

“Our Mythic Journey”

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Today’s remarks I dedicate to all children; our own small children, our grandchildren, nieces, nephews or the neighborhood children with whom we do come into contact. Think about this for a moment; there has been a divorce, a death, a mental breakdown, a financial breakdown, an accident, an unexpected illness or injury and the question is how are we to cope with these very real and yet serious circumstances that are outside our control? And you better bet, those children we talked about a minute before are watching and waiting and wondering, indeed how are you going to handle these situations? And that is the stuff of myths. How the heroes and heroines handled the very real and often fantastical stuff we call our lives.

Well my friends, we are now the heroes and heroines of this tale, it is our life now and we are being called upon to answer these challenges or be brought down by them. The choice is ours, but we are certainly not left without help. There is always help. And where do we find this help? Often none other than the myths, the stories, the legends of those of our past; our grandparents, aunts and uncles or those of the legends of the great myths of humanity. They give us their swords of truth, their armor of free choice and courage.

Myths arm us with wisdom and bravery that makes us blush and better still, helps us face whatever is coming down the pike of life. So, surrender only your misery, your questions, your anxiousness and know that within the family of humanity there are heroes and heroines out there, and in here that will be there for us as we face the dragons, the demons, the fierce ones. We are certainly not alone and the best part is, that hero or heroine may just look like the person you see every morning in the mirror. So here’s to the children and the vow we make not to leave them without models that they too can follow in their challenges. So, let us make myths together.

All cultures need myths. For many reasons, one not with standing our isolation as individuals and families, we need myths more than ever today. “Raider of the Lost Ark,” “The Star Wars” series, “Narnia” are all myth makers for ourselves and our children.

We are like sponges soaking up meaning wherever we can find it. We are the meaning seekers and myths are the meaning makers. It is my opinion the movies that last, that are enduring, that have made a lasting impression on people, are those movies that have had a universal message but done in a personal way.

Experts on modern life tell us we are living in a demythologized world. Unfortunately what we teach in school is technology and information, but what of the wisdom of the past that will inform our children and youth in how to live in the present?

Often we are blind, looking for bits of rays of light to guide us. Often we are deaf, listening for sounds that will lead us to right action, moral behavior, maybe ~ ultimately salvation. We often feel we are parched dying in a wasteland of terror and fear never drinking from a cup that fully refreshes.

Myth is powerful refreshment. It is my contention that stories are indeed entertaining, but more than that, they are often life giving. And I believe we love movies, biographies and novels so much because what is true for the personal, is true and will speak to the universal and visa versa. And stories/ myths are so much more than simple entertainment.

Myths are the backbone of how to live a moral life. They are the instruction to our children of how to face often insurmountable challenges and to come through with flying colors. It is the place where as a culture, a society you can instruct without preaching, teach without boring and charge without bullying. Myth is not so much of the news of the hour, or the news of the day, but rather it is of the truth of the inner life finding expression through story forever, for everyone!

Our kids and youth and ourselves, judging by the popularity of movies, television and novels, are also sponges, empty vessels, aching souls waiting to be filled with examples of how to be brave, courageous and bold in the face of overwhelming odds.

Myths tell us we will be all right in life even within its challenges. Stories of others, people just like ourselves, instruct us on how to be survivors; of say the holocaust, of wars, or horrors that life can fling at a person. They are subtle reminders that some people tried this or that and they endured. The message is; you can too.

These very human needs that I am speaking about today are the very reason why we have sacred scriptures. Each culture, each society had the same basic need and desire to teach their young ones and remind themselves that enduring is possible throughout the formidable task of living. Without examples, models, exemplars, we would go mad. The truly great teachers of the past, teach us with their lives, their mistakes, their courage, their ability to survive.

If you are a thinking, breathing, acting individual who wakes up in the morning, dresses, goes to work, volunteers and produces, interacts and

has grown and moved forward in your life, you have used thousands of myths everyday in order to do what you do. They are often the unconscious teachers, the stories, the lessons, the explanations, the paths, the ways to behave, in other words; a way to be in the world.

According to Joseph Campbell, who spent his life searching for myths, and noticing similarities in myths from all over the world, Campbell saw some characteristics that seemed to be a part of all good myths. See if these characteristics don't also fit the Star Wars sequence. Star Wars, by the way, I consider the premier myth of the 21st century.

A myth is a story, a narrative structure with a beginning, middle and an end, which displays some or all of the following features:

1. Central characters in the story are gods, demons or other supernatural beings or beings who are on their way to becoming superhuman because of their deeds. (Luke Skywalker, even the name says it all mythically, does become superhuman in many ways throughout the series.)
2. The characters in the myth have powers that far outweigh the ordinary human being. (Luke takes on the Force, which gives him superhuman powers.)
3. The scene of the action in a myth refers either to heaven or hell or very ordinary settings here on earth that are soon to become immortal. (Luke is taught to use the Force in a swamp with Yoda, and then fights the Emperor in the palace, in the death star, certainly not in anyway an earthly setting.)
4. The function of myth is not to convey either facts or logically consistent ideas; myth instead is a powerful means to communicate core meanings and to evoke mystery. When a myth comes alive, we live within it and it lives within us. "The world is not made of atoms;" Campbell says, "the world is made of stories."
5. And yet aren't Luke and Leah simply people in the end, who are asked to accomplish great things in their lives? Who of the children you know in your life is not also a simple person who will be asked to accomplish great things in their lives? And what about you, are you not a simple person who has been asked to accomplish sometimes the impossible in your life?

Most of us want simply; harmony, peace, answers to our questions of life. But if we believe the popular parlance of the use of the word myth, we would believe it was a fable, a fairy tale, even an untruth. We must take back this word myth, and realize that it is the very fabric of the truths we tell ourselves when the worst has happened. It is a raft helping us float when everything seems lost and chaotic. Myth is life's meaning that tells us we will survive when we are sure we surely will not.

The myth is the public dream and the dream is the private myth. The best things can't be told, they transcend thought. Second best things are often misunderstood, because they refer to those thoughts that transcend thought. The third best are what we talk about and share - myth - a field of reference to what is absolutely transcendent.

Myths express what you know inside is true about your life. Myths often talk about mystery. And mystery smashes all of your fixed notions of things. One message is that, out of myths over and over again, is the lesson that out of the bottom of the abyss comes the voice of salvation. The despairing moment is when the real message of transformation is going to come. At the bleakest moment comes the light; the message that all of heaven and all of hell is contained within each person.

As each of you and your children, your grandchildren and the young people of this church and society in general, makes life's inner journey, life often is not interpreted for you or them. Aren't there times you would love a manual on how to do life? Just turn to page 42 and see how to handle stress, page 90 for loss and so on. But, it seems all people have to work out their own lives for themselves. And, as most of you know, you don't have to live very long, or go very far off the interpreted path to find yourself in very difficult situations. The courage to face the trials and to bring a whole new body of possibilities into the field of interpreted experience for yourself and others is the hero's journey, the hero's quest and the hero's role in our lives.

We are the dream interpreters, the hope installers, the ones who now have the responsibility and the accountability to be the myth makers. Joseph Campbell tells us; "Our lives are in their very essence and character a terrible mystery. It would be childish to say no to the pain of life." Therefore, the myth is the public dream and your dreams are the private myths.

Do not be afraid to share the adventures, the experiences, the escapades of your own personal or family heroes and heroines. How did your Grandfather handle life, how did your Mother or your Father or a sister or brother be the hero? You never know, their adventures and experiences, they way they handled life often on the edge, just may save someone's life today. I find it appalling that we as a society or a family unit, or even a church community would be willing to turn the power of myth over to George Lucas, as nice and wonderful as he may be, or Stephen King, or the Simpsons or any other popular show on television. Often the best lessons in life cannot be told in any other way but story, and the mythic story is about getting to the mystery of life. Tell a story about love and courage and bravery, hope and promise of the human spirit to someone this week.

Let us be the ones who vow, that not one more child or youth on our watch, will feel they need to end their life because they have no models, no heroes, and no heroines. May the healthy myth live on in us and our children!

And what if we do begin to honor myths, tell myths, know the myths of ancient peoples and begin to share them? Which myths are you going to tell? There are many, many, many, many that seek to continue a very harmful way of looking at the world, and I will call this harmful way the dominator system, also known as the patriarchy. There are features of the patriarchy that have been slowly killing the world for far too long. Ann Wilson Schaff in her book, "Women Who Love Too Much," sums up the patriarchy in the best way I have ever seen. She reminds us that the Patriarchy has fooled men into believing that they can be objective in every situation, because as men they inherently know more than women or children.

The patriarchy, the dominator style of living in our world has ruled for the last 2,500 years and I truly believe it is time for a change. The stories, the myths we choose to tell could be a very big influence in making such a change. And yet you could ask, do I want a matriarchy? No! I want a partnership mode.

This is a myth you can sink your spiritual selves into. In 1,500 BCE there lived a group of people in Crete. They were the last civilization on earth we know of who know how to live together as men and women in peace and harmony. They worshiped the Goddess and her consort. They lived peacefully as farmers and people who honored, loved and supported arts. It is the last civilization we have, the closest to our time today of how to do it, how to live together as men and women in peace. I bet there are many of you who have never heard of Crete or how they lived. And yet, every one of us here has been hurt by the patriarchy. Men you have been hurt because you have been told it is possible to be right and correct all the time. It has made many men robots, incapable of truly feeling, being humble and able to say "I really don't know" without feeling they are somehow letting the whole world down.

And women, what has the patriarchy done to women? It has made women feel less than human. By the patriarchy making the godhead exclusively male, it has taken away the very divinity that surely exists in every human. Women were made they are the very reason humans no longer live in paradise. The full weight of the presence of evil in the world has been laid on the shoulders of women who now will suffer through child bearing as a punishment for their sins. And children and animals and the earth fair no better in the patriarchal world. All are simply means to

an end that says all things must serve the male. That is not a myth - that is a lie.

So, why do we watch reruns of Law and Order, and can't tell ourselves or our children, or our grandchildren about the mythical, salvific story of Crete? Wake up people! The dominance of one sex over another, the hatred of all things feminine, the love of war and violence, the hopelessness, could stop with us. As we pick up books with ancient and modern myths in them we learn again the hero and heroines story and as we tell ourselves, we find the courage to tell others.

What are the signs of a dominator system:

- ✓ Rigid male dominance in all areas of life (as well as “hard” or “masculine” social priorities.)
- ✓ “Strong man” rule, or a generally hierarchic and authoritarian family and social structure (where obedience to orders is expected.)
- ✓ High degree of institutionalized social violence (i.e. rape, wife beating, child abuse, war) that is required to impose and maintain rigid economic, social and political rankings.
- ✓ Emphasis on technologies of destruction and domination.
- ✓ Conquest of nature.
- ✓ Fear and scarcity as the primary motivators for work.

Characteristics of the Partnership System:

- ✓ Equal partnership between women and men in all areas of life (as well as elevation of the “soft” or “feminine” values in social governance.)
- ✓ A more democratic and equalitarian family and social structure (where participatory decision making is expected.)
- ✓ More peaceful and mutually satisfying personal, community and global relations based on interconnection (linking rather than ranking.)
- ✓ Emphasis on creative technologies that sustain and enhance life.
- ✓ Respect and love for nature.
- ✓ A stimulation of creativity, self development, group or team responsibility, and concern for the larger community (from local to planetary) as primary motivators for work.

Which world would you rather live in? Read Riane Eisler's books, “The Chalice and the Blade” and “The Partnership Way”, read Joseph Campbell's, “The Power of Myth” and you will be changed, renewed and ready to create a world that sees there are other ways than violence to get the job done, and other ways of living that says one sex is above another and must subjugate, rule and dominate. I am offering you the way to freedom. Take the hero, heroine's journey with me and – while we're at it, let's change the world.