

Speaking of Faith
February 2017

The kettle rumbling, almost at a boil, I'd pulled the chair close to the window, the morning quiet and snowy, a tableau of grays and browns. Thoughts of Valentine's Sunday began to take shape. Kindness—that fits. Ah, but sweetness appeals, too. Easier and more fun than the hard, humbling work of kindness. Hmm, who couldn't use a bit of sweetness these days?....CRACK! A big blue jay startled me out of my reverie. From nowhere, it landed with a thunk right at the window, close enough to touch. We looked at each other a long moment.

Worlds meet. Who knows what the other sees or when an encounter matters? In that moment, my visual frame filled with blue and white and black, a quick-twitch energy, shiny black eyes meeting mine. Beauty, too. A predator, yes—a beautiful predator, at that. And an aliveness whose memory still feels bright, almost shattering in its intensity. As if the blue jay had called out in its loud, harsh voice, “Look! Look at me! Wake up! Look at life!”

I got the message. The bird had darted away, but how wide awake I felt! And how different *that* felt....Sometimes a cold lingers for so long, we forget about it. We lumber through our days, and that begins to feel just the way life is. Then one day everything changes. We feel great. We realize how sub-normal we've felt for so long. Gratitude floods the senses, and we're thrilled to be alive.

This particular January has taken its toll, headlines and reactions galloping through the days. Emotions ricochet from shock and outrage to optimism and hope and back again. We're careful about where and how to share our opinion. This can wear us down. Numb us out. And so, healing circles are forming. The web is exploding with self-help messages: “Self-Care During Tumultuous Politics,” “What you can do when you're so overwhelmed...you can barely move.”

Moving slowly? Feeling like a drowsy hibernating bear? Numb?

The blue jays—a yard full of them—kept landing close. I'd grab the phone to capture the moment, but they were too quick. Meanwhile, I was hooked. Vigilant. Excited. Hopeful. Passing by the window, eager for another encounter. Anyone there? What's up?

As we flip the calendar page to February—and feel the sun grow warmer and brighter—make time for wonder. The newsfeed and Facebook can wait. Who knows? An encounter might be in store for you out there on the feeder. Trust the movement out the kitchen window to wake you up. Trust the February light to spark your interest. Trust the sounds outdoors to pique your curiosity. Let yourself flood with gratitude, thrilled that you're alive.

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