

## **Common Meditation: Monday, February 6, 2012**

### **A Hidden Wholeness**

“There is in all things ... a hidden wholeness.”

Thomas Merton, the Trappist monk and mystic who wrote these words, was speaking of the human world as well as the world of nature. But in our everyday lives, Merton's words can sound like wishful thinking. Afraid that our inner light will be extinguished, or our inner darkness exposed, we hide our true identities and become separated from our own souls. We end up leading divided lives, far removed from our birthright wholeness.

The divided life comes in many and varied forms. To cite just a few examples, it is the life we lead when:

- We refuse to invest ourselves in our work, diminishing its quality and distancing ourselves from those it is meant to serve
- We make our living at jobs that violate our basic values, even when survival does not absolutely demand it
- We remain in settings or relationships that steadily kill off our spirit
- We harbor secrets to achieve personal gain at the expense of other people
- We hide our beliefs from those who disagree with us to avoid conflict, challenge, and change
- We conceal our true identities for fear of being criticized, shunned, or attacked.

My knowledge of the divided life comes first from personal experience. A “still, small voice” speaks the truth about me, my work, or the world. I hear it and yet act as if I did not. I withhold a personal gift that might serve a good end or commit myself to a project that I do not really believe in. I keep silent on an issue I should address or actively break faith with one of my own convictions. I deny my inner darkness, giving it more power over me, or I project it onto other people, creating “enemies” where none exist.

I pay a steep price when I live a divided life, feeling fraudulent, anxious about being found out, and depressed by the fact that I am denying my own selfhood. The people around me pay a price as well, for now they walk on ground made unstable by my dividedness. How can I affirm another's integrity when I defy my own? A fault line runs down the middle of my life, and whenever it cracks open—divorcing my words and actions from the truth I hold within—things around me get shaky and start to fall apart.

from "A Life Lived Whole" by Parker Palmer, available on-line at  
<http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/healing-resistance/a-life-lived-whole>