Columns
Spirituality



(Pixabay/Daniel Roberts)



by Nancy Sylvester

Contributor

View Author Profile
https://iccdinstitute.org/

Join the Conversation

August 29, 2024

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

When one engages in contemplation, one begins to "see" things anew. I have experienced this reality in different ways throughout the years, but recently I have physically experienced it quite dramatically. I had cataract surgery.

As I came out of recovery, I was startled by the vividness and the clarity with which I could see things through what I have considered my weak eye during my life. I was amazed and truly couldn't stop thinking about it. It was as if a scrim had been lifted such that white walls brightened; vague outlines of people or things sharpened; the vibrancy of colors intensified. I began living in a not-yet-familiar world.

For years, I had become comfortable with increasingly blurred vision but was not quite aware of it until it became problematic. It took time until I knew I needed an intervention — cataract surgery.

It is a surgery that is more successful than not, but I knew a couple of friends who had trouble after it. I had a certain apprehension.

Finally, I didn't want to put it off anymore and made the decision to have the surgery. Even though there is an adjustment to living in such a more exquisite, vivid, and clear world, I am glad I did it.

For me, this experience is a metaphor for moments of growth as we experience our consciousness evolving. It is seeing in new ways who I am and how I have been living.

Advertisement

I may have been aware at a certain level that I desired to live more compassionately and from love, but how I experienced myself doing it was blurred. I continue to need moments when my dissatisfaction with how I am living erupts, and as I both accept and then let go of my shadow side or my less-than-authentic self — my weak eye — I begin to see more clearly how I can live out of love.

Even though we talk about the divisions in our country becoming clearer, I sense that we have been living in a growing blurriness regarding who we are as a country and what we stand for. We've grown accustomed to how things were and thought

that is how things are and will be. We became used to seeing things from our own perspective and believed that that is the one right way of seeing.

I sense this is true not only for those of us who are of the dominant race, gender or religion for whom the social norms, standards and values were normative, but also for those of us who feel not seen, not heard, not part of that point of view.

I can't help thinking that perhaps our country needs cataract surgery. We currently see ourselves in a very divided way: left or right, progressive or conservative, traditional or modern, Democrat or Republican, secular or religious, and the labels continue. Our narrative is that we are growing more and more divided, and our future forward is in question.

We've blurred the distinctions that exist within the spectrum of beliefs and worldviews. This eliminates seeing the complexity of varying viewpoints on either side. It is an either/or world from which we see, and that way of seeing has been growing among us for quite a long time.

> We cannot see the beauty of each other nor the reality that we need each other to go forward. The blurry vision is getting in the way of seeing who we are and can be as a nation.
>
> Tweet this

The growth of this perceived division is becoming untenable. We cannot see the beauty of each other nor the reality that we need each other to go forward. The blurry vision is getting in the way of seeing who we are and can be as a nation. It keeps us from acknowledging the values held by each side so that we can bring them forward in new ways that respect the past and yet are able to be embodied in our current reality, readying us for the future.

I wonder: Is our country ready to undertake cataract surgery?

Whether we like it or not, the 2024 elections will be an intervention into our current way of seeing. The election can be likened to surgery. It intervenes, and whether it is successful in removing what has been blocking the clarity of our vision is still unknown.

Whatever happens, following surgery are weeks of eye drops and patience with the healing or any discomfort in adjusting to seeing again. The years to come will demand of us healing and repair. More and more voices are acknowledging that we cannot go on with the negative and divisive approach to our elected officials or to our democratic structures. Things need to change, we need to change, and that will take time.

Deepening our contemplative practice will help us become aware of the blurriness of our vision and help free us to courageously remove the old lens through which we view the world and each other.

Let us replace it with the vision Jesus offers throughout the Gospel, that all are welcome; that we are all one; that leaders are servants; that all are equal and to be respected; that we care for each other, especially the vulnerable; and that we love one another as God loves us.

This story appears in the **Election 2024** feature series. View the full series.