

Spring 2005

As many of you know I decided to take an indefinite sabbatical from facilitating workshops and speaking at conferences as of September 2004. So how's the sabbatical going? Well, Jeff and I decided last fall to put a small addition on our house. This led to the discovery that we needed a new septic system. As carpenters, contractors, excavators, and electricians came and went daily for weeks I decided to paint all the rooms of the house- something I'd wanted to do since we moved here two years ago. All this while completing the rewrites on a new book, *What We Ache For*. Maybe a workaholic shouldn't try to take a sabbatical! It has been good to be home and I am not giving up on slowing down and creating more spacious stillness in my life. Although you can see by the attached calendar that I will be venturing forth and offering talks as part of a spring book tour, I will not be planning or facilitating workshops or retreats for the foreseeable future, as I wait to see what unfolds next in my life.

*What We Ache For* is about that aspect of life which consistently offers me a strange joy and deep contentment: creative work. It offers reflections on and practical ways to cultivate creative expression in your life. Human beings are by our essential nature co-creators of meaning. Creative expression is one of the ways we grapple with ideas and the struggles of daily life. We have within us a deep impulse- an ache- to find and point to the truth, to create beauty and connections from the details of our lives by making images, movements and music, poems and stories and songs. Our creativity, spirituality and sexuality are expressions of our individual soul, mirrors of the divine lived through a particular human life. *What We Ache For* is about doing our creative work without separating it from our experience of both the sacred and the sensual.

And it's about having fun while we are doing it. Doing creative work can bring us great joy even as it enables us to deepen our lives and live more fully awake. In a culture where spirituality and sexuality are often burdened by histories of dogma, division and a desperate need to be "right" it seems to me that creative expression offers us a way to quietly slip around our habitual ways of seeing and, if only for a moment, disengage from the ego's preoccupation with the past and worries for the future. When I write I never feel I should be doing something else. Ever. I am present. When I look at the suggestions for doing more and deeper creative work that I have offered in this new book - including the necessary and paradoxical combination of a focused intent and a willingness to surrender to the process itself- I see guidelines for living with joy. Strangely I often find it easier to follow these guidelines when I am doing creative work than when I am dealing with septic systems, answering emails or interacting with friends and family. Learning how to do creative work we are offered a template for allowing the soul to unfold, for becoming who we are and for offering something life-sustaining to this world.

I do hope you can come out to one of the events to hear some poetry, and share in some meditation, conversation and creative expression.

May you be faithful to the creative work that calls you,

Oriah