

## **FINDING THE HOLY IN THE HOLIDAYS:**

Holiness is the center that holds all peripheries; the pure internal absence that makes sense of everyone who comes to visit; the hidden ground beneath feet always running to look for gifts, the held note of a song that leaves a chapel silent or the stopped listener still and attentive in the busiest, most glittering street. Holiness is the deep internal, cathedral space where nothing is allowed to happen, thus allowing all other things to happen, a gravitational field of invitation and gathering and a radical letting alone, of family, of food, of perspectives, what is wanted is reached through letting go, by giving up on willed perfection.

Holiness is the rehabilitation of the discarded; the uncelebrated and the imperfect, into new unities, perceived again as gift. Holiness is the bringing of the detailed outside into the vast unspoken and horizon-less inside, from where the inside seems to give again, re-simplifying the periphery, our everyday life transformed as if by simply breathing, breathing in and breathing out, back to the world.

Holiness is memory independent of time, not time as besieging force in which we run around getting things done but time radiating out from the place where we stand, welling from the unspoken that holds together all words said at the busy surface; holiness marries hurry to rest, stress to spaciousness, and joy to heartbreak in our difficult attempt to give and receive, dissolving giver and receiver into one conversation, untouched by the hurry of the hours. Holiness is not in Bethlehem, nor Jerusalem, nor the largest, most glittering, mall, unless we are there in good company, with a friend, with a loved one, with our affections, with our best and most generous thoughts, most of all with a deep form of inhabited silence, a natural, grounded, central conversation with what and how we like to give and how we can be large enough to receive. Holiness is coming to ground in the essence of our giving and receiving, a mirror in which we can see both our virtues and our difficulties, but also, a doorway to the life we want beyond any particular form of exchange. Holiness is the star we did not know we were following.

Holiness is beautiful beckoning uncertainty: not knowing married to knowing heartbreak, time celebrated and time already gone so quickly, departed love ones as present as arriving children. Holiness dissolves the prison of time and lies only one short breath from the present busy moment: one look into the starry darkness of the mid-winter sky at the midnight hour, one glance at a son or a daughter's face, home through the door; one sight of a distressed friend alone in the midst of a crowded celebration. Holiness is a step taken not to the left or to the right, but straight through present besieging outer circumstances, to the core of the pattern we inhabit at the very center of the celebration. Holiness is reached not through effort or will, but by stopping; by an inward coming to rest; a place from which we can embody the mid-winter spirit of our days, a radical, inhabited simplicity, where we live in a kind of on-going surprise and with some wonder and appreciation, flawed and far from perfection, but inhabiting the very center of a beautiful, unlooked for giftedness.

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