

Thoughts and Smiles – June 3, 2024



Nature also provides an unending supply of images for the stories we tell. The old theory [of the four elements] never really told us what the universe is made of, but rather how it moves, the way and feel of things. Earth is stubborn, conservative, and slow, with a long memory. Water is elusive and humble, seeking the low places. Air is a trickster, fickle and shifty. Fire is fierce, quick, greedy, and bold. Over the

centuries, these four characters have played leading roles in stories told by countless people. So, Earth is the dry land that God separated from the watery beginnings. It is the mud brought up from the bottom of the primal sea by muskrat or loon, to offer solid ground where creatures with legs might walk. It is the dust from which we come and the dust to which we return. Water is the formless potential out of which creation emerged. It is the ocean of unconsciousness enveloping the islands of consciousness. Water bathes us at birth and again at death, and in between, it washes away sin. It is, by turns the elixir of life or the renewing rain or the devastating flood. Air is the wind that blows where it wills. It is the voice sounding in the depths of matter, the word made flesh. It is breath, which the Romans called *spiritus*, a divine thread drawn through every living creature. Fire is the transformer, cooking meat, frightening beasts, warming huts, forging tools, melting, shaping. It is cleansing and punishing, flaming up from the sacred bush and lashing out from the furnaces of hell. Fire is a power given by the gods or stolen from them for the benefit of a bare-forked animal. It is cosmic energy, lighting the stars, lurking in the atom, smouldering in every cell ... when you sit beside a lake, dirt or stone beneath you and waves lapping at your feet and wind blowing



in your face and the sun beating down—you are still keeping company with the old quartet.

—SCOTT RUSSELL SANDERS in *Writing from the Center*

*The closest I come to the old quartet is our neighbourhood park. People are always telling Fred and me that we need to get out in nature more, but the park is nature, I reply. This year I began a spiritual discipline of walking around its perimeter every day. I try to practice attention, hospitality, and wonder on these short walks and allow the trees, bushes, birds, and animals to speak to me. Then I record the day's experiences in my journal. Here is an example. June 22: It rained last night, and the park today looks like it has been through the wash, and the colours have all come out clean. The grass is greener, the leaves darker, the flowers brighter, the soil richer, and the animals friskier. Why is it that we wake up, see a dark, overcast sky, and declare glumly, "It's raining." Today, the rain seems a blessing, a relief, a gift—like the rain that drenches Lancelot and Gueneviere in the movie *First Knight*. He tips a leaf so the rainwater flows into her mouth. I could drink rain from a leaf today, too.*



- Mary Ann Brussat: *Spiritual Literacy – Reading the Sacred in Everyday Life*



My parents were married for 55 years. One morning, my mom was going downstairs to make dad breakfast, she had a heart attack and fell. My father picked her up as best he could and almost dragged her into the truck. At full speed, without respecting traffic lights, he drove her to the hospital.

When he arrived, unfortunately she was no longer with us.

During the funeral, my father did not speak.

His gaze was lost. He hardly cried.

That night, his children joined him. In an atmosphere of pain and nostalgia, we remembered beautiful anecdotes and he asked my brother, a theologian, to tell him where Mom would be at that moment. My brother began to talk about life after death and guesses as to how and where she would be.

My father listened carefully. Suddenly

he asked us to take him to the cemetery.

"Dad!" we replied, "it's 11 at night, we can't go to the cemetery right now!"

He raised his voice, and with a glazed look he said: "Don't argue with me, please don't argue with the man who just lost his wife of 55 years."

There was a moment of respectful silence, we didn't argue anymore. We went to the cemetery. With a flashlight we reached her grave.

My father sat down, prayed, and told his children: "It was 55 years... you know? No one can really talk about true love if haven't done life with a person."

He paused and wiped his face.

"She and I, we were together in the good and in the bad." he continued. "When I changed jobs, we packed up when we sold the house and moved. We shared the joy of seeing our children become parents, together we mourned the departure of loved ones, we prayed together in the waiting room of some hospitals, we supported each other in pain, we hugged one another each day, and we forgave mistakes."

And then he paused and added, "Children, that's all gone and I'm happy tonight. Do you know why I'm happy? Because she left before me. She didn't have to go through the agony and pain of burying me, of being left alone after my departure. I will be the one to go through that, and I thank God for that. I love her so much that I wouldn't have liked her to

suffer..."

When my father finished speaking, my brothers and I had tears streaming down our faces. We hugged him and he comforted us, "It's okay. We can go home. It's been a good day." That night I understood what true love is. It is more than just romanticism and sex, it's two people who stand beside one another, who are committed to one another ... through all the good and bad that life throws at you.

Peace in your hearts

- *Author Unknown*



"I love you,"
said the little
prince...
— "I love you
too," said the
rose.

— "It's not
the same" -
he
responded..
Love is the
complete
confidence
that whatever

happens you will be there, not because you owe me anything, not with selfish possession, but to be, in silent company. To love is to know that the weather does not change you, nor the storms, nor my winters. Giving love does not exhaust love; on the contrary, it increases it. The way to return so much love is to open your heart and let yourself be loved.

— "I understood," - said the rose.

— "Don't understand it, live it" - added the little prince."

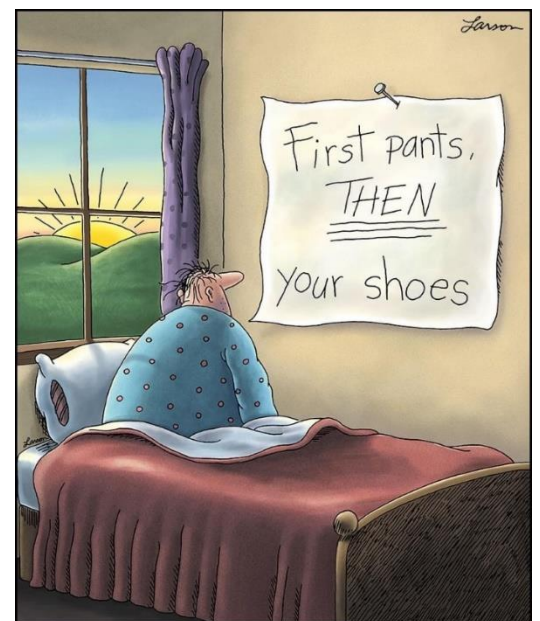
- Antoine De Saint-Exupéry | "The Little Prince"



I went to the psychiatrist today. She told me I had a split personality and charged me 160 dollars.

I gave her 80 dollars and told her to get the rest from the other idiot.

As it turns out, they were prepping us for self checkout the whole time



Have a terrific week!

Blessings to you all!

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