



Yes

Self-abandonment and the inner gesture

“We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that...we too may live a new life. *Romans 6:4*



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Questions

- In *The Waterfall* the poet Mary Oliver muses on after all the falling ‘the ‘blind and rough peace’ and the ‘deep green utterly motionless pools’.

What do I need to cultivate an inner ‘yes’ now?

- *Why must the gate be narrow?
Because you cannot pass beyond it burdened.
To come into the woods you must leave behind
the six days’ world, all of it, all of its plans and
hopes.*

What does this extract from the Wendell Berry poem *Sabbaths 1985, V* suggest to you?

Being led by Somebody outside of ourselves

In *The Shattered Lantern* Ronald Rolheiser recalls a parable about a Cretan peasant who deeply loved his land and family. His death approached and he felt keenly the loss of what and those he loved. He gathered up some soil in his hands and asked to be buried with it. He dies and is faced with the gates of heaven closed. The soil still in his hand St Peter addresses him: “we have a place for you inside, but you cannot enter unless you drop that handful of soil. You cannot enter as you are now.” “I cannot, will not, give up what I love!” is the reply. Peter leaves. A very young child emerges from the closed gates. She says nothing, takes his hand, which opens and he lets the soil of Crete fall to the ground. She leads him through the gates and he beholds all of Crete before him.

“We must let go of the life we have planned,
so as to accept the one that is waiting for us.”
Joseph Campbell

Echoes here of Jesus’s words to Peter, that in later years he would be dressed and led, and possibly where he may not want to go. (John 21:18).

‘In the spiritual life, what we think we are doing is actually being done to us; all we can do is say yes to it. You will one day find yourself inside the Other and held by the Other, your own glory intact and protected. Your true self will be revealed to you, and you will happily discover that it is much more glorious, grounded, original, and free than any identity you could devise for yourself. More than finding it, you sort of find yourself falling into it, like falling in love.’ So observes Richard Rohr*.

Paul’s description of burial and baptism preceding new life echoes the language of letting go and of surrender. The uncomfortable, sometimes raw experience of losing control (disorientation) appears to be a necessary precondition of new life (new orientation). The life attitude or ‘inner gesture’ of entrusting oneself throughout life is a precursor to an inner opening: “let the fear come up and fall through it to the other side”, Cynthia Bourgeault also advises (*The Wisdom way of knowing*).

Through our Cretan peasant we are urged to ‘continually let go of what we cling to instinctually and pragmatically so as to be open to receive that very thing in its reality and fullness’.

Read Ronald Rolheiser’s *The shattered lantern*, pages 157 to 158
* *On the threshold of transformation*

Additional reading material (poems):

The waterfall, Mary Oliver
Sabbaths 1985, V, Wendell Berry

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