

## **In Frodo We Trust**

I just finished watching the extended DVD version of the Lord of the Rings Trilogy, which I received for XMAS. To date, I have seen the trilogy five times. There is something very cathartic about watching an end-of-the-world story, where evil seems so rampant that peace-loving folks cannot fathom any vestiges of hope. Then some unexpected and fateful miracle occurs to change the expected outcome. Lord of the Rings has that cathartic effect on me. The tension builds and builds and the evildoers always seem to have the biggest and "baddest" weapons, technology and machines. But in the end, the resolution does not come from some equally opposing and warring force but from some nonlinear feat of love, compassion, or integrity.

In real life, there are times when we show compassion or pass a judgment on a person but then later feel that the other person didn't warrant either. A good example of this is Frodo's compassion and withholding of judgment for Gollum. Although Gollum took Frodo to the brink of hell, in the end, it was due to Gollum that Frodo lived and Middle Earth was saved. Gollum was a tragic and far-from-likeable figure who had a role to play in restoring balance out of chaos. He could not be trusted but in the end, as Frodo weakened and lost his own ability to "judge" between good and evil, it was the interaction between Frodo and Gollum, or good and evil, which alchemically eliminated the threat of annihilation and restored the balance to nature.

There are multiple meanings to this story, which so many of us have come to identify with. If we look at it in terms of the world situation at this given time, many of us feel like hobbits that have had our peaceful lives disrupted due to an evil force hell bent on extending empire at any cost and at the sake of the Earth and humanity. And for those of us who are not warriors, we feel helpless because ultimately there are casualties for all sides during any war and the polarity never seems to dissipate or change the nature of the problem in the long term. The pendulum just constantly swings from left to right.

We are facing our own Armageddon right now on Planet Earth. Middle Earth is the U.S. and Mordor (Wash. D.C.) continues to grow, wiping out all states and extending its empire throughout the world. Institutional forces and hatred on all sides are building up to a very tense level such that at any moment we could conceivably be headed into a conflict so great that few will be spared. But on some level, some of us feel like there is a way out that defies the polarity of good vs. evil. We have not quite figured it out yet, but our hearts tell us so.

Fighting evil doesn't necessarily get rid of the "evildoers" as there are always more where they came from. But as Frodo, we can embrace the dark and transform it. It is an alchemical process and even the most evil human has a soul that needs transforming. Even to the end, Gandalf tries to embrace Saruman as Frodo embraces Gollum. In the final hour, however, the dark falls, either through personal deceit or the deceit of others (Saruman) or by the embrace of light.

The battle between the dark and the light will never be won through machines, technology, weapons or death. It must be won from the heart because only our heart knows the secret behind alchemy and it is only through forgiveness that the dark has a chance of embracing the light, as we must embrace the dark to transform it to light. And it is only by walking through the valley of death that we can face the shadow that has lurked behind us and within us, and transform it through our own personal struggle to understand and embrace that which is a mirror of us, and become an element for change and alchemical healing. To put it in more practical terms, Frodo lives and we need not worry about judging our short-term personal failures as long as the long-term goal and vision of peace and love remains consistent. Happy new year and let us all trust in Frodo during the coming year.