

**June 2013**

Greetings,

We have moved into putting out this email bi-monthly. The main reason for this is to try to keep Geoff on board. He has been very important to these emails, as editor, consultant and provider of valuable input. Geoff has been pressed with a full-time job and a growing family. We hope this extra time allows him to keep going.

Things here in Seattle are still moving along quite well. I have now been here about two years. I'm quite happy with the way things have gone even though it has really not been at all as I expected. This has been great training for me – to keep going with what comes up, letting go of all expectations!

In the last email we talked about “pain killers”, like drugs and alcohol, and how we can use them to try to cover up our spiritual pain and suffering. We discussed how this does not work, but is in fact like throwing gasoline on a fire.

In this email we would like to talk about another thing we use as a cover up that is much more subtle, but also doesn't work and makes things more difficult. This is the attitude of complaining. Since I moved to Seattle from the Temple two years ago I have really seen how prevalent complaining is. It becomes so habitual that we don't even realize that it has become so much a part of the way we are. I live in a seniors' building. Complaining is big here. I also remember the New York story of seniors who come to the park in the morning, greet each other, then move into complaining about everything the whole day long. At the end of the day they say, “great to see you, have a nice night, and see you again tomorrow”!

I have noticed that one reason people complain is to cover up their fear of death. I can see that many people who I come into contact with here in Seattle are terrified of death. Complaining works like heroin - it covers up the fear and numbs it. It also allows us to pretend that the “problem” is somehow with externals rather than within.

I remember some friends I grew up with. They had this attitude of complaining, big time. It was so prevalent that it became a comedy routine in my neighborhood. I knew these folks well and beneath that complaining comedy routine there was a deep spiritual pain, a deep grief. We think this attitude works, we think it will reduce our pain, but in fact by complaining we harden our hearts toward things, we see them as separate from ourselves and separate from the Love of the Eternal. And this actually just makes our original pain worse, because if we harden our hearts to others, or the things around us, we are also at the same time hardening our hearts to ourselves, and all that needs help within us. That which needs help within us, the pain and grief, needs the opposite of this. In order for it to show itself it needs us to soften our hearts to it. The pain and grief

is like someone who is very shy and vulnerable, it won't show itself if it feels it's going to meet with a hard, judgmental attitude. It will eventually show itself if we repeatedly make the effort to align ourselves with the Love of the Eternal, to let go of our hardened attitudes and to see with the eyes of the Eternal. Then the pain and the grief will know that it will be met with what truly helps – The Eternal's Love – and then it can show itself.

So, we have to work on our mindfulness when this attitude comes up. We have to notice it, and let it go, notice the complaining, and stop. We may have to do this over and over again. If we are particularly prone to this attitude, we have to wean ourselves off it. It still comes up for me to this day. I can have a bad night, wake up, and go right with this attitude. I can start the day with thoughts like the following: "this grapefruit is too sour", "this coffee is too bitter", "Seattle weather is terrible", "I'm so inadequate", "this is such a foolish place to live", etc, etc.....I have to work on catching myself, and to move away from this attitude back to a meditative, still place. When we do this, we allow the Eternal, with Its Unconditional Love, to wash through the complaining and work on the deeper, spiritual pain.

I looked in the dictionary and found a good meaning: "to complain" - "to utter expressions of annoyance or resentment, to find fault". I thought of looking up something that would work instead. I came up with: "compassionate" – "merciful, tender, soft, kind, gracious, sympathetic". These are the attitudes that help us move away from the looking down attitude of complaining. And when we move away from this looking down, we allow ourselves to be open to the Love and Wisdom of the Eternal.

When we finally realize that **complaining is suffering** we can let go of it.

Take Care

Rev Basil