

# HUMAN KINDNESS FOUNDATION

A Little News

Christmas 1992

## PRACTICING THE PRESENCE OF GOD

*When Rabbi Yitzhak Meir was a little boy someone said to him: "Yitzhak, I'll give you a gulden if you tell me where God lives!" He replied:  
"And I'll give you two gulden if you tell me where he doesn't!"*

-- Ray Berry

Dear Family,

This is our first newsletter in almost two years; I've missed being with you in this way. I'd like to update you on what's been going on around here and hopefully clear up any remaining misunderstandings about this period of retreat I'm in.

First, I assure you, the Human Kindness Foundation and Prison-Ashram Project are going stronger than ever. We receive hundreds of letters each week from all over the world, and send out many thousands of books and tapes. *We're All Doing Time* is now in its fifth printing -- over 73,000 copies total. The family grows larger every day.

It's true that since 1990, I haven't been teaching, writing, or doing anything in the public eye. I'm taking some time to deepen my realization of God, in order to be of greater service.

I know that in our high-speed, high-tech infoculture, you're accustomed to being bombarded with mailings and updates and so forth. Then we come along just once a year, and have nothing more snazzy to report than that thousands more spiritual seekers have received our materials, and that I'm still deep in prayer. That may not make exciting reading, but it's real and it's honest, and we do love you very deeply. So instead of feeling abandoned by us or assuming we've quit or burned out, I hope you can dig *inward* to feel the strength and vitality of our bond with you, because it's rock-solid.

Donations and book sales have fallen off a lot, due to fewer newsletters and no marketing, but we receive enough small, loyal contributions to keep the project running (and we can always use more).

Please understand that this period of retreat is on God's timetable, not mine. I yearn to be speaking, writing, teaching again. But as a bow must be pulled back in order for the arrow to fly forward, so this Bo must be pulled back as well. I've experienced such major changes in the past two years, I trust this retreat even while I long to be "back in action." When the time is right, I will be.

### Practicing the Presence

My retreat hasn't involved very complicated disciplines. I've been praying and meditating, and as it says above, *practicing the presence of God*, which I'll describe so you can try it yourself if you'd like. What would you do, how do you think you'd behave, if you could see God or feel God with you right now -- literally, physically, right here? The Sacred One. The Holy. Right here, right now.

At the very least, you'd probably feel hushed, humbled and grateful, and every complaint would vanish from your mind. Your actions would probably be unselfish. If somebody offended you, you'd likely forgive them. Out of respect, you'd take good care of yourself. If you had to stand up against corruption or evil, you'd courageously do the right thing, because you'd see that God knows, and God guides you, even when things *seem* horrible, scary, or sad. God's sacred presence would bring you peace and comfort, even if you were dying of AIDS, or cancer, or being executed by the state.

Well, the scriptures of every religion, as well as the saints, tell us it's literally true -- that God is here with us at every moment. They also assure us that by Grace, each one of us can actually experience God directly; we can know God firsthand -- what I call *touching the Sacred*. We can experience what Neem Karoli Baba said: "*Everywhere I look, all I see is God. That's why I'm always honoring everything.*"

The actual experience may be a ways off for most of us, but we can *practice* this presence of God to develop an awareness and lifestyle more in keeping with how holy everything really is. Try it yourself and see the difference it makes in your life. Just remind yourself dozens or even hundreds of times throughout the day (in your own words), *God is here, right now. The Holy Father, the Divine Mother, the Messiah, is with me. Everything I think, do or say, is in the presence of a loving God. Nothing is unimportant, no one is meaningless, everything counts. I want to act accordingly.*



Step two is to recognize that the same is true for everyone else, whether they know it or not. Even at odds with another person, you remember God is here, watching and loving you both. So you respect the conflict without wasting energy rejecting it, like "this shouldn't be happening." God knows what is important for us to experience. God knows.

The presence of God can be practiced anywhere, anytime, because nothing is excluded. Look around you right now. You're on hallowed ground. God is here. Our spiritual journey is not to make anything more holy, but only to drop every barrier, every addiction, every bit of pettiness, gossip, greed, pride, and delusion, which blocks us from seeing how holy everything already is. Practicing the presence of God is a very appropriate thing to do.

### More Retreat Notes

I started out the year by spending January and February in silence -- no speaking, writing, reading, exercise, tv, music, eye contact, etc. Sita and I slept in separate rooms. I ate a bowl of rice soup in the morning, a bowl of rice & veggies in the evening, and nothing else. I didn't leave our property.

I was hoping for some great spiritual experiences, some great "presence of God." What I got was more like total *absence* of God -- a lot of long days and longer, humbling nights, doing my best to endure. But strangely, through such stark absence, something seems to have snuck in and deepened my faith considerably. Like the old poem, "I got nothing I asked for and everything I needed."

As time goes by, I see that even the decision to spend two months in silence was not my decision at all. It was an initiation, quite independent of what I thought was going on. We all do that a lot: Inner forces guide us toward something or other, and the ego-mind picks up the ball and runs with it, creating a whole scenario which usually has nothing to do with the actual event, it's just running parallel to it.

It's like being in the back of a car, and somebody up front is jabbering on and on about where we're going and what's happening. We assume this authoritative voice is coming from the driver, but then one day we notice that the person jabbering isn't the driver at all, and has nothing to do with where we're going or how we're getting there.

Ego is the voice that's jabbering, while God is the driver, quietly taking us where we need to go, at just the right speed and over just the right roads. We can use meditation to quiet the jabberer, so we can pay more attention to the real journey, instead of the distorted one the ego keeps describing. And we can use prayer to seek the faith in the real driver -- trusting that there is Goodness involved from start to finish, even when the road is rough.

### Summing Up For '92

We are all on The Path, and we're on it together. Sita and I love you all very much, we miss you, and hope that we're soon able to express our love more often and more directly.

Many of you have asked how our son is doing. Josh truly appreciates your love and blessings. He's twenty-one now, a spiritual seeker in Hollywood. Showbiz has been hit by the recession like everywhere else, so there hasn't been much work this year. But he's hanging in there waiting for his big break. In the three years since he left home, he's had some rough times and crises of faith, and he's reached inward through prayer, meditation, and study, to do the timeless work we all must do. He respects it all, knowing that nobody gets a free ride. He's found a lot of inner strength and compassion.

So, we're all doing fine (that's not a new book title!) and send you love and best wishes for every Holy Day. Try to trust whatever is going on in your lives, whatever passages you're moving through. There is a core of goodness, of God's love, even at the center of your greatest pain. Take the courage to trust that quiet core, instead of believing the noisy, panicked ego which shrieks, "*Something wrong is going on!*"

Nothing wrong is going on. That's the essence of spiritual faith: **Nothing wrong is going on.** From the smallest nuisance, to laying down our lives against tyranny or oppression, nothing wrong is going on. Life happens as it does to give us an opportunity to reach inward to discover our strength and Godliness. We *can* set aside the ego's fears and cravings; set aside its constant worry and discouragement. We *can* behave heroically, with humility, doing everything we do solely because we love God, and for no other reason. Imagine the relief!

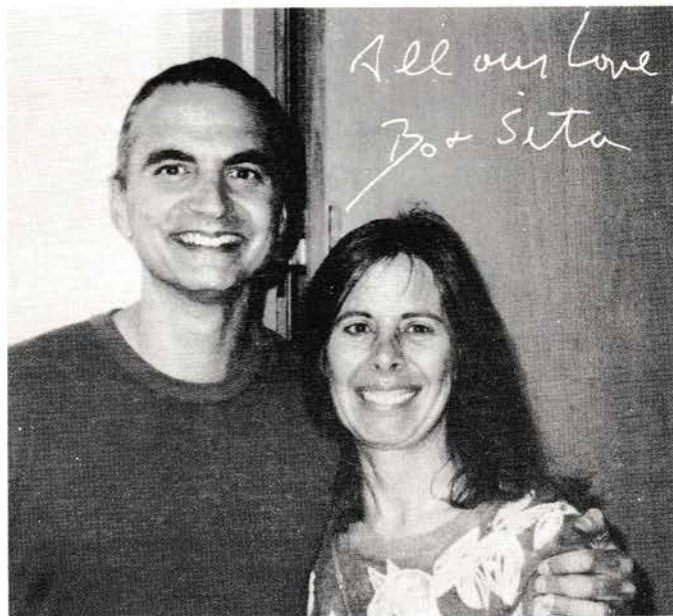


photo by Genevieve Grimmert



## OTHER NEWS & OFFERINGS

### • New Tape Available

On September 21st of this year, Bo was interviewed by his old friend Frank Sontag on KLOS radio in Los Angeles. Frank and his call-in listeners asked Bo questions about his two years in retreat, about faith and ego, and about keeping spiritual hope alive in modern times.

Because this is the only talk Bo has given in so long, KLOS has kindly allowed us to edit it into a 60-minute cassette for you.

The tape ("Bo Lozoff Radio Interview") is \$8 for those who can afford to pay, and free as usual for those who can't. [For prison regulations, it's a clear tape, no screws, and shrinkwrapped.] Prisoners, please be sure you have proper permission to receive it before you ask for a tape. We've wasted a lot of postage lately on refusals and rejections.

### • Serving Through Meditation

Learn meditation as a form of world service with the Meditation Group for the New Age. Bi-monthly booklets in English, Spanish, or Portuguese (no fee). Write:

MGNA  
BOX 566-PA  
OJAI CA 93024

### God Bless You, Dear Ann

Ann Wetherall, founder and director of the Prison Phoenix Trust and Prison-Ashram Project in England, died of cancer on the 27th of August.

Ann became involved with prisoners around 1986, and even came up with the name "Prison-Ashram Project" before she ever heard of us. When a friend gave her a copy of *We're All Doing Time*, she was astonished to find not only the book she could use in prisons, but a thriving Prison-Ashram Project to boot.

Ann immediately wrote and became our dear friend and co-worker, creating the project in the United Kingdom which has touched many people, and continues to grow and thrive.

Ann is a wonderful soul who has moved on into the next stage of this mysterious journey. Her life deeply touched many people, in and out of prison. Ann, we love you and miss you. God bless.

### • One More Language for WADT

*We're All Doing Time* is now being translated into Dutch. The work on *Iedereen Zit Vast* is being coordinated by Sally McCarter, a prison yoga teacher in Holland who has been working along with the Prison-Ashram Project for several years. Sally plans to adapt the illustrations and photos as well, in order to publish a Dutch edition which is as complete and "official" as our Spanish edition, *Todos Estamos Encarcelados*. We're very moved by Sally's enormous commitment of time and effort.

### • A Loved One Locked Up?

*Joint Venture* is seeking stories, poems, humor, essays, journal excerpts, and black & white artwork for an anthology by people who have had someone close to them incarcerated. First-time writers welcome. Please include information about yourself. Confidences kept. Write to:

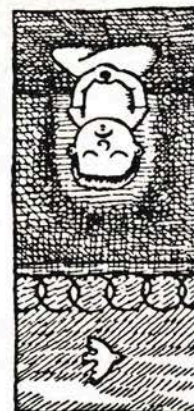
JOINT VENTURE  
BOX 7202  
SANTA CRUZ CA 95061  
(please include sase for return)

*Give up schemes and regulations about the spiritual life, and abandon yourself to the guidance of God, living from moment to moment in His presence and trying each moment to give Him all He wants.*

-- Daniel Considine (19th Century Jesuit monk)

The Human Kindness Foundation is non-profit & tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code. Donations and bequests are always welcomed and are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law. Materials are offered free to prisoners, prison workers, and others who can't afford to pay for them, and are for sale to the general public. Currently available are Bo's books, *WE'RE ALL DOING TIME* (\$10 U.S., same for the Spanish, *TODOS ESTAMOS ENCARCELADOS*), *JUST ANOTHER SPIRITUAL BOOK* (\$12 U.S.), and *LINEAGE AND OTHER STORIES* (\$7 U.S.); plus his folk/rock album of original songs, *STUMBLING TOWARD THE LIGHT* (tape or LP, \$8 U.S.); the audiotape sets of *WE'RE ALL DOING TIME* (seven tapes, \$30 U.S.) and *LINEAGE AND OTHER STORIES* (two tapes, \$15 U.S.); a 90-minute tape of talks and discussion (\$8 U.S.); a 60-minute radio interview (\$8 U.S.); and a 2-hour VHS video, *AN EVENING WITH BO LOZOFF* (\$30 U.S.). Please add \$2 postage per total order. All proceeds go to the Human Kindness Foundation, helping us to continue producing and distributing free copies for prisoners.





address correction requested

sponsor of the Prison-Ashram Project

route 1 box 201-n  
durham nc 27705

*Human Kindness Foundation*

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Durham, N.C.  
Permit No 205

*God is the ritual, God is the offering, God is he who makes  
the offering to the fire that is God. If a man sees God  
in every action, he will find God.*

-- Bhagavad Gita, circa 500 B.C.

*Take courage, and be of good cheer. I am with you always.*

-- Jesus, circa 33 A.D.

*Allah is The All Hearing, The All Seeing, and no audible thing is distant  
from His Hearing, and no visible thing is far from His Seeing, however  
fine it may be. He knows all the things that can be known; no grain in  
the earth or the heavens is distant from his knowledge.*

-- Al Ghazzali, 11th century

*Before his passing, my father instructed me in these words:*

*"My son, be sure to remember God is always with you!  
Do not ever allow your mind to digress from this awareness."*

-- Rabbi Baal Shem Tov, 18th century