

Thoughts on Generosity

Rev. Oriana LaChance

It is only recently that I have begun to ask, “What keeps me from being generous? How am I hindered?” It seems to be an insistence on *my, my, my*—my way, my view, my understanding, my vision, my desire, even, my delusions: in other words, our “old friend” attachment. This includes an attachment to how I see the past and the future—that is, an inability to let the past and the future go. When we have expectation of a repetition of the past, expectation of how things should be, expectation of a certain outcome, the natural arising of generosity, sympathy, and spontaneity can easily be lost.

It is not that I *should* be generous and then I manufacture some kind of stilted, artificial generosity. It is more to act, and then be aware of the consequences of my actions. Yes, *karmic* consequence. How does the world around me appear when I am generous, how is it when I am stingy? By how is it, I mean how the universe appears to me. Is the universe generous or stingy? What is reflected back to me, what clues does my body give me? Am I physically open or closed inside myself?

I believe that if we wish to move from a place of generosity, we must first befriend who we actually are. If we are being crazy, angry, jealous, feeling unworthy, and we embrace *that*, befriend *that*; if we are generous in that moment toward who we are, then we can begin to be generous toward who others are through sympathy, through understanding. Knowing the self, awareness of self, leads to awareness of others.

What is generosity? To me an important aspect of generosity is *not to insist*. I insist that you hear me; I insist that you come to see things the way I do; I insist that you acknowledge where you got it wrong; even, I insist that you love me. This insistence will never be satisfied. There is always something else to insist upon. To be generous is to let everyone off the hook, including myself. The phrase “harden not your heart” comes to mind here—harden not your body, harden not your heart.

What does it mean for me to be generous in this very moment? *To yield*. To yield to reality as it is right now, rather than holding everything and everyone accountable to some ideal reality. When we are generous, we yield not to a person, or a place, or a situation or view. We are yielding to what is actually happening; we are yielding to the truth. Not to see this truth as broken or as needing fixing, but just, this is what is. And, how can I best respond?

Generosity renounces closing off and shutting down, protecting our world; instead, we accept what is actually going on. To me, this is renunciation. To see our view, the little picture, for what it is, and to renounce that and open to something wider and deeper, something beyond knowing.

We tend to come to whatever our individual edge is (to our particular brink) and then say, "No, no, this is as far as I go". That place where we say, "No further" is the very place to become intimate with—to be able to live at that edge and not see it as too far, too much, but rather to see it as life unfolding, as wisdom and compassion being revealed in the "day-to-dayness" of our lives. This is where we find the generous spirit. This is the work that comes to us.