**Nurturing Beauty**

 **UU Soul Matters Topic for May 2022, Adapted for ERUUF CG/CCs**

**Group Business**

**Chalice Lighting**

As we kindle this flame, may we be open to that spirit within us and amidst us that inspires us to a deeper, fuller, richer, more abundant experience of life. Rev. Dr. James Kubal-Komoto

**Check-in**

**Topic Introduction**

The philosopher Blaise Pascal wrote, *“*In difficult times, carry something beautiful in your heart.”

These are indeed difficult times. They require courage, commitment, hope and self-love. And all of these are sustained by beauty. We find the courage to fight after falling in love with a beautiful vision to fight for. We maintain our commitment only by finding the beauty that nourishes us. We hold on to hope because experiences of beauty remind us that something in the universe is on our side. We withstand dehumanization when rooted deeply in the beauty of our own dignity.

It’s one of the most important secrets to successful social change and social survival: When we carry beauty, it carries us.

**Quotes**

“Beauty is the illumination of your soul.”- John O’Donohue

The Greek word for the beautiful is kalon, “which is related to the word *kalein*, which includes the notion of ‘call.’ Suggesting that there is something about beauty, wherever we find it, that tugs at us, pulls at us, draws us into the divine.”

Beauty is that which glistens on the edges of our yearnings and lures us into the depths of things.

Patricia Adams Farmer

Never lose an opportunity of seeing anything beautiful, for beauty is God’s handwriting. **—***Ralph Waldo Emerson*

…Beauty is a light in the heart--- *Khalil Gibran*

Beauty isn’t all about just nice loveliness. Beauty is about more rounded, substantial becoming. So I think beauty, in that sense, is about an emerging fullness.

*John O’Donohue*

**Questions for Individual Reflection and Sharing (choose one or two to respond to)**

1. When have you faced adversity and been supported or healed by beauty?
2. When did beauty first teach you something?
3. When has beauty given you a new way to understand the divine?
4. What did your family of origin teach you about beauty or what it means “to be beautiful”?
5. How has your understanding of beauty changed over time?
6. Who in your life needs to be told they are a beautiful soul?

**Responses/Discussion**

**Likes and Wishes**

**Closing Words and Extinguish Chalice**

As we extinguish our chalice, may its flame burn on in our hearts, burning away the old, outdated ideas of ourselves that no longer serve us well, and lighting the way to a new day where we may become our true selves and bring light into the world. Let the smoke from the flame remind us that the past does not equal the future.

**Additional Resources**

**Podcasts**

 **The Inner Landscape of Beauty - John O’Donohue: On Being Podcast**

https://onbeing.org/programs/john-odonohue-the-inner-landscape-of-beauty-aug2017/

“No conversation we've ever done has been more beloved than this one. The Irish poet, theologian, and philosopher insisted on beauty as a human calling…”

**How Beauty Can Heal Us**

*Jason Silva*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2W6wJniitTU

A meditation on the soul-shaking, heart-stirring power of beauty. You become what you behold. So choose carefully what you behold. Chase beauty friends, so you become it.

**Reclaiming UGLY as an Act of Queer Pleasure**

https://queerhealingjourneys.com/vanessa-lewis/

**Articles**

**Nature’s Beauty as a Gateway into Deep Time and a Lens on the Interconnectedness of the Universe**

*Maria Popova*

https://www.brainpickings.org/2018/07/17/oliver-sacks-beauty-deep-time/

“Standing amid the rainforest — a place governed by the beauty of interrelation — Sacks reflects: ‘The sense of deep time brings a deep peace with it, a detachment from the timescale, the urgencies, of daily life… a profound sense of being at home, a sort of companionship with the earth.’”

**Ugly: How Beauty was Built upon White Supremacy**

*Vanessa Rochelle Lewis*

https://wearyourvoicemag.com/body-politics/bopoincolor/ugly-white-supremacy-beauty

“In this essay for #BodyPositivityInColor, Vanessa Rochelle Lewis explores the concept of “ugly” and how it depends on white supremacist, colonialist, cisheteronormative, misogynistic, and ableist constructs of what defines beauty. She explores these ideas through history and how it exists and thrives within our current society.”

**Poem**

Beauty.

We appreciate it.

How could we not?

We wonder at it.

Get absorbed in it.

Analyze it, if it’s got a frame around it.

We make it.

Grow it.

Point at it.

Collect it.

Share it.

Save it.

But how often do we listen to it?

How often do we ask, “What is it trying to get me to hear?”

Rather than, “Do I like it or not?”

It’s just so hard to step outside

our mangled view of the world

that sees everything in the light of consumption.

Not everything is here for our possession.

Not everything is here to entertain us.

Not everything is meant to be put to use, even you.

We must find our way back,

to those questions that were once alive

but now are buried deep:

“What if beauty is here to make us wise?”

“What if beauty is the way the sacred speaks?”

Yes! Yes! It does so much more than decorate.

It demands. It calls. It asks for commitment.

It doesn’t just say “Love and appreciate me.”

It says “Protect me! Fight for me!”

It steps out in front of us and points to a precious world

that needs our help.

It paints a picture of new ways of living

and declares, “Follow me there!”

It says, “Even in hell holes I find a way to grow.”

It sings, “This world was made for more than work.”

It whispers, “Use me to heal.”

It pleads, “Nurture a new relationship with me. One that allows me to talk!”

 -Anon (Soul Matters Team)