

Listening Spirituality Forum (February 7, 2010)

Chapter 6: Personal Practices Which Embody and Support Listening Faithfulness to God in the Outer Life  
(from Vol. I of Listening Spirituality by Patricia Loring)

A. Embodying: Change in the Rhythm of Life

“Moving toward a life centered in God requires extensive change in the circumstances of our lives. We rarely make a plunge into new life. Mostly we’re led and drawn forward by that toward which we move, as the Spirit moves or nudges us, as Way opens” (p. 124).

Paradoxically, “as we clear out space at the center – we not only enter more deeply into relationship with God, we are also drawn more deeply into relationship with one another” (p. 124). The practices in this chapter are pivotal between making openings for internal experience and the outward expression of that very experience...Love is the ultimate spiritual discipline and practice – an paradoxically the ultimate gift or fruit of the Spirit...It...recreates our unity in and with God who is Love itself”(p. 125)

“In this dimension of our spiritual practice, it becomes more difficult to define or separate our practices from daily living. They are no longer solely a matter of our private, interior activity – or inactivity. They involve interaction with people close to us, people in the wider communities of which we are a part, invisible people at a distance from us...Such practices cannot be limited to a specific set-aside time” (pp 125-126).

“It is not enough, however, to assume that this spontaneous expression will arise without the same conscious attentiveness and intentionality that we bring to the rest of our life of prayer...Our personal interior practices, sustained over years, help prepare to encounter whatever comes our way with a more open heart and a freer consciousness.  
(p. 126).

1. Simplicity in the Use of Time

Loring discusses factors which compete with simplicity. “Discernment becomes extremely important at this point” (p. 127). It becomes essential to look at our motives and the particular need that is being met. It is also helpful to ask for whom we are engaged in a particular. It may not be our own if we experience resentment or harassment.

2. Restriction of Business

3. Daily Routines

B. Embodying: Changes in Relation to Material Goods and the Creation

1. Simplicity of Possessions, Personal Style, Entertainment

“Within limits, material simplicity can require less time in work to acquire and maintain possessions, freeing more time for listening for and following divine guidance” (p. 134).

2. Conservation of Resource

3. Fasting

This practice can have enormous symbolic value (see pp. 136-137). Most traditions recommend periodic fasting. It is best to attempt fasting only under trustworthy guidance and

not when one is busy meeting the demands of daily life. One benefit of fasting is that it helps us discern what really matters. Finally, Buddhists view moderation as a central virtue.

#### 4. Scarcity and Anxiety

We are very abundant and yet fear poverty! One practice can “be to attempt to modify our lives in ways that leave us less at the mercy of the marketers: less television, e.g., more analysis of the images that stir longings in us and what lie beneath those longings, more prayer to know the true nature of our longings, to be healed and redirected to the true object of our longings” (p. 158). The challenge is to find authentic forms of security and love.

#### 5. Abundance and Generosity

- a) The Blessedness of Giving and Receiving
- b) Gratitude, Joy and Praise

### C. Embodying: Changes in Relationships

#### 1. Solidarity with Those in Need

P.L. recommends that besides giving via checks (monetary donations), it is important to give via the presence and capacity for relationships – entering into love and solidarity with others.

2. Learning to Work with Those Different from Ourselves
3. The Spiritually Formative Practice of Working with Those Different from Ourselves
4. Family Relationships

### D. Embodying: Changes in Attitudes

#### 1. Commitment, Faithfulness

We must bring “into our outward lives the openness of consciousness and heart that we practice in private. In our outward lives,...(our intentions) are sorely tried again and again as we seek to be attuned and aligned to the divine in the moment

#### 2. Humility, Relinquishment and Yieldedness

“It’s a lifetime project to become aware of and willing to relinquish what we’ve put in the place of the Holy. So much of what we’ve put in that place is...that it’s hard to recognize how those things have become distorted.” (pp. 155-156).

#### 3. The Listener’s Experience of Receptivity and Hospitality

“Yieldedness and humility that come of relinquishment of our conventional selves leave us more free, transparent and open to what is in the moment” (p. 156). “This receptivity is...one more face of the “listening” that is the theme of this book” (p. 157).

#### 4. The Listener’s experience of Receptivity and Hospitality as Love

“To be receptive in the sense of listening for ‘what is,’ for how the Spirit is moving in “what it,” is to be hospitable to God, to others to life itself, to the Life within life...To experience this kind of hospitality, receptivity, acceptance from another human being is to experience an embodiment of the abundant, overflowing generosity of God’s love.” (p. 157).