

MEDIATION, JUNE 21, 2015: DAVID CHANCEY

THE OTHER

Well, first let say that for those of you who remember the old Thomas Tryon book The Other or the movie made from it more than 40 years ago, No, this is not a tribute to or discussion of that old horror story.

Rather, this brief meditation is about something that has always fascinated and scared me: How easy it is for each of us to loose our way when we look at or meet someone who seems so different from us, that we suddenly loose our ability to relate to them. Whether it is the color of skin, the way they dress, or simply whom they choose to love. We just can't get around how seemingly unlike us this other person is. This is when that this person becomes "The Other".

**Henry David Thoreau once wrote, "Could a greater miracle take place than for us to look through each other's eyes for an instant?"**

**"FOR AN INSTANT!**

**SEEING THROUGH ANOTHER PERSON'S EYES!**

**SEEING THEIR WORLD.**

**KNOWING HOW IT IS TO MARCH IN THEIR MOCCASINS!**

But Thoreau seems to think this is so, so, so hard for most of us. Well, I have to agree.

Heaven knows the Christian faith teaches us to “love our neighbor” and “turn the other cheek”. But, I’ll be the first to confess that this is mighty hard for me. Maybe you are better at it. But oh, when someone outside my experience---or comfort zone---invades my space or even my, well it is a scary thing.

Lots of people—out there---not here---cringe if I kiss my spouse in public. Of course, those individuals see us as two gay men “flaunting our sexuality” and “pushing that politically correct envelope.” We couldn’t be like them, simply expressing affection. We are “other” than they. Most LGBT or People of Color or those in poverty could tell many stories about being seen as “others”. At best, unimportant. At worst, a threat!

But, I’m not going to use this short time to talk about the old and the new bad hurtful times when differences cause us to loose sight of each other’s humanity. That’s another meditation.

No, what fascinates me is why we see “others” rather than seeing people like us who are different. Well, why we do this? And, remember, I’m talking about all of us. We all do this. For you, the scales may blow into your eyes when you see a man in heels or heavens, a butch black lesbian transgender man! Well, you know what I mean. For me, my “others” appear when I’m with born again religious conservatives. But this is not good, and it’s not right. We know we get scared when we see differences, we know we Americans tend to loose our way when any sexual difference even breathes.

It's not good. It's not right. Seeing anyone---no matter how different from ourselves---as “other”, as feeling that someone's differences make it okay for us to pretend “they” aren't important, or that we don't need to defend them or protect them when they are threatened.

What do we do? Remember “love your neighbor” and “turn the other cheek, AND make forays into the land of YOUR others. Think. Pray. ACT!

I'll confess that I have yet to accept any of Pat Robertson's or Ted Cruz's many potluck invitations, but maybe I'll try watching a bit of the Fox network while attempting to keep my mind open. And, maybe I will make one of these

conservative Republican potlucks before HE double hockey sticks begins to ice over. You never know, in the last 60 years I have learned never to “say never.” Now, you, whatever your “other” looks like, make the effort to break through your preconceptions. Pray. Think. Act.

May we ALL, on this Pride Sunday, always remember to make the effort to see the wonder of diversity, the value in differences—even if they frighten or startle us. WE, are GOD’s trendsetters on earth. It is our hands and our minds that will make the new world. Let our eyes be open, our hands joined, and our high heels not too high, for the journey is long and amazing if we only look carefully, honestly and lovingly at all our fellow travelers.

AMEN