

## **Living in the Light**

Religious organizations have similar interpretations of what it is good and what it is evil. The interpretation is based on the duality that we face on Earth, but this duality, as interpreted by western religion, encourages us not to know and recognize our own shadow or evil side. The problem is, you cannot know good if you do not know evil, and vice-versa. Duality actually teaches us about ourselves. If it didn't exist, we would have no awareness and we wouldn't exist.

The role of duality is a learning experience that helps us to discern and make decisions about the quality of our lives. We cannot know goodness through word of mouth; we must experience goodness by knowing what goodness is not. We can certainly choose to go through the motions of being good, as most religions tell us to do, at the expense of becoming wise to the ways of the world. However, in the final analysis, going through the motions without experiencing the ways of the world leaves us ignorant, gullible and subject to trickery. It is this ignorance that keeps us from knowing God. To know God, we must know what God isn't lest we be fooled into thinking otherwise.

The myth of original sin keeps us shamed into believing that we are evil and this keeps us from really learning the truth about ourselves. However, in the end, it is the truth that will set us free. And it is in this truth, that we will find light. Once we understand that we were made in the image of our creator and, thus, as we are like our creator and so too is our creator like us, then it is easy to understand that our creator is also aware of duality. Thus, the trick is to discover how to overcome duality, which is not a sin, but a learning experience that keeps us on our toes for our mortal lives. Denying this duality only leads to repressed fears and desires, which is a lesson the Catholic Church is facing now as it tries to deal honestly with the nature of human sexuality rather than continually repressing it until it becomes a perversion and abomination of nature.

The truth is, nothing about our being is bad; it is the way we perceive ourselves and the world around us, in terms of good and evil, that is bad; and thus, by trying to deny certain parts of our being, we turn ourselves into monsters. Anger, sexuality, jealousy, etc., are all parts of our being that we must bring to the open, into the light, and look at truthfully to understand the value of these feelings, desires and perceptions. When we do this, we expose ourselves to "the truth"; that is, the nature of our complex being, and we can then begin to deal with the real world from a point of personal integrity.

Integrity is an evolutionary process that comes with knowing ourselves; our strengths and our weaknesses and balancing them accordingly. Denying our own weaknesses generally produces an aggressive response to the world that hides deep-rooted insecurities about ourselves. Thus, this aggression, and the denial of this aggression, in the most extreme cases, manifests as evil.

Integrity is a difficult value to understand. Having integrity has little to do with charity work, or being helpful to a neighbor, which is the dogma we are fed from our religious institutions. Certainly, there is value and goodness in doing charity work, but we must ask ourselves why are we doing it?

That is the question from where we find the answer to what is really good; that is, selfless acts of goodness (Godness), rather than what is just selfish and self-serving.

If we are doing charity work just because our church has always told us that's the way we'll get to heaven, but we really hate doing the work and hate the people we work with, but believe we must put on a good face, that is not integrity. That is a product of not living our truth but instead living with a heavy heart that creates internal disharmony, animosity, and smugness the longer we perform your duties.

If we give alms to the poor from a distance because our church tells us to, but when a person truly in need comes to our door or church and we turn them away because they don't fit our model of goodness (Godliness), that is not living the truth. If we give change to the homeless, rationalizing that we've done your part, when in fact, it is only a bandaid to a bigger problem that we don't want to deal with, that is not living the truth. When we make judgments about a person based on our perception of their situation, not having walked in their shoes, that is not living the truth.

Integrity means looking at both sides and making an effort to understand the dynamics of a person's nature and the feelings they have elicited in you, and then learning to forgive them and yourself for any actions that you may have taken in regard to that person and situation that were not truthful. There is always a balancing act to play because Earth is a school where we need to learn to forgive ourselves, and forgive others as God would forgive us. This has nothing to do with sin. It has to do with integrity. You will not always be in a position to make the best decision or take the best action for both yourself and those around you; but even an attempt to look at both sides and make a compromise in the face of complexity is an attempt at integrity.

This is a hard lesson that we all must face as we move forward in this millennium. The well being of this entire planet depends on how well we learn to forgive ourselves and those around us, particularly those who do not know any better (the truth). I, for one, am being very challenged at this time, as many of us are, to discern the truth through a very distorted media and an array of distorted perceptions, and then make decisions based on integrity. But to save ourselves and our planet from war and total destruction, we must all work at being honest and truthful with ourselves and others. We must choose to walk in the light, by knowing and addressing that side of ourselves that would carelessly and irresponsibly choose the dark side over the light.