those first moments were **almost tangible** and pulling the grief of letting go into an unknown future, a thin place of vulnerability that allowed the emotions to be raw and real. To tentatively experience the love at the foot of the cross, deep enough to hold the weight of falling, struggling and tearfully into God. Maybe, just maybe, this is the soil from which an amazingly vibrant hope can grow strong and give life to the story that is yet to be told. And so...

We Let You Go⁶



With gratitude for earth that has nurtured
so many lives in this place

We let you go

With gratitude for the welcoming
sunshine of this place

We let you go

With gratitude for the life-giving water,
rains and bracing
winter's cold of this place

We let you go

Into the winds and air of our planet

We let you go

Into the hands and lives of others

We let you go

Into the unknown future

We let you go

Into the mystery of our good God

We let you go

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Our own Farewell words