

“Validation”

March 15, 2009

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Today’s sermon starts with the fundamental basis of our faith tradition, which is our First Principle. *“We affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person.”* Everything else we say and do emerges from that principle, for it is the bedrock of our Universalist faith.

We believe that all of creation, including human beings, are born with this fundamental goodness. The task of our religion is to encourage that goodness to flower into our lives.

What does that mean? What can we do to make that happen? This is an important question, since our culture and our world and especially much of the religion of the world tends to belittle individuals. The message is, “You’re no good; you don’t meet the standard; you need to be fixed.” We have all experienced this kind of defamation, sometimes even in our own families.

Most of us go around, trying to be validated in some way. The word “validate” is from Latin words which mean “to be made strong”; to be “confirmed or substantiated”, and to be “given official approval by someone in authority”.

So it is that we come to our “mystery play” for today. In medieval times, the Bible stories were played out by traveling troubadours in the public square in what they called mystery plays or miracle plays. Today, this happens on YouTube.

Our play is called “Validation”, and the plot centers on a fellow who works in a parking garage “validating” shoppers’ parking tickets. But in a twist of the plot, the guy also tries to validate the persons themselves. He eventually becomes well known as someone who validates people by making them smile.

(Remember, this is a mystery play, so everything is allegorical.)

He finds someone at the Department of Motor Vehicles who will not smile, and he goes into a funk. In other words, the one who validates needs to be validated himself. This very thing has happened to me as a Unitarian Universalist minister, even as I try hard to spread the message out into the world. Sometimes I find myself in the place where I need to hear it myself.

So here it is: “Validation” courtesy of YouTube.com (our modern format of presenting the great parables):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cbk980jV7Ao>

(You may need to paste this address into your browser.)

It’s all about our intense human desire to be validated, to be accepted, to be honored and affirmed.

What do *you* think about all this? Do you want to be “confirmed”? That’s the traditional religious response to this question, consummating in the act of “confirmation”.

So many of us want this confirmation, even if we are not part of the orthodox church. Please look at this video and imagine how you can be redeemed. This is, after all, what the church of today—what Shoreline Unitarian Universalist Church—is all about: the confirmation of our deepest humanity and most profound spirituality of all people.

Whoever you are, and wherever you are on your life journey, you are welcome here!

Amen and amen!

A Gift

Just when you seem to yourself
nothing but a flimsy web
of questions, you are given
the questions of others to hold
in the emptiness of your hands,
songbird eggs that can still hatch
if you keep them warm,
butterflies opening and closing themselves
in your cupped palms, trusting you not to injure
their scintillant fur, their dust.
You are given the questions of others
as if they were answers
to all you ask. Yes, perhaps
this gift is your answer.

~ Denise Levertov ~

(Sands of the Well)