

December 3, 2016

Dear Ones,

We can follow every lurch, trying to divine what each cabinet appointment or erratic policy signal means. Or we can stipulate that it's a disaster. Am I sure about that? No. In our tradition, people of the Way have for centuries greeted each other with "I am not certain," which is a pretty interesting way to say hello. But we can work with our best guesses, as long as we remember that's what they are and hold them provisionally. (In a certain way, any koan response is a best guess, some of which change us forever and endure for a lifetime, while others move and open over time.)

So let's provisionally consider that we're in the midst of a disaster. Let's put a pause on fighting with life for being life, accepting instead Auden's notion of the disobedience of the daydream. Let's see if that frees up some energy for other things.

Like asking who we are now, in this new age. Cuban writer Reinaldo Reynas, who was imprisoned for being gay and whose work was banned, said that it was crucial to remember that people like him weren't the counterculture; the regime was the counterculture, and people like him were the culture, which he described as everything that is diverse, luminous, mysterious, and festive.

We are the culture. Right now that puts us in the interesting position of being the conservatives, in the sense of protecting traditions we hold dear. Protecting our human gifts to each other like civil rights and simple civility, and also protecting the most ancient traditions of all — those held in the waters and the land and the wide skies that connect us to interstellar space. There is such dignity in this role, sitting like Guanyin in royal ease posture, steadfastly

attentive with very old eyes, one leg already raised so that rising to respond is graceful and immediate.

In contrast to the chaotic immaturity of the administration-to-be, we are being given the embodiment of ancient protective dignity in the people of Standing Rock. We are being given a vision of generous conservatism in the vets who have gone to defend them, to put their training, as one of them said, at the service of the people's prayers. Whose heart is not pierced and humbled by these First Peoples' steadfastness in the face of everything this nation has forced upon them? Let us support them in all the ways we can, and let us, with pierced and humble hearts, learn from them about what it means to be the culture.

We could be a gathering of everyday bodhisattvas – diverse, luminous, mysterious, and festive. We could encourage each other and be fiercely loyal to holding the field for everyone, encircling the vulnerable, and acting as elders, whatever our age. The world that is swirling into existence will not wait for us. The future we hold dear is calling each of us right now to be its ancestor.

With my love,

 