

What Does This Time Ask Of Me, Of You, Of Us?



Image: Peace for Paris by Jean Jullien

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Thursday, November 19, 2015 -- Griet Bouwen

Curator's Note: *Griet Bouwen offers the gift of deep and provocative questions in response to the ongoing refugee crisis and most recently the attacks in Paris. Her desire is to stir hope and life-shifting reflection even as so many dark and contrary feelings abound, including within herself.*

How can we, citizens of our community, country and globalised world contribute to safety, peace and a future for people? What does this time, with all the disruptive

events and rumors, ask of me? Of you? Of us? No statements here. Questions are the only meaningful contribution I can come up with now. No explanations, no advice, no truth. Even if we would like to be reassured by an unambiguous truth, there is none. But we can transform our worries, fears and grief to a stance of dedication to peace and coexistence. That is, if we make room for our deeply felt questions and listen to the answers that emerge.

Because the calling of our time is huge. We are challenged to build a warm and peaceful society, a world in which we welcome refugees in our communities, to make our world a place where everyone is valued as a human being. We feel called to contribute to a human world that rejects violence, that values peace over war, that redistributes its life sources amongst all living creatures. This world cannot come from our political and economic leaders only. It's up to us, to you and to me to start transforming our lives and become sensitive activists for human values. If we don't find the courage to establish it for ourselves, let's at least make an effort for our children.

But where to start in this overwhelming world? Maybe, some of these questions can be of help.

- What do I feel right now? Is it grief, fear, hate, confidence, longing, love?
- What is the source of this feeling? Can I reach that source? Can I transform crippling feelings into longing? What actions can I take to transform these longings into deeds?
- What is my place in society? What is my circle of influence? Who are my companions? What is the quality of the energy that I dedicate to my circle of influence?
- What is the gift I bring to this world? What patterns of thoughts, actions and relationships can I discover in which in which I feel strong and flourishing? Do I present these gifts to my surroundings? Can I do that more often, more profoundly? Can I envision what can happen then?
- What are the major distractions in my life that hold me away from contributing to the whole? How valuable are these distractions to me? Are there any that I can either give up or transform into a constructive force?
- Do I believe that I can make a difference in my world? Can I be confident that making a positive difference to my world is contributing to a better world as a whole? What do I need to make this confidence stronger?

- What is there in my life for which I can be grateful? Who and what contributes to the quality of my life? How does this work for me? Can I imagine that this also works for other people, even for strangers? Can I and my actions become a source of gratitude for others? How can I make that work?
- How valuable is my community to me? Do I have a sense of connection between the health of my community and the safety and peace in my life, the life of my friends and even the life of people that are strangers to me? What am I willing to contribute to that?
- How big is my heart? Can I feel the grief of other people? Could this empathy become a constructive force? What do I envision doing then?

Questions. It's all I can offer now. Yes, we are worried. Yes, we are in grief. Yes, we have lots of troubles around understanding what is happening. And no, there are no simple answers.

Take the time the answers need to be born.

We can embrace our questions more easily when we simplify our busy life of working and consuming. We can start living a life with less distraction and more silence in order to reach the deep spiritual source where answers are waiting for us to discover them. Making connection with this source is not a simple task that we can do and then check off our list as done. There are no easy, quick answers. What we can do is practice confidence that time brings insights if we reach the spiritual source, the place where our questions can speak to us.

When we dare to live our questions, we will move to a space where we can touch our answers.