

# 2012 Winter Wonderings

By Nancy C. Wonders

*Hello friends, old and new to my winter greeting. Grab a cup of tea or a glass of wine. Find a comfortable chair and a cozy throw and settle in for a bit of winter reverie. Spend some time with me and with my favorite traveling companions: wonder and joy.*

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***“I am a woman 60 years old and Glory is my work.”***

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And so it is. I turned 60 this year. I have loved well in 60 years. My life has been so full. And yet something is still missing. Incomplete. What is yet mine to do? The first answer that appears: write a book and get my message in a more lasting form is true but not what this ache is about. ***What MUST I do?***

***“I am a woman 60 years old and Glory is my work.”***

***Yes! I must proclaim the wonder of ordinary life.*** To leave this world and not have received it fully, all of it, would be for me unbearable, a life half lived. I will leave the world with "to do" lists if I am lucky, with very much undone. A full life rarely gets through a day's to do list. I have no issue dying with things not finished. I darn well hope that is the case. But not experienced, to be so focused on my lists or my anxieties that I am not present to the miracles small and large always around us. That would indeed break my heart.

***“I am a woman 60 years old and Glory is my work.”***

***By what great fortune has it become my privilege to announce the “kneel and kiss the ground” beauty that surrounds me every day? Every day? Unbelievable! Why did it take 60 years for me to wake up to this ever-present opportunity to fall in love...minute by minute, day in and day out with our human life on this lovely green and blue planet? TS Elliot might say “...not seen because not looked for.” And I would say, not looked for because it didn’t fit my idea of how my life should be. And in that overstrained focus on what I thought I wanted, I kept missing the entrance to the shrine itself. Because I had “an idea” about “how it should look.” Or what words it should say, or what face it should be held in...and I just kept missing the ever-present love ... all the time right there in front of me. Waiting for me to notice her. Hoping I would find eyes that truly see.***

In the play *Our Town*, in the last scene, Emily Gibbs (who has recently died in childbirth) is allowed (against the advice of the other dead souls) to relive one day in her life. She chooses her twelfth birthday. It is a profound and heart opening scene. She realizes that we miss most of life while we are alive. It has so many gifts, like the smell of bacon and the sounds of a household waking up. For me, gifts like the way my mother smiles at me, even though she no longer recognizes me. But something in her knows I am hers. I can feel it. I am introduced as her niece. With her warmth and graciousness, she makes sure the hospice nurse knows I am family. **There is** care for both of us. **How did I miss all the ways she was so gracious before?** All I could see is her narrow mindedness all those years. And, it was there. But it wasn't the only thing that was there. I made her only narrow minded. **Yes, she was that, but never only that.**

This year, as I turned 60, my children surprised me by asking friends and family to email them a wish for my next 60 years (hope springs eternal in the young) and a memory of me. This collection, the gifts so many of you gave me remains a treasure beyond all words. And as they took turns on March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2011 reading your words to me, one particular sentence stood out. My friend Mattie Decker wrote to me the words of Mary Oliver:

*"I am a woman 60 years old and Glory is my work."*

**Pinch me. I am dreaming ~ did the poet really say "Glory is my work?" I heard those words and something deep inside me stood up and danced toward the light. I knew the rest of my life would be for the sake of loving this life, loving all the ways big and small, soft and fierce that She loves us.** If I am to work, it means I am to glory. To glorify. To see with eyes made for glory. Beam me up Scottie! Can it be that what I am made for ~ glory ~ falling in love ~ being swept up ~ taken ~ wants me? Is choosing me?

*"A real life doesn't mean getting what you want; the achievement, the privilege, too, is knowing what you love. But getting what you love? Having what you love, love you back? Oh my friend, it's a miracle: your one tiny life's head-on collision with divinity."*

*Marisa De Los Santos*

**So, let me begin the work of glory ~ of "fall on your knees and hear the angels' voices" -- the work of transforming the world in front of me by seeing right to the heart of things.** Have I told you about my 1928 craftsman bungalow I now call home? The light ~ it is everywhere. This year I added two orange screen doors. The ones that slam shut when you go in or out of them. So on those balmy Texas days the breezes pass through my home. And I wonder by what great fortune I get to be here now. I wonder how an old house could make a 60 year old woman truly young again.

Exhibit A: My daughter wrote the poem below as her memory of me for my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday book. She took me with all my faults and failings (of which she is most familiar...my circular way of talking, my inability even at 60 to internalize any sense of time, my stubbornness, intensity and earnestness to name just a few) and she saw them through the eyes of Glory. **I invite you to listen to Glory's voice...**

*She paints her face with daring colors.  
She dons her clothes like a peacock fans his tail feathers. Brilliant colors,  
Catching the light as she moves through a room.  
She laughs and it's instantly recognizable as belonging to her. It comes from the deep depths  
of her soul, and it echoes through a room.  
She falls in love with some element of life every day ~ a song, a necklace, an acceptance  
speech, a poem, a glimmer of hope, a moment of vulnerability.  
She sees your potential. Celebrates it, and then asks you to live in it.  
She cries a lot ~ at beauty, at pain, at old, at new.  
She leaves the longest voicemails known to man, because inevitably something will surprise  
her and take her off track for a moment.  
She is still surprised by life daily.  
She has the uncanny ability to say the one thing I don't want to hear, because I know it's true,  
but I would rather act like it isn't.  
She loves fiercely. Not only those who love her back, but the world in all of its jumbled,  
confusing, beautiful mess.  
She is the true definition of a woman.  
She is strong, beautiful, capable, intelligent, opinionated, stubborn, emotional, sensitive, and a  
force to be reckoned with.  
She is my mother.  
She is mine, and I am hers."*

I am sure it won't surprise you that this gift of transformation that happened to my daughter also happened to me. **I will never see myself again in the same way. There is power in a "seeing" that includes everything.** As you will see in...

**Exhibit B:** My son, who went to Ghana, Africa this year, brought me home an amazing painting called "unity". He wrote this to me as part of my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday book...

*"I wish you 'unity' in your life. By unity I mean integration, the harmonious joining of your many different skills, passions, and aspects of personality. You have been blessed with a wide range of interests, skills, and even friends. This diversity provides many benefits; however, it also comes at a cost ~ a sense of internal fracture or an inability for others to fully see you. I wish in the coming years (and beyond) that you find unity with these many different aspects of yourself, and that more people can see the many different sides you have as one. I hope you will not reject or abandon any of these sides, but instead continue to learn how to embrace and integrate all of them. Through this unification process with its pains and rewards, I hope you will also remember to keep dancing, just like the figures in the painting. Dancing towards unity is never easy. With that said, I know that you have never shied away from doing something because it is difficult."*

Zac speaks to my frontier and the next level of growth that calls to me. These children who have seen my best and my worst, do they not see me through the eyes of unending love and through those same eyes, also see where I need to stretch and grow? Why does this matter? **Think about what it means that we might each be surrounded by such great love, such infinite and persistent support for our growth.** Is this not glory? God's glory? Earth's glory? The glory of being human? Why do we worry?

**I use myself as an example but I must be clear: I am the rule not the exception.** I see this in each of my clients' lives. In my children's lives I have had a front row seat to the workings of this kind of love and devotion to their/our individual and collective growth toward fullness. And because of the work I do I also get to see that those moments when we are the most devastated ~ you know the ones I mean ~ the betrayal of a spouse or friend, or of life when I least expect it and believe I am unable to meet it. What about those? I promise you that they are the depth of Love's fierce embrace of us. We need to open our hearts so we can open our eyes and realize (one day we will understand) that this was the only way Love could reach us. She had tried others, but we weren't having it. It was her most compassionate (albeit fierce) attempt to wake our sleeping princess out of her denial of her true power and beauty. To remind our frog prince of his inner nobility that needs to be seen just once, as brave and true. Those myths and fairy tales are true. They are real. They are more real than the concrete our streets are paved with.

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### ***Life is about transformation!***

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**It is for the sake of being kissed or slapped awake. Of being, even just once, brave and true. That is the miracle of light in the season of darkness.** This is what it means to "call back the sun" as the ancients did each winter solstice.

Exhibit C: Listen to another voice of Glory...from poet Rainer Maria Rilke's *Ninth Elegy*:

*"...but because truly being here is so much; because everything here apparently needs us, this fleeting world, which in some strange way keeps calling to us. Us, the most fleeting of all. Once for each thing. Just once; no more. And we too, just once. And never again. But to have been this once, completely, even if only once: to have been one with the earth, seems beyond undoing."*

*"O earth: .... What if not transformation, is your urgent command?"*

We sophisticated 21st century people, no longer believe like the ancients did that if we do not "call back the sun" it might not come back and the planet would grow cold and all life would perish. **But the ancients' belief that they were players in the round of creation, that the sun needed them as**

much as they needed the sun speaks to a kind of belonging and intimacy most of us rarely glimpse in life.

**And why is earth's urgent command "transformation?" What if earth was designed for us to experience ourselves as the creators of transformation?** Like the ancients. We might not need to literally "call back the sun," but we surely long to see each other and ourselves as brave and true. As whole even with our faults and failings. Even we, no, especially we sophisticated 21st century people need transformation. Our lives in many ways are more tedious and exhausting than were our forbearers.

So, in this Solstice season, this season of the return of light:

*What in your life needs the magic of a transformation in your vision?  
Who needs you to see them through Glory's eyes?  
How have you made your life too small for you?*

Einstein said you can't solve a problem at the level of thinking that created it. Can we let go of our problem-based thinking and dream a new world into being? Emily Gibbs in *Our Town* would tell us that it is already here. Right under our noses. Smell the bacon. You do not have to be 60 to practice glory. Transformation of our hearts will call light and warmth to each of our days.

*How are you blessed beyond all rational measure?  
And how do you bless our "just once" world?  
This amazing, fragile, tenacious, messy,  
yet bold and beautiful world.*

Yes, 2012 is upon us. Yes, we have big problems. Yes, we face huge challenges. And yet, as Archbishop Desmond Tutu tells us, in his sermon and book *We Are Made for Goodness*:

*"Do you think I don't know the demands of your life?  
I see you striving for perfection, craving my acceptance.  
I see you bending yourself out of shape to conform to the image that you have of me.  
Do you imagine that I did not know who you were when I made you,  
When I knit you together in your mother's womb?  
Do you think I planted a fig tree and expected roses to bloom?  
No child, I sowed what I wanted to reap.*

*You are a child after my own heart.  
Seek out your deepest joy and you will find me there.  
Find that which makes you most perfectly yourself and know that I am at the heart of it.  
Do what delights you and you will be working with me.  
Walking with me  
Finding your life  
Hidden in me.*

*Ask me any questions.  
My answer is love.  
When you want to hear my voice.  
Listen for love.  
How can you delight me?  
I will tell you:  
Love.*

*The tough, unbreakable, unshakable love.  
Are you looking for me?  
You will find me in love.  
Would you know my secrets?  
There is only one:  
Love.*

*Do you want to know me?  
Do you yearn to follow me?  
Do you want to reach me?  
Seek and serve love."*

My friend Ann Orsinger noted, "But to have been this once, *completely*, even if only once: to have been one with the earth, seems 'beyond undoing.' It is this presence that brings us to glory and to the fullness of love; it is this complete being ~ if only once ~ that makes our lives 'beyond undoing.' If we practice bringing light into our lives one spark at a time, soon each day will be radiant with glory."

So in this season of beginning, as you reflect and enact your new year's intentions, I invite you to do this not with a sense of how you are not yet perfect or how "far" you are from your vision of who or what your life can be, but rather as Glory would. **What does this next year in your life look like through Glory's eyes?**

Till we meet again next year...

**Nancy**

**Live full, love freely, risk joy!**



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