

FROM HEART TO HEART
(Eugene) Register-Guard, January 10, 2009

It is within our power to make “reign of God” a reality

by Mary Sharon Moore

Since my earliest days I have been irresistibly drawn by the “incompleteness” of the Christian scriptures—incomplete because they beckon me at every turn to take an active role in fulfilling and revealing their truth.

Phrases like “You are not far from the reign of God” (Mark 12:34) and “The reign of God is within you” (Luke 17:21) have impelled me to seek out this reign of God which is around me, within me, somehow here yet somehow waiting to be revealed.

What is this “reign of God”? Far from illusive, it is a way of life where justice and mercy are the norm, where peace prevails, the hungry are fed, the naked clothed, the homeless sheltered, the imprisoned and fragile and hidden ones are visited, heard, touched, and given their rightful human dignity. In the reign of God, “power over” is replaced by “abiding with.”

Utopian dream? No, the “reign of God” is the world as it was originally intended, and for which Christian men and women and all people of good will have been variously equipped to create, because the world as we know it, distorted by greed and overbearing power, is no longer acceptable. For many, the world we encounter today no longer works.

But times they are a changin’ and something is starting to shift. In my spiritual direction practice, I meet with people one-to-one to discuss the spiritual dimensions of their lives. One after another they say, “I didn’t

mean to talk about political things in this session,” and then they break down and weep. Why? Because for the first time in memory they hear words of hope openly spoken in the public square; they see deeds of hope happening everywhere.

Hope, a reign of God word, is a spiritual reality which seeks expression, moving me toward action in my life and in the body politic. Hope is always hope-despite-the-evidence, and therefore it’s not logical. Hope sparks the possibility that injustices and moral distortions can be named, addressed, reversed, and replaced with a moral clarity, generosity of spirit, commitment to the common good, and a governance worthy of inspiring us to achieve genuine good for humankind and all of creation. Despite its illogic, hope makes sense because of a deeply held human intuition that a greater good exists, the “Good, all Good, supreme Good” whom St. Francis of Assisi humbly recognized as God. Hope, ultimately, is a miracle, something which would not make sense if God—“all Good”—did not exist.

Jesus told the rich young man, “You are not far from the reign of God.” But “not far” has never been good enough. In this new year, as we turn the page and start a new chapter in our personal and shared histories, we must redouble our pledge to use the gifts and talents we have been given to reveal in this place and time the “reign of God”—a world of justice, compassion, peace, where a zest for life is shared by all.