



The Still, Voice Small

Judith Pennington

THE RED CARDINAL

Last November, when the red cardinal laid siege to my house, I was amused to learn that he was caught up in the same illusion as so many people: seeing his own reflection in the window, he felt threatened by the “other” bird and attacked a mirror image of himself, bashing his beak and body against the glass every two or three seconds from dawn into the night. Thwack! Plop! Thunk!

From the start, I felt that the cardinal was an object lesson: if I could not be peaceful about the bird’s attack on my house, then how could I expect President Bush to ignore the potentially invasive presence of Saddam Hussein? This notion amused me further, until the cardinal disturbed the sleep of our house guests over the Christmas and New Year’s holidays.

I began to question his presence, and in a meditative writing, my still, small voice claimed that the cardinal, a gift of nature, would call me to beauty and deepen my understanding of peace and what comes to awaken one and all. My daughters laughed at this. But I tested it and noticed that one daughter had merely been amused by the bird’s bizarre behavior, while the other daughter, now admonished to peacefulness, was calming her fury at the cardinal.

A better test came in early February, when I, desperately busy with work and family, suspended my meditation practice, lost my balance and soon wanted to wring the bird’s scrawny little neck. Where before I’d appreciated being awakened to the glory of red-streaked skies at dawn, now I caught myself banging my fist against the window glass and wanting to exterminate him with cheap perfume. A kind of chemical warfare, I ducked guiltily, thinking of George Bush and Saddam Hussein.

I know that the only road to peace is peace, yet just like the cardinal, I’d allowed fear and frustration to entangle me in the illusion of an enemy. I got the deeper message: could I not only tolerate but also love another soul who, as I’d just done, looked into this mirror of life, glimpsed an image of himself and attacked what was really an enemy within?

All winter, snowy weather has been our only respite from the cardinal. But a few days ago, despite a wailing blizzard, there he was again. I looked outside, called to nature by this persistent little apostle, and watched billowy, wind-blown snowflakes spiral in every direction to become even more beautiful, and I was reminded that our greatest lesson is to be peaceful and serene no matter how many storms blow our way. For it is only in this stillpoint of consciousness, free of anger, judgment and separation, that we are

open to higher wisdom and able to perceive the truth of who we are and what we are becoming as an ever-evolving collection of souls.

My joy in music and meditation shifted my energies back to their intuitive flow, and I soon followed an inner urge to travel to Philadelphia and watch the gentle Lobsang Samten, a Tibetan monk, create a magnificent Wheel of Life sand mandala. It was a perfect case of synchronicity. Patiently trickling out a few grains of sand at a time, Lobsang depicted the Buddhist philosophy of the three enemies within (fear, greed and anger) and how we and, by extension, our government and our planet, can suffer terrible consequences time after time, or release these inner poisons through prayer and meditation to reach the peace of enlightenment.

We know this is not easy to do: the red cardinal, accustomed to violence, plunges against our windows day and night. But if we choose, we can rejoice in the splendor of nature’s mirror and the words and images of comfort and insight given to us in meditation and by people and events everywhere. Each thought of love lessens the cardinal’s hold on our reality and he comes less often to our windows. Love forms a protective field and no outer force can disturb this field of love, which grows and extends outward to encompass any disturbance and heal it.

On Feb. 9, this was proved by hundreds of thousands of Americans praying with author and peace troubadour James Twyman and 70 others in Israel to build peace in the Middle East. During this prayer vigil, a scientist using a biometer measured a baseline 6500 units of light emitted by people and physical places and watched it surge to a remarkable 9500 angstroms of light. The next day, according to statisticians, violence and crime in Israel decreased by 50 to 100 percent.

I see more clearly now than ever before, as my still, small voice instructs, that the only healer is love. If we can be loving, no matter what comes, we will watch as peace rolls across the land like waves in the sea, washing one and all until all are One and healed and whole and free.

We will do this if we wish to carry seeds of peace into the future, and if the cardinal is to recognize that his only enemy is within.

(Judith Pennington is a writer, meditation teacher and author of “The Voice of the Soul: A Journey into Wisdom and the Physics of God.” The Newsletter page of her website, eaglelife.com, contains articles related to this one.)