

Truth SETS US Free

SANDE RAMAGE writes of how spiritual guidance has helped her know herself and review her pastoral care practice.

“Going the extra mile” was mandatory when I was an over-helper. It made me feel good. No longer. Years in pastoral care have trained me to do less rather than more. To encourage people to be experts in their own lives, to identify and harness their own sources of power.

But being still is counterintuitive when someone is in trouble. Hard to stick to when it makes you look lazy or callous. So, thinking again about what going the extra mile means to me is useful.

Jesus of Nazareth is responsible for the original pithy saying. He reckoned that if a Roman soldier expected you to carry their pack for one mile then you ought to offer to carry it for two. Perhaps appealing from a self-sacrificial perspective but I'm not buying that literal reading. After all, Jesus is master of the undercut — comments that slice through superficial dross to lay bare shy truth.

Maybe Jesus was being subversive. For there is a view that Roman soldiers could be punished if they got someone to go further than the required mile. The delicate balance between controlling a population while waiting for their forced submission to turn into willing co-operation. So, with charm and guile the responsibility is pushed back to the enemy invader.

From that perspective “going the extra mile” can be a polite but definite act of resistance to the over-culture of the day. This is how it is for me.

A dream was the start of a significant change for me. I dreamt that it was night and I was being kidnapped from my home, led to a car and forced to sit in the driver's seat. I was blindfolded and expected to drive across America with my kidnapers in the back. I was terrified. As day began to dawn, I plucked up the courage to stop. With great trepidation, I removed the blindfold and turned to face my captors. There was no-one there.

This is the first dream that I took to analysis with John P Dourley (1936-2018), Catholic priest, emeritus professor of religion and Jungian analyst. Every Friday morning, I would phone John in Canada. We would talk about my dreams

and much more. What it meant to be complicit in capture by external forces, organisations, cultures, ideologies and religions. Shades of the biblical narrative.

In this weekly ritual and the many hours preparation for it, I became acutely aware of how separated I'd become from my instinctual life. How that vivid dream was a call from my unconscious to go the extra mile, to explore and push back at what was keeping me captive. To be courageous enough to imagine and write my next chapters forward.

As we worked, I began to be less concerned about

external demands. Not so absorbed with outputs or outcomes and remarkably disinterested in saving the world. More resistant, in a polite but firm way, to the distractions and contradictions of the over-culture. All of them designed to distract and reel me in to blind captivity.

The Jungian reading I'd done for 20 years began to mix and mingle with theology, faith, family, culture, the biblical text and the stories of Narnia, all powerful influences in my life. The focus was centred on nurturing my psyche, my soul. Creativity and the inner source of authority, the divine within if you will, began to matter most.

When John suddenly died, I was destabilised. In part, because his giftedness with theology, religion and depth psychology had helped

me integrate these major themes in my life. I wanted to maintain and grow that. Eventually, I re-established my regular practice, with two analysts. One whose focus is dreamwork and the other who helps me find and develop the healing author within.

None of this is straightforward. Clarity tends to be short lived before fog descends again. But somewhere within this ritual practise, or as a result of it, is an increasing sense of the truth setting me free. Healing arrives when I step into that freedom and write, accompanied by my Soul Dog and Spiritual Teacher, Kali the Labrador. “Watch her,” said John, “she instinctually knows what to do.” He was right. ✨



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