



A Heart Wide Open, by Joel and Michelle Levy

"Then it was as if I suddenly saw the secret beauty of their hearts, the depth of their hearts where neither sin nor knowledge could reach, the core of reality, the person that each one is in the eyes of the divine. If only they could see themselves as they really are, if only we could see each other that way all the time, there would be no more need for war; for hatred, for greed, for cruelty. I suppose the big problem would be that we would fall down and worship each other." Â - Father Thomas Merton, Epiphany at 4th and Walnut in Louisville, Kentucky

Can you remember a time (or times!) when you were really cracked open, and beheld the overwhelming beauty or suffering of the world around you? Can you remember how it felt to have your heart that wide open, your seeing that deep and clear, and what it felt to simply be present and alive in those moments?

In one of the later Superman movies, there's a touching scene where Superman takes Lois Lane way up into the sky, and asks her to listen. "Listen. Tell me what you hear," he tell Lois. Lois listens hard, and responds, "I don't hear anything. " Superman then replies, "I hear everything. All the cries for help from all the people in danger. I hear voices of countless voices of people calling for help."

In the Chinese tradition, Quan Yin is regarded as the embodiment of Universal Compassion. Her name literally means, "She who hears the cries of the world." In Asian cultures it is understood that Quan Yin is really a dimension or quality of our own innate compassionate presence, an innate quality of being that each of us can find within the depths of our own hearts - our most essential being. In Christianity this archetype of compassion may be related to as the Christ or Mother Mary, in Jewish tradition as the Shekina, the Divine Feminine immanent aspect of God residing within us as "in-dwelling Presence."

It takes courage to wake up, to open our wisdom eyes, look more deeply, see more clearly, and feel deeply into the subtle, complex, and profound interrelationships that weave the fabric of our lives and world.

To the fainthearted, it may superficially seem easier to live in denial, mindless of the intensity of beauty, joy, and wonder, numbed to the sorrow, suffering, and pain in our lives and world. Aloof and semi-disembodied, we distance ourselves from the raw, vivid, intensity, and intimacy of our feelings and our visceral responses to

the suffering of the world within and around us. Such self-protective strategies keep us distanced from our heart, our feelings, our loved ones, yet sooner or later, most of us get cracked open, one way or another, by the raw intensity of the nature of our lives and world.

If we are truly committed to embodying compassion, there is an opportunity for gratitude, wisdom, and dedication to come together at least three times a day in our busy lives. When is this? At times when we select and eat the foods that sustain our lives.

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