February 6, 2020 – Work with Delight  
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**A close up of a sign

Description automatically generated**

*“It’s dark because you are trying too hard. Lightly child, lightly. Learn to do everything lightly. Yes, feel lightly even though you’re feeling deeply. Just lightly let things happen and lightly cope with them. So throw away your baggage and go forward. There are quicksands all about you, sucking at your feet, trying to suck you down into fear and self-pity and despair. That’s why you must walk so lightly. Lightly my darling…”*

***–*** Aldous Huxley, *Island*, pg 318

**Introduction**

There is a Commentary in Vol 4 entitled “Will and Delight” and Dr Nicoll reminds us that when we ‘engage our Will with directed attention, we can find our Delight. There is another Work aphorism that I wish to address tonight – Page 10. Why is it called Page 10? Simply because on page 10 in Vol 1, Dr Nicholl tells Bush to remember to take himself lightly. But isn’t the Work serious business? Yes, AND we can do it lightly. Dr. Nicoll says in the Commentary on Inner Freedom, “We begin to build a new orientation to everything and everyone…When this happens, we begin to float, as it were, lift ourselves off the ground, to learn to sail”. I think that is what is meant when Christ tells us, “…my yoke is easy and my burden is light”.

What does Page 10 look like? Let me give you an example: one night in a Second Line group, I was sharing an event from work that had happened. There had been a very heated exchange with a co-worker – I made myself look tough. I think we all like to tell our stories and make ourselves the heroine or hero, and that is how I related the observation. But my Work partner asked me, “Did you really say it like that?” Busted. Of course not. the group loves me enough to let me know, this is the importance of working in groups. My choice in that moment was to fall into old neuropathways of shame and humiliation, or to choose to float. I chose to float, and laugh, and answer honestly, “no”. And remember God doesn’t need Caren to be a bad ass.

Other traditions have references to taking ourselves lightly. There is a Tibetan proverb, “The secret to living well and longer is: eat half, walk double, laugh triple, and love without measure.” Rumi said, “When you find a peaceful joy, that’s when you are near truth.” Hafez said, “Laugh because that is the purest sound.” Henri Nouwen reminds us that “Joy does not simply happen to us. We have to choose joy and keep choosing it every day.” Choice is a gift of metanoia.

Humor research (as excerpted in Psychologytoday.com) notes that humor is a most important topic. Certainly our culture uses it to entertain and engage consumers. Humor can have a positive effect on your life- it can have health benefits – improved circulation, improved lung capacity, and improved skills in reducing stress. But more importantly, Humor can move you from Internal Consideration and account-making (as in Second Line – why are you picking on me?), into External Consideration (to see myself through another’s eyes).

**Elaboration of Work Idea(s)**

The Work idea of Page 10 encourages us to remember that like Job, we must ,” …fall into the hands of the living God.” (Hebrews 10:31). If we simply remember God and know that it is all in God’s hands, then we can feel safe. Fr Thomas said, “Nothing really matters because of God. But everything also matters because of God.” (World Without End). And by taking ourselves lightly, we can lessen the burden of our Common Father – the 4th Obilgoian Striving. The idea of thinking in a new way, looking in a new direction for our happiness is the gift of metanoia – we can choose. We can Work.

Remember, in the beginning, God created everything, and said it was good. Bernadette said, “God doesn’t make trash.” - we have a place and responsibility in the Ray. Fr Thomas reminds us to remember our inner core of goodness. Even the Gospels incorporate goodness – the term means Good News. It is our false self, our programs for happiness that color our world with darkness and disdain. My programs were all around unworthiness (I used to say ‘God of the universe…and Caren) – a heavy burden indeed. My burden has been lightened by understanding “Not I”. By using the Work, I have been able to separate from my habitual patterns, and understand them as a lie I have believed most of my life.

I remember my first viseral awareness of “Not I”. I was driving home from work with the expectation of encountering my husband’s anger over a conversation held earlier. I was in my usual state of worry, fear, and apprehension. At a stop light, I took a deep breath and said “not I” over and over. I had a feeling of something being peeled off of me – not painful, but freeing. I felt the fear melt away. I had just learned to float! Non- identification happens. With scathing self honest observation, you will see your darkness – not condemn it – but transform it into light. That is true metanoia.

If, as the work says, our Being attracts our life, then it follows that as we learn to choose lightness we will attract lightness. The gift of choice is paramount – in every moment we can choose our reaction, we can choose to use life as our third or relating force, or the Work. I broke my favorite teacup, and initially reacted to it as a tragedy – it had been a gift from a friend. But I was able to see it as an opportunity to Work, and remove my sense of I from the broken teacup. As we engage with Work ideas and apply them to our life – try it on our bones, then we begin to deeply understand since knowledge applied to Being gives us understanding. And understanding brings us freedom. I believe it is the Work and Centering Prayer that enabled me to face being fired at 65. It was a shock, I’ve never been fired before, but it was not devastating. I have come to be grateful for the event and am working on residual feelings of being wrongly accused.

Work ideas are seeds that contain the entire pearl – Matthew 13:45-46. “The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls. When he finds a pearl of great price, he goes and sells all that he has and buys it.” We sell our old programs and habits of behavior to buy the key to living in the kingdom now…here. At first, we are learning the language and the concepts, then it all becomes the pathway to the light. We begin to truly have valuation for the work – it becomes our treasure, as in Matthew 6:21, “For where your treasure is, there will be your heart also.”

But, you may counter, ‘the world is broken. How can we take ourselves lightly?’ I would answer, lightly and light is exactly what our fragmented world needs to repair its brokenness. That is not to say we are thoughtless or unaware of suffering, we are acutely aware. However, we have been given tools to use suffering to transform not only ourselves (as in the first line of the work), but to transform the world (as in the third line of the work). The power of “you have the right not to be negative” can remove the wrong feeling of I from an event in a snap. And the power of the third line of the Work to transform others is incredible. My daughters were not raised in this church, and have not studied the teachings. But I hear Work principles spoken by them every day, and that is being passed down to my granddaughters. We are raising a more consciously aware generation – look at our HYPED!

There is a tendency to assume the work must always be taken very seriously. I would agree in regards the concepts, the importance of pondering, and the need to apply it personally. I was a very serious Work student in my early days. All my sharings were about negative events. Scrupulosity. Eventually, I learned all events are my food to make that higher vibration, and that adding humor, lightness, is also therapeutic. There is a joke I no longer remember, but I do remember the punchline: “Under all this manure there must surely be a pony!” Sometimes life seems to give us manure – an unpleasant event, an argument with a loved one – but in that event is a gift. We just need to be willing to dig for the pony and delighted when we find it.

The Aesop fable of the Ant and the Grasshopper is a moral tale extoling the benefit of hard work and preparation. However, if we move beyond the initial message look deeper as we do in Lectio, we begin to see more. The Ant is doing his tasks with an attitude of burden and drudgery. There is no joy. The Grasshopper is taking his life very lightly in fact he is loving life. The Ant is living in lack while the Grasshopper lives in abundance. It may even be that the Ant is Martha and the Grasshopper is Mary. And we can embrace the idea of being both Martha AND Mary – those of us in Seva do that every Sunday. Yes, we need to be diligent and prepare fully for our transformation and we can do it with joy. In the Decalogue, we are commanded to “Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy.” (Exodus 20:8). Holy does not only mean serious and somber. In his book, Sabbath, Wayne Muller reminds us that the “Sabbath creates a marker … if we are lost, we can find our way back to our center.” He goes on to say, “Remember the Sabbath means remember that everything you have received is a blessing. Remember to delight in your life, in the fruits of your labor. Remember to stop and offer thanks for the wonder of it.” (pg 6) Each week we pray to ‘Simply remember God’. When we engage a sense of playfulness, we will find the light of consciousness will enable us to learn to float.

The 1964 movie, The Seven Faces of Dr. Lao, presents the idea of taking yourself lightly when Dr. Lao answers the child, Mike, who wants to join his circus: “…The whole world is a circus if you look at it the right way. Every time you pick up a handful of dust, and see not the dust, but a mystery, a marvel, there in your hand, every time you stop and think, ‘I’m alive, and being alive is fantastic!’ may be the best definition of Self-Remembering.

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In summary, the key to freedom from our personal prison is choice, metanoia. This choice can undo the wounds of a lifetime – we are not eternally damned, unworthy of God’s love – the message of my false personality. We are in fact the evidence of that love and declared good by God. The Work is not meant to weigh us down, but rather to lift us up – up into the Light of Consciousness and into Lightness of Being, to help us remember “I’m alive, and being alive is fantastic!”.

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