

Mourning our Unfinished Symphony – Grief as the Path to Making our Peace

- I. Making Peace with Our Unfinished Lives
 - II. A Psychological Response - *The Drama of the Gifted Child*
 - III. A Spirituality Response - Living an Unfinished Symphony - Ten Commandments for the Long Haul
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I. Making Peace with our Unfinished Lives

- *“You have made us for yourself, Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.” St. Augustine*
- *“In the torment of the insufficiency of everything attainable, we learn that here in this life there is no finished symphony.” Karl Rahner*
- *Fear not, you are inadequate!*

II. A Psychological Response - *The Drama of the Gifted Child*

- *“Give me two months to roam the hills and weep with my friends because now I will die a virgin.” Jephthah’ daughter, Judges 11, 37-40*
- Alice Miller’s classic book – 1979
- Her basic analysis
 - Who is gifted child?
 - What is our drama?
- Her essential prescription – Grieving our wounds and grieving what can now never be
- The religious equivalent: “Mourning and weeping in this valley of tears”

III. A Spirituality Response - Living an Unfinished Symphony - Ten Commandments for the Long Haul

1. **Don't ask life to give you what it cannot give – accept an unfinished symphony.**
 - *“In the torment of the insufficiency of everything attainable, we learn that here in this life there is no finished symphony.” Karl Rahner*
2. **Don't put “messianic” expectations on any person. No one can be your Messiah.**
 - *The first task of a couple in marriage is to console each other for the fact that you cannot not disappoint each other. Anita Brookner*
3. **Give yourself permission to be inadequate.**
 - *“I realized that it was simply impossible for a human being to be and remain good or pure. If, for instance, I wanted to be attentive in one direction, it could only be at the cost of neglecting another. If I gave my heart to one thing, it left another in the cold. No day and no hour go by without my being guilty of inadequacy. We never do enough, and what we do is never well enough done, except being inadequate, which we are good at because that is the way we are made. This is true of me and of everyone else. Every day and every hour brings with it its weight of moral guilt, as regards my work and my relations with others. I am constantly catching myself out in my human failings and, in spite of their being implied in my human imperfection, I am conscious of a sort of check. And this means that my human shortcomings are also my human guilt. It sounds strange that we should be guilty where we can do nothing about it. But even where there is no set purpose, no deliberate intention, we have a conviction of our own shortcomings, and of consensual guilt, a guilt which shows itself all too clearly in the consequences of what we have done or left undone”
Anna Blaman*
4. **Give yourself permission to be unhappy, to be disappointed, to break down.**
 - *“There's a line I came upon in the musings of a preacher: On a Sunday morning many of the people sitting before you are the walking wounded, and you need to give them permission to be sad. In a world obsessed with happiness, where being great is all that matters, let the preacher say, you have permission to be sad. And in a world where old age becomes the golden years, where every problem can be fixed and every ailment cured, let the preacher say, you have permission to be sad. In a world preoccupied with prolonging life, where death is a forbidden word, let the preacher say, you have permission to die. And let the preacher say, you have permission to live in memories of a lonesome kind.” (Ron Evans)*
5. **Never confuse meaning with happiness.**
 - *Before you get serious about Jesus, first consider carefully how good you are going to look on wood! Daniel Berrigan*
6. **Don't put messianic and soteriological expectations on sex.**
 - *“In writing about sexual intercourse, the poet, Annie Sexton, did not focus on desire, arousal, or orgasm. Rather it was the state of union between the lovers that fascinated her, a state of union that was doomed because God would ‘untie the knot’. Her lament was that sexual communion could not be sustained. It breaks apart, and the ecstasy of union returns to a lonely state of separation.”*
7. **Don't put messianic and soteriological expectations on any potential achievement.**

- 8. Celebrate and enjoy the temporary.**
 - 9. Give others, especially the young whom you are mentoring, the symbolic tools to handle frustration and inconsummation.**
 - 10. Console each other and give each other permission to be sad when it is called for.**
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