

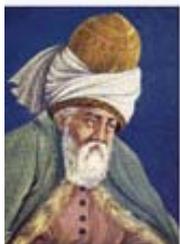
Towards a new beginning

The days have been dark and wet these last few weeks and autumn has most definitely arrived. I usually love autumn. I love the fact that the fields once so full of crops are now getting chance to rest. A newly ploughed and fallow field is so pleasing to my eye and my soul. It speaks of calm and of slowing down. It speaks of a job well done and a chance to replenish before next spring. It speaks of potential for new growth and energy and life. Most of all it speaks of deep rest.

This autumn, however, hasn't been so easy for me. It has been tied in with an autumnal season in my moods and feelings and my spirituality. I have felt like I have been in a swirling mist which is unsettling, and unnerving me. All have been triggered by a range of experiences at home and at work - curved balls that have been thrown my way that I just haven't seen coming. Of course, like most of us do when we feel like this, I have given myself a good talking to and resolved to battle on. But battling on doesn't always do us that much good. We need to look at what is happening beneath the surface. To take a long, hard look at ourselves. To come to some conclusions about why we feel like we do and what can be done about it.

I have done just this over the last few evenings and I don't like all of what I see. I see a tired and cross person who has got the 'poor me' syndrome. I am giving to others with a smiling exterior but feel a little put out on the inside. Of course I tell myself that I don't want to receive or for anyone to say thank you ...but deep down feel that just a little something back would be nice! In short - I am feeling negative and I don't like it.

Rumi - a 13th century mystic wrote that negativity and turmoil has its place in our lives:



*This human being is a guest - house; every morning a new arrival;
a joy, a depression, a meanness - some momentary awareness comes as an
unexpected visitor.*

*Welcome and entertain them all! Even if they are a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house empty of all your furniture;
still treat each guest honourably. He may be clearing you out for some new delight.
The dark thought, the shame, the malice - meet them at the door laughing, and invite them
in. Be grateful for whoever comes, because each has been sent as a guide from beyond.*

Rumi is pointing at the truth that there is nothing neutral. That all of our emotions play a role and can act as 'guides from beyond'. My learning heart is beginning to understand something that I know I have worked out before but have since forgotten - that within the difficult times we are experiencing there is, as well as all the pain, an opportunity for trust and for growth.

All is grace and when we learn to begin to trust this, our difficult times are no longer as threatening. God is equally in all of the turmoil as in all of the joy. Getting our heads around this isn't easy but once you start to 'Look, see and recognise' this - it becomes easier to do. Why? Because with practice we can begin to see hope in our situation and that brings the blessing of transformation. Or the beginning of it.

*'Unknown to us, there are moments when crevices we cannot see
Open for time to come alive with beginning.*

*As in autumn a field of corn knows when enough green has been inhaled from the clay
And under the skill of an artist breeze
Becomes gold in a day.*

'Before the beginning', John O'Donohue

The first step of this journey is to acknowledge our feelings, our weaknesses. To admit that we are vulnerable. When I acknowledge this fact about myself, then somehow I can feel my frustrations and negativities melt away - even just for a while. I allow myself to draw close to God, to rest in God and to let God's loving presence and energy fill me and soothe me like a balm. And when I do this - like the autumn fields I love to see - the balance within is given a chance to become restored. Somehow, my human heart can be reminded of its divinity, its beauty and its huge capacity for love. And when this happens I can see an opportunity arising to let the 'dark crevices' within me become places that are open to come alive again with beginning.