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## CHAPTER 5 - THE ONE WITH NO NAME

*When you looked at me  
your eyes imprinted your grace in me;  
for this you loved me ardently;  
and thus my eyes deserved  
to adore what they beheld in you.*

*Do not despise me;  
for if, before, you found me dark,  
now truly you can look at me  
since you have looked  
and left in me grace and beauty.<sup>1</sup>*

*~Juan de la Cruz*

## TOTAL RUIN

In his later life Francis suffered intense and blinding pain in his eyes, so acute he could not bare the light. He stopped at the convent of Clare on the way to find a doctor. Francis and Clare were halves of the same coin, two wings of a soaring bird, two hands of the one Spirit. Their time together was a joy and consolation for both of them. He was so exhausted when he reached her; she made him a little bed and hut of reeds so he could rest. But Francis could not rest. The pain in his eyes was intense. Even worse the little hut attracted a host of scurrying rats that annoyed him continually. Day or night he could not rest.

After suffering like this for several days he began to think that the pain was sent to him by God because he had erred in his life, had committed violence and the like. He began to feel he had come to ruin as he should, a shell of the man he once was, blind and weak. He prayed, "My God, I am worthy of this, and even worse. Grant to me Lord of Mercy and Compassion that no pain, however great, no infirmity nor anguish, shall ever separate me from you. I am grateful for your presence in even this."

At this prayer, a voice came. Some say the voice came from the innermost sanctuary in the heart. Some say it was out of the universe ablaze with stars. Others say what is within is without; what is without is within.

The voice spoke, "Francis, if there was a treasure more precious than gold, and other gems, more precious than fertile earth and rocks, or rare healing balm, than living water, seas, rivers, and if all were offered to you in the place of your infirmity, would you not rejoice and be content?"

Francis knew his failure inside out, "I am unworthy of such a treasure."

And the voice said again: "Rejoice with all your heart, Francis, for such a treasure is a life lived in union, forever I am with you, and even now I promise you will enter more fully into this union. Your infirmity and affliction, these signs of contradiction, are a pledge that when love pierces all things to unveil itself, all things become love."

Francis received the promise and was filled with joy; and calling his companions, he said to them: "Up now, let us be on our way." He sang for them, and danced on the way like a troubadour. Stumbling in his blindness he regaled them playing mock music on a fiddle of two sticks. The companions were amazed at his vitality and when they questioned him he spoke of joyful contradictions, of the sword of gratitude that pierces the veil of illusion, of the blessed joy of coming into complete ruin. For to Francis now everything, even his blindness, his pain and his failures, was pregnant with the grace of God.

When they approached the town, a crowd came out to meet Francis. But he avoided them by staying away from the city. Instead he went to a church two miles away. When the crowd found out where he had gone they followed him, trampling an old vine that surrounded the church. All its grapes

were ruined. The priest of the church seeing this wished he had never laid eyes on Francis or let him on to the grounds.

Francis looked at the ruined vine and the ruminating priest, "Father, tell me, how much wine does this vine produce in a fertile year?" He answered: "Twelve measures." Then Francis said: "Be patient and endure my presence a few days longer. I find great rest and healing in this church. I promise you this vine that has come to total ruin will produce twenty measures of wine every year."

So Francis and the companions remained there. When the grapes were gathered, although the vine was entirely trampled, it did produce twenty measures of excellent wine.

The people marveled at the miracle and concentrated on the wine. But one of them upon tasting the wine remembered the almost blind and stumbling man and the ruined vine. Sometimes the whole world is a mirror.

When Francis and the companions left, that one followed them at a distance, then closer and closer, until he was one of them.<sup>1</sup>

## **THE ANONYMOUS ONE**

An anonymous leper opened his arms to Francis and invited him into a fierce embrace. From that moment Francis states he was filled with the love of God. His whole life reflected that passionate love.

The anonymous one is always with us in the secret spaces of our hearts lurking behind rocks and in the crevasses of the world we inhabit. We often find difficulty in acknowledging his presence, cringing to avoid him even in our dreams. And yet he reaches out to us in compassion and bestows the gift of transformation. In that fierce embrace something utterly new and unheard of is created, a mysterious third.

He called to Jesus from the side of the road. He walked before Buddha in a Brahmin field. Heyoka, backwards clown of the universe, bodhisattva of compassion, moneychanger of the world, dancing among the bones of the dead, he separates illusion and delusion from ultimate reality.

Call him leper, outcast, enemy, madman, hidden self. He is the initiator, the quickener, everywhere hidden and right before our eyes.

## COMING INTO SILENCE

Read slowly aloud three times the following verse from the Hebrew Scripture, "Be still and know that I am God". Then sit quietly for a few minutes repeating the scripture silently within yourself. Pause in silence for a few moments after each line. Start subtracting words until the last word allowing yourself to come into silence. Wait a few minutes and start adding the word until the scripture is complete once again. It is like this:

Be still and know that I am God.  
Be still and know that I am.  
Be still and know.  
Be still.

Be

Be still.  
Be still and know.  
Be still and know that I am.  
Be still and know that I am God.

## SOUND

Let the sound and feel of humming permeate all that you do throughout the day.

## CONTEMPLATION

### Moving Down with the Sound

Someone is singing an old song, a hard song  
one of those songs of love.  
Someone's got a torch song, a light song,  
a shining in the dark. Green forces its way  
through cracked ground. Someone's singing  
as if life's very heart were the stake.  
Hot woman wailing, wailing, got fire in her breath.  
Man playing the blues takes you down,  
takes you down to the sound,  
that rumble in your chest,  
that rumble in your chest.  
can you feel it? feel it.

can you feel it? feel it.  
Sounds cracking right through bone.  
can you feel it? feel it.  
can you feel it? feel it,  
that rumble that rumble like roaring stone.  
Rocks are rising through the ground,  
that rumble that rumble  
that sound that sound.  
Hard songs sing so sweet.  
I want to know. I want to know  
whose heart is howling this beat?  
can you feel it? feel it.  
can you feel it? feel it  
vibrate, resonate, move through you,  
going down, going down  
to the silent silent still of the sound.  
O how beautiful you are.  
How beautiful you are. I am  
moving through the particles of your light,  
moving in the hum of you, moving down  
with the sound to the ancient quiet of you.  
O how beautiful you are.<sup>ii</sup>

## STORY

- Tell a story about a time when you encountered an outcast within or without and later recognized you were given a gift.
- Name, list or draw those "outer" things, those anonymous people or qualities that disgust you or terrify you or repel you. Now turn "inward" and 'see' where these same behaviors or qualities are hidden inside your self. In an act of mercy begin to embrace these abandoned, repelled or separate parts--draw or create an image of that movement, that embrace. How does that make you feel? What yet needs to be done?

## BLESSING

May you hear the holy in all that is; see the holy in all that is. May you embrace all and every particle of you. May you embrace within, without, around and through all beings that seem outside you. May you know the holy.

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<sup>i</sup> Flaherty, Barbara. Contemporary adaptation from *The Little Flowers of Francis* by Fra Ugolino da Santa Maria, 14<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>ii</sup> Flaherty, Barbara. *Holy Madness*. Chanting Press. Anchorage, AK 2006.