

The One Dwelling in the Many (1st Incarnation according to John 1)

New Song 12/29/19

by Rev. Catherine Quehl-Engel

So I have this little device created by scientists at HeartMath Institute. When you attach it to your earlobe, it measures your heart rate, brain waves, and automatic nervous system during meditation. I use it occasionally while engaging in heart focused compassion or interior prayer. I also use it when training Cornell College students and others in order to help them understand how radiating feeling of tenderness, compassion, oneness, or appreciation impacts their own mind and body.

Sometimes I get adventurous. For example, I'll use this device to experiment with different kinds of heart and energy focused breath prayer, meditation, and sending distance energy healing treatments to people, ill animals, or the planet as a whole. That includes a little experiment I've been doing as my spiritual practice for Advent and Christmas this year. I'll come back to that practice in a moment and invite you to join me given how the numbers the HeartMath device measured for that meditation went through the roof. For now though, I invite you to simply hold in your awareness the First Incarnation as told in the creation story of the mystical Gospel of John: That is, of Christed energy or Light of the Eternal Life and Love Force of the universe we call God penetrating everything. Even you on your lousiest of days. Stay mindful of this Christed energy abiding in you and the many, linking us and all beings one to another as you hear what I'm about to say.

So, my doctoral dissertation research project in compassion, breath and energy based interior prayer of the heart a few years back involved 30 participants over several weeks' time. It had the contemplative prayer of Teresa of Avila as well as Francis and Clare of

Assisi as its theological underpinnings. Yet the research of HeartMath Institute scientists who created that little measuring device as the dissertation's scientific underpinnings. These scientists focused not only on the psychological and physical benefits of the person radiating these feelings of love and appreciation, but also a kind of psycho-social impact. So, for example, in one HeartMath study the heart rates of untrained people adjusted to match or enter a state of coherence with the calmer heart rates of people trained in a heart focused radiating love technique. When I first learned of that research study I as a chaplain approached things including pastoral presence so much differently including during faculty meetings. Since fear is often what lurks behind ego-mind, anxiety, and frustration at such meetings—fear of spending cuts or fear of being forced by faculty vote or the administration to change the way one has always done something—I, for the most part, stopped speaking at faculty meetings years ago. Instead I go into the shrine of the heart or, as Jesus put it, go pray in one's closet (meaning here), sending out healing compassionate intention and peace.

Research like that of HM not only points to the interconnectivity of people. Despite our tendency in the West to see ourselves as separate from, rather than part of nature, The Princeton Global Consciousness project has been measuring how collective human thought impacts the earth's electromagnetic field. Through the help of measuring devices stationed at various places around the earth they've found that when big events happen which draw attention internationally thanks to media including via the world wide web—good things like the opening ceremonies of the Olympics or painful things like the 9/11 terrorist attacks—there is a correlation with shifts in the electromagnetic field of the planet. This is one reason why there are things like synchronized meditation with a

targeted or shared care focus with thousands of people around the world radiating healing compassionate intention. Important note: This isn't woo-woo. This research on collective consciousness, quantum fields and the like, have the attention of NASA and others.

I like Gregg Bradden's term for the mystery of this Communion or primal web of energy and consciousness that interconnects our bodies, minds, and all of creation: He calls it The Divine Matrix. It appears that we communicate through this web or energy or Divine Matrix which links us one to another through the language of emotion. In other words, as Gregg Bradden puts it, 'the "us" that lives in our physical selves isn't limited by the skin and hair that define our bodies. Whatever we choose to call this mysterious "something" we all have it; and ours mingles with everyone else's as part of the field of energy that bathes all things.'

Perhaps this explains things like meaningful synchronicities, telepathic communication including with animals, and other woo-woo sounding things I take seriously. It is the same principle those of us as reiki-master teachers and healing touch practitioners embody when asking God to help us empty self of ego-mind so we may become a clear vessel through which Divine love and healing energy flows. Or, like John who is mentioned in our Gospel today; how he was not the light but pointed to the light. Or as is said elsewhere in scripture: He was a bright an shining lamp It wasn't his Light but the indwelling presence and Light of Christ shining in and through him (St. John of the Cross' words about even the worst sinner in the world having this light within themselves; it's a matter of cleaning the grime off the windowpane of the soul which keeps that light from brightly shining).

I know we as Christians take Pentecost seriously; how Christ's Spirit breathed into his disciples and on and on into us as his body/ The Church. In our Episcopal tradition we light a candle during one's baptism in order to speak of this inner illumination. And yet, I also take seriously what Christian mystics have said from the very beginning in ways echoing Jesus' words about the Kingdom of God being both in and among you. And that is: Our oneness with God we've had all along. It's just that we keep seeking it outside ourselves or thinking of God as only out there over there separate or apart.

Perhaps God came to earth incarnate in the child Jesus to remind us of the Christ mystery of the First Incarnation which points to the goodness of creation and even the likes of you and me as bearing the Light, reflection and energy of the Divine. Jesus being love—and eliciting within us the feeling of tenderness and desire to be and share love. To choose humbly approaching life each day with gratitude and adoration: Not only before God's presence shining in and through the beauty of creation and people you most love, but also in those you may struggle to love politically or otherwise, for they are part of you. Even daring to revere the Divine as the Light and life force shining in and through you as your Deepest Self. Or as Etty Hillesum put it in her diary when amid the rise of Nazism which would eventually take her life she wrote to God saying “We must help You and defend Your dwelling place inside us to the last.”

Two weeks ago a woman sat in my office telling me about the years of abuse she experienced by her ex-husband whom she was having thoughts of returning to. Also how her dad abused her when she was young. What a powerful thing for a woman with this habituated pattern to know herself as bearing Divine life inside her.

My husband Craig and I have a friend named Fred who, after losing his job, was hospitalized several times for depression. When he learned about interior or centering prayer, he found healing by engaging in this spiritual practice daily. This communing with God's Inner Helper Spirit deep inside himself helped return him to wholeness. Fred added how he wondered why, despite being a Christian all his life, no one at Church or beyond bothered to tell him about this healing breath prayer?

I close with this: St. Teresa of Avila who in her book *The Interior Castle* said "the problem is that we do not know who we are...who dwells inside us." Previously, Teresa had tried interior or contemplative prayer but found her mind to wander; like many folks today who say they are no good at meditation. . But then one day while walking into chapel she noticed a statue or image of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. She decided that for prayer she would make her heart or souls the garden and stay with him there amid his fear; how he needed *her* presence and companionship.

- A. Name my Advent and Christmas meditation experiment: Not only embracing the first Incarnation—the innate Divine energy within me and all but also an adaptation of Teresa's practice except instead of compassionately companioning with him in his hour of need within the Garden deep within her heart, to make of my heart a nativity to hold him. To compassionately companion the Divine amid The Sacred's vulnerability as a new born babe; offering offer tenderness, welcome, and warmth in the shelter of my heart.
- B. Name how, when I engage in this practice, the HeartMath meditation device numbers went through the roof.
- C. Lead a brief version of the practice... Include part about not only sending energies of love to the Christ child but also to all who, like refugee children today, seek safety and refuge. And when sending to Mary and Joseph, also sending to all who, like them, sometimes struggle and are doing the best they can to shelter and project their children in vulnerable times.....