

Until My Time Comes

“We all sit on the edge of a mystery. We have only known this life, so dying scares us—and we are all dying. But what if dying were perfectly safe? What would it look like if you could approach dying with curiosity and love, in service of other beings? What if dying were the ultimate spiritual practice?” --Ram Dass and Mirabai Bush, from Walking Each Other Home.

You may know Ram Dass as the American teacher of Eastern wisdom, writer of the seminal book Be Here Now. He experienced a significant stroke 20 years ago, but has continued to work with the help of his partner on the path, Mirabai Bush. They have recently released a new collection subtitled, Conversations on Loving and Dying. After hearing Mirabai speak I found myself again reflecting on this fundamental underpinning to so many of our deep choices.

Only when you accept that one day you'll die, can you let go and make the best out of life.
--Gabriel Ba

Of course our work in community is to support each other in making the best life that we can. I suggest that an important part of that process are the practices that help us be able to sit with what makes uncomfortable, if not to befriend at least to accept. And I suspect there is nothing that makes us more universally uncomfortable than the truth of our own end.

If I had my life to live over again, I should form the habit of nightly composing myself to thoughts of death. I would practice, as it were, the remembrance of death. There is no other practice which so intensifies life. Death, when it approaches, ought not to take one by surprise. It should be part of the full expectancy of life. --Muriel Spark

This work may not be for all, but I know there are many who would appreciate a chance to sit together and share thoughts, hopes, intentions and fears. The Death Café model is something that someone might want to explore and possible help bring to Lathrop. In our greater community, John Berkowitz who some may know from his work with the group Compassion & Choices, leads the weekly discussion "Living Fully, Aging Gracefully, and Befriending Death". (for more info: 413-387-8439) If there is enough interest perhaps we could host a session here at Lathrop.

I don't ask if there is life after death, I ask "is there life before death?"--Dr John Kabat Zinn

And meanwhile we live and we choose, and every day we can come back to reaching for what might makes our life sweet while we practice being thankful for what we have in our hands, even if it's not what we would have chosen.

I don't remember my birth. I haven't experienced my death. All I know is I'm here now.

And until my time comes, I'm going to shake the tree of life until every leaf falls off.

--Lou Silluzio