

## WHERE'S THE MIRACLE IN A TSUNAMI?

The tsunami brings spiritual questioning to the fore of our consciousness. We grasp for some higher understanding to match the depth of our grief. And we find it.

First there is the Law of Divine Compensation, which purports that no matter what the darkness, God's light is larger. Yet where is the light within such a horrible tragedy as a tidal wave killing over a hundred thousand people?

That light emerges from the incredible outpour of love that followed.

In the days after the tsunami hit, we experienced the love that would literally save the world. It was palpable everywhere, as millions of people hugged their kids a little longer and tighter and more often, having been so tragically reminded that nothing - absolutely nothing - can be taken for granted. Least of all, life itself. Heartbreak opened our emotional floodgates, as true, authentic compassion became the routine rather than the exceptional response to human suffering. The tsunami made us get it. And in that, there was a gift. The specter of death had taught us the value of life.

With the tsunami, we were suddenly jolted back to our right minds -- where the ultimately meaningless preoccupations that normally dominate our lives were pushed to the background where they belong. What loomed large was love itself. And ever since, we have been freer. Freer of the forgetfulness, the distraction, the petty arguments, the insignificant pain. For pain of true significance and horrifying meaning had landed in our midst, and had etched its message on our hearts forever.

It is said in A Course in Miracles that God has a plan to every problem the moment it occurs. And what, I have asked myself, was God's plan at the moment the tsunami hit?

His plan, I believe, is that each of us become someone fundamentally different, someone capable of wisdom, insight and compassion and intelligence beyond what we have displayed before. For there are lovers, and there are committed lovers. We have loved the world in a non-committed way, and now we are being challenged to change that. The tsunami is not the only example of huge amounts of human suffering. Are we committed enough to admit that?

I have wondered what makes humanity so selective in its capacity to discern catastrophe. Yes indeed last month's tsunami was a catastrophe, and the world's concerted effort to serve the suffering has been both commendable and appropriate. Yet such collective and concerted compassion is not just called in the face of one isolated tragedy. It is the only authentic, righteous way of life on any given day. The hard and painful truth is this: for millions of people living on this planet, every day is a catastrophe. From AIDS victims in Africa, to citizens of the Sudan caught in the struggle of their civil war-- and yes, to both soldiers and civilians in Iraq - life itself has become catastrophic. Where is our concerted knowing, our collective response, our deep grief for those who suffer through experiences that are just as catastrophic as the tsunami yet more convenient to ignore?

Those who died in last month's tsunami did not die in vain. For in their dying they helped to awaken a distracted and slumbering humanity (what symbolism, that the tsunami hit while we were literally on vacation). The only hope for the future of the world is that humanity will experience a change of heart; that we will awaken to the sanctity and fragility of life; and we will dedicate ourselves -- as we are dedicating ourselves now to the tsunami's victims -- to all who suffer and grieve and so need our aid.

And thus the miracle, if we choose it: that death itself can bring forth a greater life.

-- Marianne Williamson, Jan. 5, 2005 --