

# An Invitation to Wisdom and Grace

## Week 3: REORDER: A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life in a Wounded World

Living along the Arc of Life

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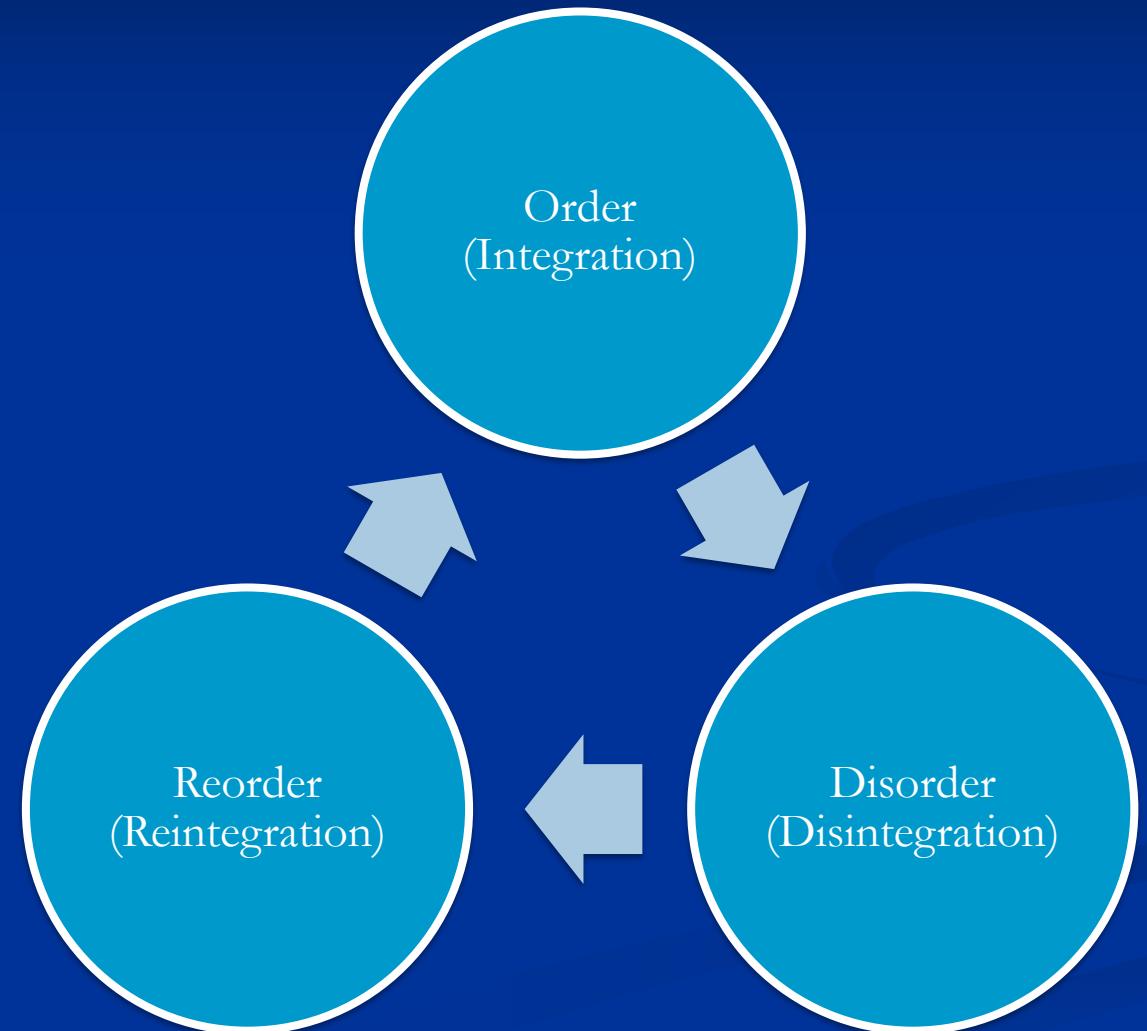


# Presuppositions for this series

- We were created to live in union with God (Divine Love Affair)
- We need Love, Faith, Hope to make the arduous journey
- Even when we feel the absence of God, we still are in the “womb of the incarnation”—preparing to be born into what’s next.
- In the fullness of time, we open/yield into union with God (mystery)—nothing and no one is irretrievably lost!

*Be gentle with yourself*

# Models (heuristic guides, not straightjackets)



# Distortions of Life

- We are all born with a desire for God and the fullness of love (most of us are unconscious of it)
- Complication: Western individualism convinces us we can achieve perfect satisfaction on our own
- We find proxys (good, beauty, truth) that relate “of-Godness” to us
- We habituate on these experiences—not bad unless they become attachments/compulsions (we no longer choose them)
- If they are especially unhealthy/destructive, we call them addictions

# Distortions of Life

- We all have attachments and addictions, which can become our idols—missplaced love
- Here's the challenge: it is only in the dark night that we are able to release our attachments and addictions (movement, change, awakening to new orientation)
  - Tinieblas—blindness to our being enslaved to attachments and addictions (a poverty of love)
  - Oscura—disorienting darkness that awakens to new possibility (freedom for love)
- In this way, the dark night becomes a totally loving, liberating, life-giving process (even if it doesn't FEEL that way at the time)

# The invitation to wisdom and grace

- It is a gift from God, calling us into new life
- John of the Cross: in worldly matters having good light matters in finding your way; in spiritual matters, it is precisely when we think we know where we are going that we are most likely to stumble.
- When we cannot chart our own course, we become vulnerable to God
- Liberation, whether experienced as pleasure or pain, always involves some loss (invitation to frame it as sacrifice--set apart as sacred, holy)
- Transformation is the release into freedom for desire (not from desire), but the desire is authentically to love as you were created to love.

# Last week's Exercise

- What was it like to write a love letter to God?

# Transformation—from dark night into new dawn

- Offers three precious gifts for the human soul:
  - The soul's deepest desire is satisfied—freed from attachments, one is able to love God and others and self
  - The delusion of separation from God and creation is dispelled
  - With the newfound freedom to love and realization of union, one can actively participate in God (gentle with self as beloved, compassion and mercy for others as God is, the world changes)
- Contemplation of this wonderful gift is not “thinking on it” or meditating; it is con-templatere: aware that you stand on holy ground

# Character of Reorder (Reintegration)

- Integrity—not as adherence to a moral order (exoskeleton), but to be whole, complete, healed (integrated, deep inner true self)
  - We stop obsessing over codes of conduct (compartmentalizing life)
- Relational—cannot do it alone (divided)—we need “circles of trust” which serve as fierce communities holding space for silence and truth as non-contradictory values
- Authentic—involves realigning “soul” with “role”—identity on the inside resonates with identity on the outside (non-anxious)
- Sacred—on recognizing the true self within as holy, we offer it to the world. (Rilke: “...the god wants to know himself [sic] within you.”)

# Reintegration in Relationship

- Relationships are neither invasive or evasive (mutuality)
- The soul feels safe enough to speak its truth (to self and others and to God) and to respond in non-anxious ways to what we hear in response
- Others gather and hold the space with enough discipline and goodwill to welcome the soul into the circle (non-threatening)
- Resist cultural norms to fix, judge, or admonish the soul (no external agenda for change)

# Tandem Conversation

- Share a time when you felt you were really in a trusting relationship where your true self (soul) could really show up.

# Economy of Grace: A Transformative Way of Being in the World

- Reintegration (Reorder) is about discovering True Self
  - Rediscovering meaning, purpose, identity
  - Leads to joy, gladness, soul-sustaining peace
- Economy = oikumene = household
  - Household is where we openly acknowledge connectedness
  - Our household is global (not tribal, us versus them)
- Grace = charis = gift
  - The "gift" is being created and rediscovering the true self as that created being
  - Gift is unmerited, unearned, freely given in love

# The Economy of Grace, writ large

## Three Consistent Principles (Practices for the True Self):

1. Unconditional giving
2. Noncompetitive relationships
3. Universal inclusion

The “gift” is being created for love...

Joy comes as a secondary and life-sustaining gift...

The gift given also becomes life-giving for others...

# Derek Wolcott's “Love After Love”

The time will come when, with elation, you will greet yourself arriving at your own door, in your own mirror, and each will smile at the other's welcome, and say, sit here. Eat.

You will love again the stranger who was yourself. Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart to itself, to the stranger who has loved you all your life, whom you ignored for another, who knows you by heart. Take down the love letters from the bookshelf, the photographs, the desperate notes, peel your own image from the mirror. Sit. Feast on your life.

# Writing Exercise

- Write a love letter to your true self. What is it that you want to say?

*(consider referring back to slide 9 on character of reintegration—  
Integrity, relational, authentic, sacred)*

# Rilke's gentle reminder

”Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves...Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer.” (Letters to a Young Poet)

# Selected Bibliography

- Gerald May, *The Dark Night of the Soul: A Psychiatrist Explores the Connection between Darkness and Spiritual Growth*
- Walter Brueggemann, *Spirituality of the Psalms*
- Richard Rohr, *Immortal Diamond*
- Kathryn Tanner, *Economy of Grace*
- Parker Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life in a Wounded World*
- Writings of the Mystics: John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, Julian