

## 2014

What I found in the days of Grace, not only with Peace, but with my co-workers and friends, was an acceptance of myself that truly allowed all that came after. There really is no better place to start than with an open heart and a little self-love!

For a new generation of readers, and for those older as well, I hope that there is something beyond the messages of an angel and the excitement of discovering spiritual truths that might be what captivates you and points the way. I hope it will be friendship.

The movement I began to experience during the days of Grace was one from separation to connection through friendship—friendship with my spirit sisters Mary and Julie, and friendship with the angel, Peace. Such miracles that happened seemed small and ordinary and at the same time magnificent and promissory. Connecting, through compassion and open hearts, was the way. Trusting in new ways of knowing was the means. While much of the story occurred under the florescent lights of an office, our office was a place of togetherness and equality, a place apart from teachers and practices and study removed from life. Our spiritual awakening took place within life as we knew it. And it totally changed life as we'd known it to be.

Mary, Julie and I are still friends twenty years later. Steve Lehman (Peace's editor at Hazelden), and I are still friends. Dan and I became very close companions in the years just following *The Grace Trilogy's* publication and he was instrumental in helping me bring forth my next work, one that in this review of *Peace*

seems to have been portended to a much greater degree than I recalled. That work was *A Course of Love*.

I mention these friendships and *A Course of Love* together because it makes perfect sense to me that a Course given to inspire wholeheartedness, and relationship as well as union, would begin and grow out of such connections of the human and divine as are evidenced here. The manner in which they arrived was essentially . . . perfect. The manner in which I bumped my way into the receiving of such fine works was perfectly . . . human.

I see intimations of the coming of the Course hidden within the messages of *Peace*. But I also see allusions of the value found in *The Grace Trilogy* in *A Course of Love*. I see it primarily in the movement to embracing not only unity but relationship. I see it in the emphasis on accepting ourselves as we are and on being who we are. I can feel it in the movement –some might say “back,” to our humanity. And I can see the spiritual relevance of human love in all its poignant glory.

Getting together to work on the books again with Mary and Julie has been a joy. And we each kept saying, “My life would not be what it is now,” or “I would not be who I am now,” without the experience that we shared twenty years ago. What was extraordinary then feels more natural now. Our capacity to transcend our limited way of being human, and to *become* the “more” we seek, is evident. And it all started with *Love*, *Grace*, and *Peace*.

When I looked back to write *Love* (even if from a very short distance) everything about our story was quite lovely (if not easy). As I wrote *Peace* (which started and remained a journal) I reveal the story I thought I was living as it happened. In this presentation, the imperfection in the perfection is clearly seen. Here is the angst of the thought processes of a wounded but yearning-to-be-healed and hopeful individual . . . me. Here are the growing pains of new friendship, of holding compassion in grief, of navigating a

transitional time of life, and of the long, long road to acceptance of what can't be accepted.

As so much of spirituality has about it an idea of seeking and finding an ideal self, and of not “arriving” until such a time, I am eager to keep this tale of “ordinary women” available. To share the message of how lovable we are when we feel the least lovable, and to be an example of a life that didn't have to actually be “healed and whole” before it was touched with the divine or even asked to serve.

When you think no one else feels as you do—remember this book. No matter how refined people may appear, or how inferior our pasts can at times make us feel, what we share so commonly that it isn't even funny, is the capacity for being harder on ourselves than we'd ever be on anyone else. When we open our hearts enough to get to know others, we find that this is true, we grow compassion for them and, eventually, for ourselves too.

And therein lies our Peace.

What I have discovered is that our humanity is large enough to hold all of our pain, all of our growth, all of our uniqueness, all of our ways of knowing, all of our ways of expressing, and all of the graces that our Creator and the created world has to offer.

I wish you your own discoveries—within yourself and those close to you in your ordinary and magnificent life . . . as it is in its isness! I thank each one who shared in mine.

I am grateful for all involved in the original publishing and for those participating in this new publication as well, especially the insight of Glenn Hovemann at Take Heart Publications for seeing the link between *The Grace Trilogy* and *A Course of Love*, and proposing this re-issue.

Mari Perron, July 22, 2014