

Spiritual Mourning

The saying is: May your tears be weapons in your fight for glory. May your *tears* be *weapons* in your fight for glory. This maxim lays these two quite incompatible symbols alongside each other - I imagine quite intentionally to startle and alert us to deeper meanings.

The saying speaks of 'tear's – of soul weeping , or what Osuna describes as the tears of recollection. The saying points to the possibilities of our profound and natural capacity to grieve being recollected, and becoming a conscious and transforming energy. So what is this experience of spiritual mourning that reduces us to tears - this inner experience of soul weeping releasing a powerful spiritual force which can be wielded and directed like a 'weapons' in spiritual transformation ?

Spiritual mourning as a spiritual force

Before we reflect further Osuna offers some insights that may help to understand why this weeping in the soul is given such weight. First of all, the tears of recollection is the natural grief response that can arise in us, quite spontaneously, once we have begun to taste something of the healing, the wholeness, the intimacy, the alive-ness of recollection. This inner taste can be transient and incomplete - but deeply unforgettable. It is a taste or glimpse that awakens spiritual hunger for the promise of this new way of being. And it simultaneously wakens healthy sorrow that sees clearly what obscures and hinders life lived from the heart. It is in this sense that hungering, yearning, longing and grieving for this glorious way living that rises spontaneously in the soul and is released as spiritual force for transformation.

Recognising the inner feeling of spiritual mourning.

It is this force of spiritual desire that is a powerful, and in fact only means of engaging with the deeper sources of grace within us. It is this experience of inner weeping that is our best means of engaging. It is being attuned to the softening of what was fixed, or a moistening of what felt dry, of a cleansing and clarifying of the mind that feels like the clarity of light that comes after a rainstorm, or the sense of dry soil being irrigated by tears and becoming fertile by the overflowing of a rivers of them. This is the

experiential language of spiritual mourning. It is being attuned to this feeling in the heart, this affect in the soul that brings change rather than the use of rhetoric, or argument.

An irresistible transaction

Osuna speaks of spiritual mourning as an irresistible transaction that releases grace. He gives us an array of word pictures that suggest this irresistibility. It's like a mother who hears her child crying for her to comfort it who can't resist her desire to pick up the child and hold it close. Or a lover who can't resist being desired so returns desire with desire. He evokes spiritual images of God as helpless and 'disarmed' by this spiritual longing. God is a divine lover being longed for, that is unable to resist - and the One who was begged now comes begging in the soul.

Lamenting in hope

Spiritual mourning is a progressive and unfolding experience. In the beginning the mourning can take the active, expressive form of lamenting. The affect of longing is expressed in words or gesture, in spiritual song and rites of lament. This capacity to lament is not moral assessment coming from the judging mind leaving a sense of condemnation or false guilt.

It is a lament of the heart rising out of direct experience of love and light and life that orientates the soul to hope – it orientates us to more life. Lamenting in hope increases our courage to see and discern clearly what is in our own souls that separates and distorts or hinders us without disconnecting from this hope.

Silent and sweet weeping

Spiritual mourning deepens in contemplative silence. Here there is no active expression but a silent, inarticulate yearning movement of mind and heart. There is no longer thought or speech or activity – but a learning to simply turn and yearn in an open expectant way. Without naming our particular desolation, without grasping at particular consolation.

This naked mourning is free from the endless rising and falling cycle of ordinary self generated desires. Osuna describes this as 'sweet' weeping - it's an experience of mourning that is nourishing and sweet to the soul rather than leaving a sense of bitterness. This silent inarticulate inner movement feeds rather than depletes.

It is this affect of yearning that intensifies the magnetic attractive energy of spiritual eros. So - we learn to sit in silent contemplation as lovers do ; aroused, open and yearning . Osuna constantly returns to the love poetry of the Song of Songs . The bride who mourns and yearns for the presence of her bridegroom is exercising this irresistible attracting eros energy. The bridegroom will come to her.

Mourning is celebration

The fullness of spiritual mourning is experienced in the contemplative mind where mourning and celebration are not two opposing experiences . This full flowering of this capacity to mourn comes when undiminishing weeping is undiminishing joy. Mourning and celebration become a single response in the joining and union of spiritual recollection. This rises from hidden, mystical experience of communion which, as Osuna points out, most often is not known to the person who in some way knows it!

But although there is this hidden aspect the effect is visible and flows into life and relationships. Osuna puts it this way. Through this this spiritual mourning we become gracious – we become full of grace. Gracious at a level of being, of our essence. We become pleasing to God . He calls this graciousness the primary spiritual gift. And it is out of this graciousness that we become gracious in life . It is out of this that specific gifts for service in the world – compassion, teaching, healing, loving flow freely and abundantly. This graciousness is for the world.

Graciousness as the fruit of mourning.

Osuna uses a vast array of symbols to evoke graciousness – but loves the symbolism of oil most of all. Oil has a pouring quality, healing properties , and refreshing, and nourishing qualities. These describe something of the feeling qualities of graciousness – an abundantly flowing, healing, refreshing, nourishing source of life in the soul flowing out in loving service. But in particular , oil is associated with spiritual anointing - the anointing in preparation for death, and the anointing that marks us for the unique call on our live. This graciousness is the graciousness of an anointed mind and heart . We could call it a christening of consciousness - in the profound sense of the Christ being an anointed being.