

INSCAPE December 2014

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Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

May you always be consciously aware of the grace and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the love and mercy of God the Father, and the communion of the Life-Giving Holy Spirit dwelling within your heart!

DREAMS AND VISIONS AND DIVINE ENCOUNTER

As we enter into the last month of 2014, we try to get used to the reality that we are already rapidly approaching a new year. Did you ever look ahead as a child in grade school and wonder what your life would be like down the road in 2015? And now that you have experienced and lived through that time and now a new year of life is being given to you by God as a total gift.

Surely the passing of one year can bring to our hearts some regrets. Perhaps we encountered our fair share of suffering for one year on the physical, psychic and spiritual levels. Some relationships brought special pain to us. Perhaps we caused pain to our loved ones, deliberately or indeliberately.

Still all of us might have hearts that swell up with humble gratitude to God for His many graces and gifts. We thank God for His protective and involved uncreated energies of love sustaining us in all trials.

This coming new year of 2015 lies before us as a rich potentiality. Much will depend on our choices in each event of each day as to whether such gold can be mined out of the rich potential locked within our body, soul and spirit faculties.

One of our richest assets for fulfillment as dynamic human persons living fully unto God's glory is locked within our unconscious. Over 95% of what we could become lies in the darkness of possibility. For this reason I have chosen the important topic of dreams as a way to open up our unconscious to God's grace.

GOD SPEAKS TO US IN DREAMS

God is love. And love is communicated in words and actions. Therefore, God is a God who is energetically always gifting us with the gift of Himself unto communion. He has created us according to His own image and likeness (Genesis 1:26) in order that we might through the powers of our "soul" faculties of emotions, memory, imagination, understanding, will and intellect receive His "speech" about Himself, about our true selves in relation to Him, about ourselves in relation to other human beings and the whole created cosmos around us.

Receiving God's Word admits of many levels on our part. To enter deeply into communication with God and to listen with childlike obedience to His Word revealed to us, is never a static act, but a continued process of greater and greater alertness, discernment and surrendering love on our part. It means intricate and intense work. It is of the essence of what we call the "spiritual life." There are no easy ways as the lives of the Saints demonstrate to us.

The Holy Spirit is God's hidden energies of love as communicating and self-gifting toward mystical union between God and ourselves (Theosis). The Spirit reveals or unveils God in His many ways of communicating Himself through the indirect modes of participated perfections of God found in His creatures, through the Church in its preaching and its mediating encounters with Christ through the sacraments (mysterion) and the teaching of the hierarchy. Such true communications of God to us are indirect. God speaks to us in such a mode from the "outside" through indirect agents who mediate God's revelation.

DREAMS: THE FORGOTTEN LANGUAGE OF GOD

But God so loves us that He also communicates Himself to us in more direct and immediate ways. Such modes of revelation are in the area that lies beyond the logical reasoning and sense experiences we acquire from outside of ourselves. One such “pre-logical” and yet very traditional manner in which God continually reveals Himself, as we find in the consistent Tradition of the Old and New Testaments and in the early Church until the 5th century, is the world of dreams and “waking dreams” or “visions”.

The prophet Joel prophesied: “And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit” (Joel 2:28-29). “But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: It shall come to pass in the last days, says God, I will pour my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams; And upon my menservants and upon my maidservants will I pour out my Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy” (Acts 2:16-18).

Such biblical and early Christian heritage assures us that God not only communicates to us indirectly but also in manners more directly through our human spiritual powers. There never was doubt in the Old and New Testament people of God that dreams and visions are such forms of God’s direct communication. Other ways connected with dreams and visions are the gifts of prophesy, speaking in tongues and interpretation, words of wisdom, knowledge and understanding. “Now there are diversities of gifts, but there is only one Spirit. And there are diversities of ministries, but there is only one Lord. And there are diversities of powers, but it is the one God who works all things in men. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man as help to him. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit. To another faith by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophesy; to another the means to distinguish the true Spirit; to another different languages; to another the interpretation of languages. But all of these gifts are wrought by that one and the same Spirit, dividing to everyone severally as he will. For as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, even though many, are one body, so also in Christ. For all of us are baptized by one Spirit into one body, whether Jews or Arameans, whether bond or free; and we have all received through the one Spirit. The body is not one member, but many” (1 Corinthians 12:4-14).

DREAMS AND VISIONS IN HOLY SCRIPTURE

Dreams and visions have equal authority as God’s “place” where He communicates Himself in the Old and New Testament. Those skilled in their interpretation, such as Daniel and Joseph, were revered; those who understood the revelations of God to them e.g. Abraham and Solomon, became great and wise. Those who were overcome by their inner experiences, such as Saint Paul or Ezekiel, became great missionaries and prophets. Viewed from this perspective the entire Bible is the story of God’s in-breaking into man’s conscious mind through his unconscious.

Psychologically we call a dream an experience we might have during sleep when we are unconscious. A dream is like an internal movie, a story that is being shown on the screen of our unconscious (even in High-Definition color!). This unfolds as a story in which we are involved as much as we are while watching a movie. But such a dream involves us because it

is God communicating Himself directly through images from our unconscious and He wishes to involve us in the contents revealed.

We see this on nearly every page of Holy Scripture. “And the Lord said to them, Hear now My words: If you are prophets, I the Lord will reveal myself to you in a vision and will speak to you in a dream” (Numbers 12:6). All of us are to awaken to the Word of God living within us. “Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart...” (Psalm 95:7-8). YOU are called to be a PROPHET! You are not called to foretell the future events of history. But you are called by Jesus Christ to inspire, to edify, to lead others to the God of love by your very presence. By surrendering completely to His Word, your every word, gesture and action will mediate this divine presence to those around you.

God is seen as one revealing Himself in dreams and visions. God makes Himself present as revealing messages to chosen individuals through a messenger or “angel.” Saint Joseph the Righteous, the head of the holy family, in his dilemma as to whether he should put away Mary after finding her pregnant, receives God’s message as to what he should do through an angel in a dream. “...the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream...” (Matthew 1:20). The Evangelist Saint Luke has Zechariah also encountering the angel Gabriel in a vision (Luke 1:22) as well as Mary meeting the same angel Gabriel in the Annunciation narrative (Luke 1:26-38). Yahweh appears to Abraham in a vision and in a dream and makes a covenant with him (Genesis 15:1-21). Jacob in a dream sees a ladder and angels ascending and descending. God promises Jacob a numerous progeny of descendants (Genesis 28:10-19). He wrestles with an angel (God) in a dream at night (Genesis 32:26-29).

Moses had a vision of God in a burning bush (Exodus 3:1-6). Samuel heard God speak to him at night in a dream (1 Samuel 3:1-10). All the prophets received messages from God in visions and dreams. The entire book of Daniel shows us how God communicates messages through dreams and visions and gives Daniel the gift of interpretation.

In the early Christian community we see God’s Spirit guiding the Apostles and individual followers through dreams and visions. When a crisis occurred as to whether Gentiles should have to submit to the Jewish laws of purification, Saint Peter received God’s message as to what should be done through a vision-dream on a rooftop in Jaffa (Acts 10:9-16). Saint Paul continually encountered God in Jesus Christ in vision and dream from his first encounter on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-19) until the end of his earthly life.

PATRISTIC PERIOD

This same belief that God speaks to individuals in dreams and visions continues in the first five centuries in the general practice of the faithful and in the nuanced teaching of such Fathers as Tertullian, Origen, St. Augustine, St. Basil and St. Gregory Nazianzus and a host of others. St. Basil and Evagrius, of the Egyptian desert of the 4th century, used dreams in spiritual direction to attain the hidden levels of the psyche, the unconscious, for healing the roots of human brokenness and for the release of powers and abilities to serve others in freedom and love.

Such a universal belief and practice of encountering God’s communication in dreams and visions fell into oblivion [hindered in part in this age by “hardness of heart” and “ears that did not hear”] until only the 20th century through the great discoveries of the “layers” of the human psyche by modern psychologists. This restoration of dreams and visions as great helps in the spiritual life has come about also through a move away from “dry” Aristotelian scholastic theology toward a more prayerful reading of Sacred Scripture that encouraged a further experience of God working in the unconscious as well as the consciousness level of Christians to reveal Himself.

CAN YOUR DREAMS HEAL YOU?

You might be asking yourself: "I know I dream, but I hardly ever remember my dreams. Then what am I to make of them when I do recall vaguely parts of them? I don't know how to interpret dreams."

First of all, let me assure you that you do dream every night as you sleep. We spend one-third of each day-night in sleeping and in dreaming. If we sleep seven hours, one hour cumulatively will ordinarily be spent in dreaming.

When Father Maloney expressed his experience in dialoguing with his dreams, he would insist that we need to remain always in the world of mystery. God does reveal Himself beyond mere sense knowledge in pre-logical, direct experiences that come out of our unconscious, that "gold mine" of rich potentiality waiting for release and actuation if we could tap its richness in terms of self-knowledge and God's personal communication with us.

The second principle is that your dreams are always about yourself, at least about you in relationships with others. You are not a passive spectator. God is speaking to you. You are the subject, but, strangely enough, you are also the observer of yourself.

A third principle is: Avoid seeking a book, a person or God Himself to give you an "interpretation." This reduces the mysterious communication of God to you to an either/or logical answer. To receive humbly what God wishes to communicate to you do not be concerned primarily for a static interpretation, but seek to "actualize" your dreams.

Available to us modern pilgrims are many sources [internet, books, dictionaries, medical analysis] that can give us the "mysterious and fascinating world of dreams, where the rules of reality do not apply." As such, you can make reality apply to "your own reality" with "uncensored views" and to the unlocking and interpreting the meanings to your dreams. The pitfalls of these types of suggestions can actually lead you away from your true self in Christ. Just like contemporary political correctness in our postmodern world, truth is what you want it to be. Saint Paul reminds us "for the time will come when men will not listen to sound doctrine; but they will add for themselves extra teachers according to their desires, being lured by enticing words; and they will turn away their ears from the truth, and they will turn to fables" (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

You must become involved in an on-going, prayerful dialogue with God as you continue to amplify, re-enter and dialogue with your dreams, rather than settle for a one-shot interpretation that might miss entirely God's true communication to you. Stay in the mystery of God speaking to you in night and waking dreams and you will discover also how to pray Scripture on deeper levels beyond mere conceptual knowledge. Scripture will then become for you a two-edge sword, cleaving the soul from the spirit (Hebrews 4:12).

THE MAP OF THE HUMAN PSYCHE

According to Dr. Carl G. Jung, our human psyche is made up of consciousness and the unconscious. Take his example: imagine an iceberg with 4.5% to 5% of its entirety floating above the ocean surface. That is your consciousness. In your consciousness resides your "persona" or masked self that is an adaptively organized image of yourself--your way of meeting and coping with the world around you.

The over 95% of the iceberg that lies beneath the watery surface Jung calls your unconscious. The unconscious is present and active before consciousness develops out of the dark potentiality locked in the unconscious. The consciousness develops between the ages of 6 and 10 years old. But to increase consciousness out of the unconscious potential requires attentive effort on your part.

Your unconscious is made up of your personal experiences that have been stored there and forgotten by you, plus the “collective” unconscious. This, according to Jung, “is the source of the instinctual forces of the psyche and of the forms or categories that regulate them, namely the archetypes.” On this level we human beings share a common heritage, basic unlearned knowledge similar to animal instincts. We tap into the unconscious mind of the entire human race back to the first man and woman.

The collective unconscious is the archaic matrix of primordial images which go below and before any language. Here lies the myth-making faculty that is pre-logical and non-verbal. Here are found three universal archetypes: Shadow, the Anima and the Animus. Our “archetypal” dreams that deal with the level of our integration as “whole” persons usually center around the appearance of symbols of the Shadow, Anima and Animus in all human beings. The Shadow in our dreams is a figure of the same sex as the dreamer. The Anima is a feminine figure in the dreams of men and the Animus is a male figure or figures in the dreams of women.

The ego is the center of our consciousness; the person we habitually think we are. The goal of healing and integration that dreams lead us into is to achieve a kind of mid-point of personality where the center of the total person no longer coincides with the ego but with a point midway between the conscious and the unconscious. This center is called the self.

A DREAMWORK METHODOLOGY

To use your dreams properly in order to open up deeper levels of your unconscious to healing and integration between the ego and the self, between the anima (feminine) and the animus (masculine), between the rational and the pre-logical or intuitive, we need a methodology, a way of going about studying our dreams. New ways that do not overly stress the interpretative approach, but deal primarily with the dream and all it can tell us are being developed through a Gestalt process, and Jung’s method of activating the imagination. [A most helpful work to develop such methodology for working with your dreams is: The Jungian-Senoi Dreamwork Manual by Strepson Kaplan Williams].

The following are questions you can ask yourself about how to work with your dreams in a deeper and more enriching way.

1. The first question is: Do you really wish to remember your dreams and work with them?
To help the recall of dreams have always a journal and pencil for writing at your bedside, or a means of recording your memory when you awake. Pray to God that this night He will instruct, admonish, heal and affirm you as He wishes.
2. Do you habitually take time in prayerful consideration after waking up to re-enter your dreams in order to amplify consciously the material that arose out of your unconscious through the dreams?
3. How is one to activate any given dream? Place yourself reverently and in a very relaxed attitude of body, soul and spirit in the presence of God. Pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. To re-enter, amplify and dialogue with your dreams here are some leading questions suggested by Williams:

[A] How am I, as dream ego, acting in this dream?

[B] What symbols in this dream are important to me?

[C] What are the various feelings in this dream?

[D] What are the various actions in this dream?

- [E] What relation, if any, does this dream have to what is happening right now in my life? In my future? To something in me?
- [F] Who or what is the adversary in this dream?
- [G] What is the helping or healing force in this dream?
- [H] What is being wounded in this dream?
- [I] What is being healed in this dream?
- [J] What would I like to avoid in this dream?
- [K] What actions might this dream be suggesting I consider?
- [L] What does this dream want from me?
- [M] What questions does this dream ask of me?
- [N] What choices can I, and will I, make as a result of this dream?
- [O] Who or what is my companion?
- [P] Why have we **NOT** asked: What does this dream mean to me?
- [Q] Why did I need this dream?
- [R] Why am I not dealing with this situation in this way?
- [S] Why am I not doing this in my life?
- [T] Why have I dreamed of “so and so” now?
- [U] Where are my helpers and guides in life and in my dreams?
- [V] What is the difference between a ‘why’ and a ‘what’ question?
- [W] What can happen if I work actively with this dream?
- [X] What is being accepted in this dream?
- [Y] What new questions come up from this dream-work?
- [Z] Will it be helpful for me to make this dream a “waking dream”?

This *Inscape* Newsletter of December 2014 on Dreams and Visions and Divine Encounter is concluded with a healing contemplative prayer that you can experience before falling to sleep and hopefully enter then into your dreams, God's forgotten language.

Jesus, my Divine Physician, through the power of the Holy Spirit, go back into my unconscious as I sleep. Every hurt that has ever been done to me; heal that hurt. Every hurt that I ever caused to another person; heal that hurt. All the relationships that have been damaged and broken in my whole life that I am not aware of; heal those relationships.

Speak, Lord Jesus Christ, your humble servant is listening this night and let me know through my dreams what You are asking of me, to have healed, to complement or compensate so that I may become more and more the unique person You are calling me to become through Your providential support, protection and sustaining life-giving grace.

If there is anything, Lord, that I have not integrated within myself to be a more loving person, I implore and beg of You, to kindly reveal to me what is missing and what I should freely choose to do to acquire what is lacking. Speak, Lord Jesus Christ, your humble servant is listening and desires to listen more attentively with reverent vigilance! Fill the empty spaces, the vast spaces of my unconscious with Your loving presence. Set me free, set me on fire with greater consciousness of how great is Your merciful love and compassion for me so that I may be a giving-merciful-love to others whom I meet along the paths of my earthly life.

For to You are due all glory, honor and adoration, to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, both now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

The Undreamed HAS Happened; God has become one of us (save sin), God lives within us!

Fr. John Michael Zbojovski