

February 25, 2022
Betty Leon, IHM

Perseverance, Disenchantment, and Wisdom

From James the word PERSEVERANCE comes through. It suggests something held to over time, not a short-term thing. The Gospel is about relationships in which people do persevere and those where they don't. That led me to Joyce Rupp's book, The Star In My Heart and the focus on the word: DISENCHANTMENT.

Joyce says this is part of what it means to "*grow up*." In The Star in My Heart, she has a chapter on "*The Enchanted Forest*" which she described this way:

"...growing into adulthood, I gradually developed several *understandings or beliefs about life*, my "*enchanted forest*." They were my ideas of how life *is* or *ought to be*. These beliefs came to me from my parents, teachers, and numerous other influences. All my beliefs in my *enchanted forest* seemed so real. When life challenged me, I would go to that forest and look for one of my *deep and strong truths* so that I could feel comfortable and secure."

It carries messages such as:

- If I have good friends (or a good community) I will never have to be lonely.
- My faith is strong and enduring. I won't ever need to question my belief in God.
- If I am kind to others, they will be kind to me.
- I won't age or get old or develop illnesses.
- I respect and treat everyone the same.
- Someday I am going to find a real balance in my life between work and play, between action and contemplation.

She continues, "One of my biggest "growing up" experiences has been that of 'disenchantment': having to go to my *enchanted forest* of beliefs and discover that what gave me such comfort or sense of direction *no longer does so for me*."

"Growing up" has been and is, the process of discovering *which* of my beliefs is steadfast and which needs to be *changed, adapted, or discarded entirely*."

Often when I experience disenchantment, I feel wounded, empty, maybe even betrayed by someone, or betrayed by my own truths, which I thought were so accurate.

We are called to persevere through these very challenges.

William Bridges, in his book Transitions, says, "disenchantment is a natural part of *endings or significant transitions*. It is difficult at first, to see any meaning in the disenchantment experience. It hurts too much. But later it is important to reflect on these things, for the old must be cleared away before the new can grow."

Judith Viorst, in Necessary Losses, describes this powerfully. "The road to human development is paved with *renunciation*. Throughout our life we *grow by giving up*. We *give up* some of our deepest attachment to others. (Those I've lost recently). We *give up* certain cherished parts of ourselves. (new limits and weakness) We must *confront*, in the dreams we dream, as well as in our intimate relationships, all that we never will *have* and never will *be*."

P.29 The Star In My Heart

Let's stop for a moment. Is this not our lived experience?

From mid-life and onward, this disenchantment is especially essential to the maturing process. We all have needed to let go of or readjust some beliefs we've had about:

*our country * religious life* church * ourselves.

We may need to change *our expectations* of them yet *keep alive* our willingness to work toward a deep vision of justice and healing and wholeness.

Joyce concludes: "It is a time to trust that Sophia/Wisdom will lead the way *into* the *enchanted forest* and also to trust that she will help me find the way *out* of it, *wiser and healthier* in what I believe to be *true* about life." P.32

Peeling Off Another Layer

Transforming Presence,
Layers and layers of my false self
keep being stripped away from me.
I walk with caterpillar feet,
knowing that the skin must be shed time and again
before I find my butterfly wings.

I look at the old discarded peelings
of the person I thought I was
with some dismay and sadness,
but also with some relief and joy.

With every lifted layer, I feel lighter.
With every painful peeling, I am freer.
With every discarded skin, I stretch deeper.
With every sloughed off segment, I grow wiser.

Keep teaching me Freedom Bringer,
that it is never too late
to embrace the changes
that lead to my truest self.
Keep nudging me away from confining security
when I cling too tightly to what needs to go.

Continue to attune my spirit to your song
of ongoing transformation.
Remind me daily that I will always have
another layer that needs to be shed.

Joyce Rupp Prayers to Sophia 2004, p.86