

The Color of Trust



Photograph by JayAnne

Looking at this photo, I wonder, what takes place in the night sky that allows rest and resettlement for new colors to blend in the next day? what happens at night time that has the potential to regenerate trust, hope for a new day?

The nighttime sky is so rich, so much happens in darkness! A great amount of trust is required to navigate in the dark and as singer Trevor Hall says: darkness has its teachings. Here is what I've learned so far:

In psychology, black is associated with mystery, with death, with the unknown. In art, black comes from the blend of all colors so it feels fitting that in spirituality, particularly in Catholicism, St. John of the Cross would coin the term: "Dark Night of the Soul" referring to the times of complete desolation, disconnection and emptiness in his faith journey, a time when all the colors are jumbled inside.

In physical terms, when our bodies get hurt, we close our eyes instinctively to feel and tend to the pain. It is hard to cry, wail, scream with our eyes open. Introspection also demands a need to go in a cave-like mode, away from light. And in our daily lives we tend to shut down and retreat when needing to tend to emotional needs.

So where does "trust" come in? Or "hope" for that matter, in a person that is wounded, deeply grieving or crouched down by the weight of their world?

To answer this, it is impossible not to look at Christ during the night time: You see, we can't truly love anyone and much less trust them, unless we know their pain.

As a therapist, empath and highly sensitive being, I know that the closest form of connection is embodiment: nothing beats having someone show you the exact same scars, or having them say: me too! Physically our muscles loosen, our gaze lightens, there is a little more space to breathe: we are not alone, we feel seen, we feel connected. When we mirror each other, rewiring is possible, healing can occur in empathic co-regulation: I see you, I hear you, we are in this together.

We may agree that of all the possible pains and traumas we could experience, the worst one is death. Thus, having my Creator, my God incarnated, Jesus, die but also go down to hell, my hell, anyway, whenever I am consumed by pain, grief, desperation, isolation and darkness, that is the biggest form of empathy and connection I know.

The biggest hindrance to trust is not pain itself but allowing it to isolate us to the point of not seeing God is hurting with us.

Christ's resurrection grants me the awareness, the grace-full knowing that like Christ, we too, are God's children, affected by suffering, pain and death and united with Him, are also empowered to trust and hope again. Our pain does not have the last word, nor the deaths we live or the suffering we carry.

How does it actually occur? In my life, just like the timing of dawn, trust also occurs in a process. The crack of dawn is pure grace. The Church is very wise to dedicate "good friday" for mourning the physical death of Christ but He is always dying in unjust suffering: parents that lose their kids in a fire, for example. Yet triumphs over unjust suffering do occur all around us as well: the woman that chose to serve others after her family died. We have heard these stories, this is the body of Christ: suffering, dying and resurrecting all the time at the same time, everywhere.

Our bodies have no calendar so I'm grateful that the Paschal triduum of suffering, death and resurrection is not necessarily linear but ever present in us, and around us.

For some of us we are rushed in the day to day tasks, to the point that the time for mourning or the desired sabbatical is obliterated. Regardless, somewhere in each human heart there is a gifted desire to look at the horizon.

Then there is the acceptance, the humility that I need Him, or in some cases the exhaustion present in my darkness that I can't deal with pain alone. It is not a pleading but rather an opening, an expression of my pain to Him who knows it best but respects my freedom to express it: this is where it hurts, God. This is what my pain looks like or when only tears fall before the cross, this is what my pain sounds like.

All forms of expression to God can be prayers and the more honest the expression the better. The psalmists were excellent for filing complaints, for expressing anger, for painful cries. Check out: "**Psalm 142:1–2**, With my voice I cry out to the Lord; with my voice I plead for mercy to the Lord. I pour out my complaint before him; I tell my trouble before him." and Christ himself: "Father, why have you abandoned me?" **Mathew 27:46**.

When I allow such authenticity in my prayer, when I allow such honesty to transpire my darkness the illusion of abandonment slowly succumbs and I can perceive like the movie with Will Smith, the "collateral beauty", the abundance of Christ-like people that light up our world. These are some of mine:

Two years ago a woman asked me to say grace after I screamed and yelled at God in the hospital, that I no longer believed in Him or anyone because I felt completely abandoned in my pain. After mumbling the prayer the woman then coached me into living my faith with my whole body, to see Him in all I do and live. I never saw her again after we both got discharged.

A few months ago an old man stopped me in my walk on the beach to tell me I had sad eyes and smiled to then say how he would pray for me. I never saw him again either but his prayer awoke new life in me. And last week a houseless lady walked in my Church and gave her only cash for our fundraiser saying: "it's all I got but I want to share it" in a time when I felt depleted.

Some resurrection moments feel sporadic, almost angelic but the greatest miracle for me is to receive Him daily in the Eucharist, to let Him feed me, to let Him physically enter my darkest insides carrying a dim light.

In all those experiences: Abandonment, loneliness, depletion and all other deaths I've had in me, Christ yells to my heart: me too! I feel that too! I am with you always.

Dark nights will continue to come again and again, such is the price of sunsets and sunrises. That to say, no one is immune to suffering, not even Christ. I pray that by grace I can look at the crucifix in every one of those nights and hold on the words spoken at every Mass: "through Him, with Him, and in Him"...we live, move and have our being.