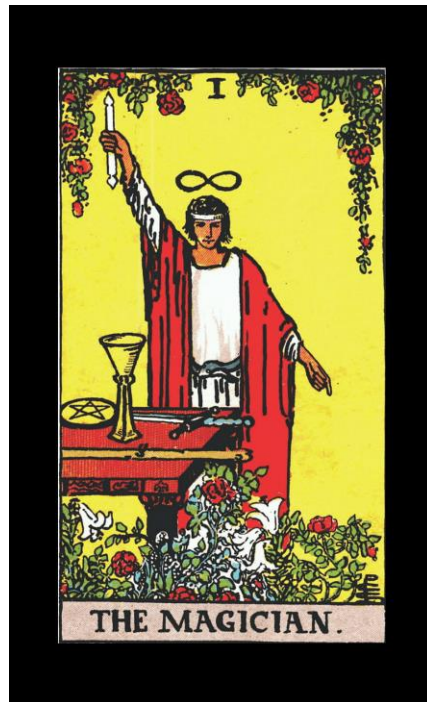


THE MAGICIAN



Luke 10:29 "But wanting to justify himself, (the lawyer) asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?' Jesus replied, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.'" (Now) Which of

these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?' (Jesus asked.) (And the lawyer) said, 'The one who showed him mercy.'"

This the last of a five-part sermon series that I have been preaching this Lent entitled "Archetypes of the Spiritual Journey." In doing so, I have tried to provide some language and images to help us all understand and talk about our spiritual selves, our interior lives, mindful that Jesus once told the Pharisees that the kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; but rather that the kingdom of God is within us (Lk. 17:21).

So, then I have preached about the Innocent one within each one of us, and the Orphan, and the Wanderer, and the Warrior, and the Martyr, and now the Magician. Each one of us, I believe, experiences each of these archetypes of the spiritual journey at various times in our own lives. And each of these archetypes contributes something vital in our search for our true selves, for meaning in our lives, and ultimately in our quest for God.

In previous sermons, for instance, we have seen how the Innocent one within each of us seems to affirm the universal truth that we humans have a deep-seated yearning for some lost Paradise, for a place where we are safe and loved and accepted as we are, where there is peace on earth and goodwill among mankind. The

Orphan within each one of us contributes the recognition and acceptance that real life is hard and painful, that life isn't fair, that this is not our promised Eden, and most particularly that we cannot make it so on our own; so, we look for another, a knight in shining armor, a Promised Land, a Savior. The Wanderer within each one of us sets out to find a better life and a better world somewhere, and along the way helps us 'find our own true selves,' apart from the roles we play or the expectations others put upon us. The Warrior within each one of us trusts ourselves enough to stand up for who we are and what we believe, especially in the face of opposition or danger, while the Martyr within each one of us is willing to give of ourselves completely for the benefit of others, even unto point of death.

As I noted previously, our spiritual journey is not a linear path moving from one of these archetypes neatly to another, but it is more like a spiral. We keep circling back through these archetypal manifestations of our interior lives at different levels of depth and breadth, at different times in our lives, and with different relationships. We may, for instance, be a Warrior at work, but a Martyr at home. We may be an Orphan today, but a Wanderer tomorrow. Each of us will find within ourselves each of these archetypes of our common interior life. And we can only be spiritually healthy and whole as each one of these is uncovered and allowed to speak.

Now at the end of this series, we are here to explore who the Magician is within each one of us? Whereas men traditionally prefer warring and women loving, or Martyrdom, the Magician within each of us enchantingly integrates the two. But one can reach this stage of the Magician only once we have apprenticed with all the other archetypes in this series.

Thus, the Magician within us is sometimes difficult to explain. It is, I think, like having to explain what 'falling in love' feels like to an adolescent who has never known the experience. True love, lifelong commitment, is a very different thing from our childhood crushes, and thus it is difficult to explain it until you have lived through it all, through the romance and found true love. The Magician is the one within us who unexpectedly changes our perspective on life and thus radically changes the reality we see. It's like falling in love, things are never the same thereafter. The Magician is the transforming hero, the most redemptive aspect of our spiritual lives. From a touch of humor in a time of stress, to a random act of kindness, to the welcoming of the outcast and forgotten, the Magician within us changes our perception of life and as if by magic the reality of the world around us changes too, simply by the power of someone's mercy, or joy, or fearlessness, or self-effacement. Jesus revealed the Magician to us in his loving the unloved, dining with sinners and tax-collectors despite the criticism of the scribes and

Pharisees, in his forgiving the woman caught in adultery despite the crowd, or healing the Syro-Phoenician's daughter despite his own initial resistance, or simply embracing children in his midst whom his disciples wanted to send away.

Now for most of us, the first stage of magicianship will be the recognition of synchronistic events as Carl Jung calls them, as we look back over our lives, at fortuitous decisions we have made or unexpected opportunities we have received. The results will be to understand, often without even recognizing it at the time, that there has been a sense of direction and meaning and pattern in our lives all along, that we have been part of something larger than ourselves.

While the Orphan, the Martyr, and the Warrior live in a universe of scarcity, in a battle of limited resources, where there is constant fear of not having enough or losing what we have, in contrast, the Magician within each one of us lives in a world of abundance. The Magician knows that when we open our hearts, we will always have enough love. When we stop hoarding --- our talents, ideas, our material goods --- we will always be prosperous, that the world is full, full of life and wonder and magic! The Magician within each one of us knows that we create the scarcity in our lives through our fears, but when we fully give the gifts of our lives back to the universe and to each other, when we answer God's call to us, when we find our true work, or

true love, we experience the fullness of our true nature, and the world around us is mysteriously enlarged. And in doing so, we find the love of God working in our lives and in our community, and we realize that we are blessed, not cursed.

When we are in the Orphan stage, for example, the world is full of suffering and disappointment. When we are in the Wanderer stage, the world is full of uncertainty and the unknown. When we are in the Warrior stage, the world is full of challenges and danger. When we are in the Martyr stage, the world is full of people needing love and care at every turn. But when we are in the stage of the Magician, the world is simply full, full of life, full of richness, and diversity, and strength, and hope. It isn't that the world has changed so much, as has changed our perception and experience of it.

Whereas Orphans, Wanderers, Martyrs, and Warriors usually see themselves in opposition to the world, a world imagined as hostile and dangerous, as unfair and painful, the Magician within us sees through this perception and discovers the world to instead be a friendly inviting place, a cherished home, a charming haven, a lovely garden, and in doing so, we begin the journey to reclaim our lost Innocence, we discover again the boundless child within each of us.

To deny or repress the real pain and hardship in life is to hold onto it. It is only by suffering through the pain and

hardship of life, by allowing it, by feeling it, by speaking aloud about it, and by embracing the sorrow, and not running from it, can we learn from our sorrow and go on through it, conquer it, to feel the joy and love of life in a new and powerful way. Those who cling to their lives will lose them, while those who lose their lives easily for the Gospel's sake will gain them, such is the mystery of life.

This return to Innocence is embodied most clearly in the popular literary image of the fool, the court jester, the clown, the child, Dostoevsky's 'the Idiot', the one who speaks the truth no one else dares to say, that the Emperor has no clothes! Yet being truthful and childlike in such moments is to be profoundly vulnerable, so we usually avoid it, but it does allow for truth, for intimacy, for love, and occasionally for magical moments of transcendence, as the veil of life is lifted.

Again, the Magician within each one of us does not so much change reality, as changes our perception of reality, allowing us to see more of life, to see what has been there all along, that there has always been hope, that there has always been enough, that when we open our hearts, we always have love to give, and to receive, if only we dare open our hearts and our minds to the reality about us.

The Magician understands awe and wonder, but understands it not as an unusual occurrence, but simply as the underlying current

of all life, that that awe and wonder is always there to be found, if we but look for it. Religious people might call this the Grace of God, learning to live in harmony with ourselves and one another. More secular minded individuals may say they are simply tapping into the energy of the universe, the dynamism of life and living, what the movie Star Wars calls 'the Force.'

And we have all know such glimpses of magic in our lives, like our childhood crushes, pointing to larger truths and larger realities. Times when we have been walking along the beach in the warm sun and felt a deep sense of peace with the world around us. Or moments of intimacy with someone where we have felt truly understood and loved for who we really are. Or quiet moments in the silence of the night, when all the world around was sleeping, and how we felt connected with one and another in our common humanity. Or profound moments like the birth of a child, when we were overwhelmed by the wonder and excitement and the immense mystery of life itself.

We have all had such moments of magic, we have all seen glimpses of heaven, known times of peace and harmony with all, and with God. This is the doorway to the kingdom of God within us, this is the gate of heaven, the beginning of eternal life, this is the way to the resurrected life we share with Jesus. As Christians, he is the pioneer of our faith, and we are called to be like him, to take up our crosses and to follow him, to follow

him *through* the pain and suffering of life and through death
itself, into the hands of God and eternal life, as a part of all
creation, which is fundamentally good. In doing so we will leave
no part of ourselves behind, we will take with us the Orphans
within each of us, and the Wanderers, and the Warriors, and the
Martyrs, as we rediscover the Innocent one within each of us by
virtue of the Magician within. AMEN