

Human Kindness Foundation

a little good news

Christmas 2003

IMPATIENT LETTER FROM GOD

[Editor's Note:] The following letter was originally printed in A Little Good News back in 1989, and was included in Bo's third book, Just Another Spiritual Book. A few years ago, this piece found its way onto the internet and caused an international stampede of fans and detractors. Paul Harvey, one of the biggest names in radio, read it aloud twice on his show, and was inundated with calls, email and faxes. When Bo was finally identified as the author of this "anonymous" letter, they had a conversation on the phone. After a half-hour of discussion on spiritual matters, Paul Harvey said, "Well, it looks like you and I share the same basic belief: All steeples point in the same direction."

DATE: Eternity

FROM: GOD

TO: My Children on Earth

RE: Idiotic religious rivalries

My Dear Children (and believe me, that's all of you),

I consider myself a pretty patient Guy. I mean, look at the Grand Canyon. It took millions of years to get it right. And how about evolution? Boy, nothing is slower than designing that whole Darwinian thing to take place, cell by cell and gene by gene. I've even been patient through your fashions, civilizations, wars and schemes, and the countless ways you take Me for granted until you get yourselves into big trouble again and again.

But on this occasion of My Son's 1,989th birthday, I want to tell you about some things that are starting to tick me off.

First of all, your religious rivalries are driving Me up a wall. Enough already! Let's get one thing straight: These are your religions, not Mine. I'm the Whole Enchilada; I'm the Spirit beyond them all. Every single one of your religions claims there's only one of Me -- which, by the way, is absolutely true. But in the very next breath, each religion claims it's My favorite one. And each claims its bible was written personally by Me, and that all the other bibles are man-made. Oh, Me. How do I even begin to put a stop to such complicated nonsense?

Okay, listen up now: I'm your Father and Mother, and I don't play favorites among My Children. Also, I hate to break it to you, but I don't write. My longhand is awful, and I've always been more of a "doer" anyway. So all your books, including the bibles, were written by men and women. They were inspired, remarkable people, but they also made mistakes here and there. I made sure of that, so that you could never trust a written word more than your own living Heart. You see, one Human Being to Me -- even

a bum on the street -- is worth more than all the holy books in the world. That's just the kind of Guy I Am. My Spirit is not an historical thing, It's alive right here, right now, as fresh as your next breath.

Holy books and religious rites are sacred and powerful, but not more so than the least of You. They were only meant to steer you in the right direction, not to keep you arguing with each other, and certainly not to keep you from trusting your own personal connection with Me.

Which brings Me to My next point about your nonsense: You act like I need you and your religions to stick up for Me or "win souls" for My Sake. Please, don't do Me any favors. I can stand quite well on my own, thank you. I need you to defend Me like Mike Tyson needs Peewee Herman as a bodyguard.

And another thing: I don't get all worked up over money or politics, so stop dragging My name into your dramas. For example, I swear to Me that I never threatened Oral Roberts. I never told Rajneesh I preferred Rolls Royces. I never told Pat Robertson to run for president, and I've never ever had a conversation with Jim Bakker or Jerry Falwell! Of course, come Judgement Day, I certainly intend to....

The thing is, I want you to stop thinking of religion as some sort of loyalty pledge to Me. The true purpose of your religions is so that you can become more aware of Me, not the other way around. Believe Me, I know you already. I know what's in each of your hearts, and I love you with no strings attached. Lighten up and enjoy Me. That's what religion is for.

What you seem to forget is how mysterious I Am. You look at the petty little differences in your scriptures and say, "Well, if this is the Truth, then that can't be!" But instead of trying to figure out My Paradoxes and Subtleties -- which, by the way, you never will -- why not open your hearts to the simple common threads in every religion?

You know what I'm talking about: Love and respect everyone. Be kind. Even when life is scary or confusing, take courage and be of good cheer, for I Am always with

you. Learn how to be quiet, so you can hear My Still, Small Voice (I don't like to shout). Leave the world a better place by living your life with dignity and gracefulness, for you are My Own Child. Hold back nothing from life, for the parts of you that can die will surely die, and the parts that can't, won't. So don't worry, be happy.

Simple stuff. Why do you keep making it so complicated? It's like you're always looking for an excuse to be upset. And I'm very tired of being your main excuse. Do you think I care whether you call me Yahweh, Jehovah, Allah, Waken-tonka, Brahma, Father, Mother, or even The Void or Nirvana? Do you think I care which of My Special Children you feel closest to -- Jesus, Mary, Buddha, Krishna, Mohammed or any of the others? You can call Me and My Special Ones any name you choose, if only you would go about My business of loving one another as I love you. How can you keep forgetting something so simple?

I'm not telling you to abandon your religions. I want you to enjoy your religions, honor them, learn from them, just as you should enjoy, honor, and learn from your parents. But do you walk around telling everyone that your parents are better than theirs? Your religion, like your parents, may always have the most special place in your heart; I don't mind that at all. And I don't want you to combine all the Great Traditions into One Big Mess. Each religion is unique for a reason. Each has a unique style so that people can find the best path for themselves. But My Special Children -- the ones your religions revolve around -- all live in one place (My Heart) and they get along perfectly, I assure you. The clergy must stop creating a myth of sibling rivalry where there is none.

My Blessed Children of Earth, the world has grown too small for your pervasive religious bigotries and confusion. The whole planet is connected by air travel, satellite dishes, telephones, fax machines, rock concerts, diseases, and mutual needs and concerns. Get with the program! If you really want to help Me celebrate the birthday of My Son Jesus, then commit yourselves to figuring out how to feed your hungry, clothe your naked, protect your abused, and shelter your poor. And just as importantly, make your own everyday life a shining example of kindness and good humor. I've given you all the resources you need, if only you abandon your fear of each other and begin living, loving, and laughing together.

Now I want to say a special Word to My Children in prisons and jails: Although you are locked away from your families and friends, you too have a responsibility to help make the world a better place. As terrible as most prisons are, your behavior toward each other is just as terrible. Even those of you who "do your own time" look the other way when a Brother or Sister gets ripped off, raped or even killed. This allegiance to your "Convict Code" allows the tone of prison life to be set by a small minority of the most brutal convicts in the institution.

It will take some time to change. But slowly and carefully, the great majority of decent inmates must begin talking and banding together across your idiotic racial and ethnic divisions, to make it clear to the violent minority that you will no longer allow your prison home to be a place of barbaric cruelty.

You must develop a new "Convict Code" based on respect, tolerance, and mutual support -- where a con can trust that cons watch out for each other and allow each other to live in peace and self-dignity; where if a gang of ten threatens you, you can count on a hundred -- of all races and creeds -- to stand with you and say "That kind of stuff just doesn't fly here anymore." I know this isn't an easy task, and most of you just want to get out of prison alive. But even outside the prison walls, millions of My Children all over the world daily risk their security and even their lives in non-violent efforts to make a change for the better. Being in prison doesn't exempt you from standing up for what's right. And remember, I do help those who help themselves. I promise you My Support.

Finally, My Children everywhere, remember whose birth is honored on December 25th, and the fearlessness with which He chose to live and die. As I love Him, so do I love each one of you. I'm not really ticked off, I just wanted to grab your attention because I hate to see you suffer. But I gave you Free Will, so what can I do now other than to try to influence you through reason, persuasion, and a little old-fashioned guilt and manipulation? After all, I Am the original Jewish Mother. I just want you to be happy, and I'll sit in The Dark. I really Am, indeed, I swear, with you always. Always. Trust In Me.

Your One and Only, **GOD**

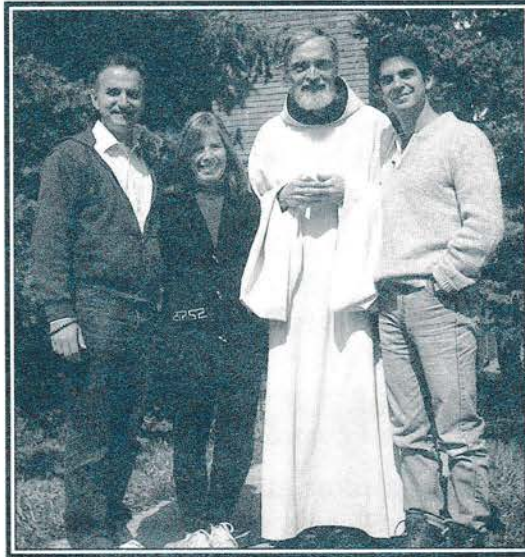


Envelope Art by Andres Mares, Texas

ANOTHER FRIEND PASSES OVER

written by Bo Lozoff

Father Theophane, a beloved friend, a true eccentric and lifelong spiritual seeker, passed into the next realm on October 6th, at the age of seventy-four. He had been a monk in the Order of St. Benedict for fifty-three years. Born Harold James Boyd on May 20, 1929, Theophane entered the monastic life in 1950 at St. Joseph's Abbey in Spencer, Mass. He came to St. Benedict's Monastery in Old Snowmass, Colorado, in 1984 on a temporary loan, but stayed on until his death. He served as retreat director, confessor, cantor and manager of the bookstore.



Bo, Sita, Fr. Theophane & Josh

Father Theophane's only book, *Tales of a Magic Monastery*, found its way into our hands many years ago, and quickly became a family favorite. Many of his stories are only one page, or even one paragraph, but pack a big punch and leave us with images we can enjoy and work with for a lifetime. I remember the first time Josh, Sita and I went to the monastery in Colorado to meet Theophane. We immediately told him how much we loved *Magic Monastery*, and in his usual dry style, he said, "Then it must be quite a thrill for you to meet me."

At a time in the Catholic church when the Pope was calling Buddhism a "negative religion," Father Theophane was among the monks and nuns who studied Buddhism and especially Buddhist meditation techniques, refusing to get caught up in church politics. He integrated those techniques into his own personal practice to deepen his relationship with Christ.

Speaking on the phone with Theophane was always a fascinating experience. After thirty or forty minutes of wide-ranging conversation, suddenly without any further words or any social graces, you would hear him say softly, "Well, that's it," and the next moment you're listening to a dialtone.

Father Theophane decided early in life to dedicate himself to the spiritual search by becoming a monk, and never went back on that decision. Through countless political upheavals and social struggles, through profound changes in his own religious tradition and in the dynamics

of religions throughout the world, he stuck with his birth-tradition and pursued the One Truth behind all differences. I am grateful to have been one of his many friends, and grateful to have spent some memorable times with him, including sitting in his small room holding a tape recorder so he could read *Tales of a Magic Monastery* onto cassette tape for Human Kindness Foundation to produce. I had read the book onto tape myself and brought it for his approval. But after listening he said, "Nah, I don't like it; it sounds like you're reading, not *telling* the stories. I guess I'll have to do it myself." I'm glad he did. Below are a couple of Christmas stories from his book.

Editor's note: We are not the publishers of Father Theophane's book, so while we do sell the book, we are unable to send free copies. We are, however, able to send free copies of the audiotape to inmates (it's \$8 to others). That's why he read it onto tape for us. This is his gift to our prison work.

CHRISTMAS AT THE MONASTERY

For Christmas, why don't you go to the Magic Monastery?

They have a brother there who was one of the shepherds who first greeted the Christ Child. Of course this brother is very old now, but when you hear him play his flute, you will become very young. (Be careful. You may do something silly.)

The three Wise Men are there also. Each Christmas one of them will give the sermon. Listen very carefully. You may have difficulty with his language, but that is because he is so wise and you are so foolish. I thought he was superficial, talking about incense on Christmas. It was only later that I realized he had been talking about the REAL incense, and now I can smell that wherever I go. Perhaps when you go there he will be speaking about the real gold, or the real myrrh.

And then there are the angels. You'll hear them singing. What shall I say? It's God's music. It gets into your bones. Nothing is the same afterwards.

*But all this is nothing. What really matters is when the Word becomes flesh. Wait till you experience that.**

David's Flute

I went there as a child. There was an old monk sitting under a tree playing a flute. I was fascinated. When he stopped playing, I said, "That sounds like Christmas. Could you tell me a Christmas story?"

"Aha!"—he laughed. "Christmas? I was there. I was there, my boy. Sit down. Sit down. The others are tired of hearing my story.

"You see, it was like this: I had two flutes in those days. One I would play during the day, the other at night. The one I played during the day was your ordinary type of flute. The one I played at night was special. It could not be heard by human ears—that way the other shepherds could get their sleep. But ah, the angels could hear it. Yes, the angels heard it, and they would come whenever I played. They would turn out in great numbers. I had quite a few friends among the angels, my boy. Do you have a few angel friends?

"Well look, one night when I finished playing, all the angels slipped away—except one. He came close. There was a secret in his eyes. He bent over and whispered into my ear. The Big Secret! My boy, the Big Secret!

"The next evening I persuaded the other shepherds to come with me. I just told them a child had been born. Everyone loves a child. When we got there, they went right in to admire the child and congratulate the parents. But I—I just fell flat on my face. What else could I do? Finally the father pulled me to my feet. 'I see you have two flutes,' he said. 'Would you play for the child?'

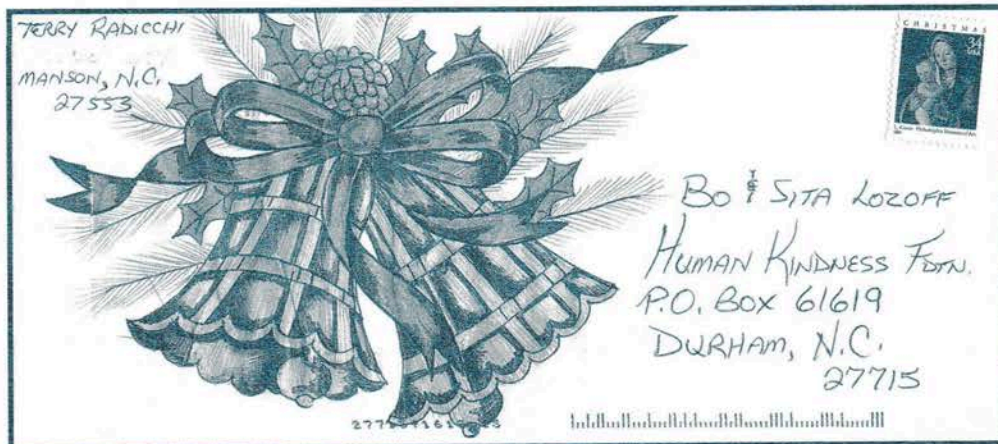
"Ah, no,' I answered, 'neither of these will do. This one is just for humans, and this one is just for angels.'

"The father laughed. 'I see,' he said. 'Well, I am a carpenter, and my father was too. But one of our ancestors was, like you, a shepherd. He used to play the flute. But then, after they made him king, why he felt he really shouldn't play that flute anymore. He just stored it away. They found it when he died. It has been handed down from father to son, these many generations. They say it's for the good shepherd. I've never let anyone play it, but tonight I'm so happy. Here—take it. Play it—please.'

"I played. My boy, the angels sure heard it that night. And the stars too. That was my great hour. I called out all the angels, and all the stars."

"Well, that carpenter let me keep the flute. This is it. I'm getting old now. I'd like to pass it on. But who wants it? They all prefer words! Imagine—they think they can announce the Big Secret with words!"

-- stories from "Tales of a Magic Monastery," by Theophane the Monk



Envelope Art by Terry Radicchi, North Carolina

LETTERS

Friends and Family,

I have decided to write to you today because I have been attempting and succeeding, for the most part, at applying the Divine Truth into all the aspects of my life. Unfortunately, my writing is being completed right now in an unbearable fashion. My stomach is in knots. My body is perspiring. And a great sense of fear exists at this moment. I feel, however, that I must continue.

Let me begin by saying that I am realizing my behavior and thoughts changing. Some of the inmates here who I speak with through the bars of our cells are more so concerned than afraid that if I take this new attitude that I now have with me out into a yard when I am reclassified to a lower custody, for we are all locked down 24 hours a day, then I will find myself being hated and possibly physically hurt and humiliated by the general population.

This conversation came about when I started talking with them about how I no longer valued my prejudice. I told them how prejudice only created hatred and fear in my life. And how I would now attempt to talk to a child-molester or anyone else who has been labeled by the inmates prison codes as beneath their dignity and without any hope for their salvation and try to help them. They were initially startled and repulsed by my remark.

I also realize that the only thing holding me back from being completely one with God is my fear of losing my life and being humiliated in the process. I also see how much my ego has led me to the position I now entertain. It's actually making me physically sick to even talk about it. The longer I write this, the longer I have to endure this pain. I never realized until this moment how much power my ego had over my divine nature. It's pretty sorry if you ask me. What a delusion I've been living all my life.

But I know that if I'm to overcome this and in a sense, tame my ego, then sooner or later I'm going to have to face, and I mean really face, this unbearable fear. I don't think that I'm doing that right now. I am kind've like a child, who is afraid of the dark and the boogey man in the closet and has his blanket over his head,

and every now and then peeks an eye out to see if everything is okay.

I am going to have to sacrifice myself for the greater good of all. And I don't know if I'm capable of this ultimate sacrifice. The giving up of "self." My selfishness still overpowers my better and divine nature. Oh how closely fear and selfishness are related.

I guess the best that I can do is to ask God for the courage and strength to fulfil my heart's longing to be at peace with the world.

Any advice regarding this seemingly frightening situation would be a most gracious blessing. Because my ego doesn't seem to want to tell me.

Love, A

Dear A,

I respect the struggle you're having in turning your life over to God and moving beyond ego's fears and limitations. That is definitely the work we all need to do at some point. However, I have some good news for you: God moves us along that process at His own speed, not our mind's agitated concepts about how to do it. Your ego itself is making "a project" out of this instead of allowing you to move along in a natural way in a process.

Let me give you an example: If or when you get out to the yard, you don't need to go find child molesters or other low-rung inmates in order to prove your lack of prejudice. You don't really need to DO anything, A. You simply need to be UNprejudiced now whenever a situation naturally arises that puts you in front of a child molester. Do you understand what I'm saying? God may put you in such a situation immediately, or He may keep you away from such situations for months or years. Leave it up to God. You just be ready to be the person you want to be as God places you in your life's natural situations and struggles. Don't allow the ego to take God's place and create false struggles for you.

A big part of the spiritual journey is to peacefully receive what God hands you from moment to moment, and to respond in a way that helps instead of hurts. Too many people get too busy and unpeaceful to receive what God is sending. Their own minds are creating

constant agitation about being "good." The most genuine way to be "good" is simply not to be bad. As each situation presents itself, respond from your unselfish spiritual nature, that's all. Avoid the inclination to lie, to scam, to manipulate, to be fearful. This approach could be called following your life instead of leading it with some sort of hokey campaign to "be good." Be careful of how clever the ego can be in taking over your spiritual transformation.

If you work with this approach, your stomach doesn't have to be in knots right now, because you don't have to be making all sorts of plans for how you're going to put your life in danger by wearing your spirituality like some sort of badge as soon as you get out in population. Sometimes, maybe just a few times in our life, God may put our lives in danger because it is necessary for our spiritual growth. Most of the time, God gives us a much more gradual, humble training process with small-scale conflicts and battles that increase our strength and compassion and wisdom. God wants our hearts to be innocent, but He also advised us to be as sly as a fox in order not to create unnecessary troubles for ourselves. So my advice is to turn even more of this adventure over to God, and stop taking for granted that you've got to walk out there and announce you're a weirdo spiritual freak who loves everybody. Stay calm, patient, keenly aware. Just don't betray your new values, that's all you need to do. You don't have to paste a bullseye onto your butt and hand out bows and arrows to the population, brother.

Love, Bo



Dear Bo,

I have just finished "Just Another Spiritual Book" for the third time. It amazed me that yet another of your books could have the impact on me that "We're All Doing Time" had.

You beautifully illustrated a dilemma all people face: doing what is 'right' instead of what 'feels good.' This is a struggle for all of us and I have made many mistakes in my few years on Earth.

I have written a few times, and the letters back from H.K.F. have helped me a

great deal. You know the path and journey better than I do. I never feel afraid or ashamed about writing you.

I want to explain a situation that has developed for me over the last few days, and ask for some guidance. I know you don't have any easy answers, but I hope you can either validate my opening awareness, or steer me towards the higher path.

Over the last few weeks I have sent my mother over 100 drawings I did in the last year. She asked to see all my art work (minus anything inappropriate.) I removed the naked women I had drawn for the men in here, and sent the rest. We have been fighting ever since! It culminated in an angry, arrogant, and belligerent letter I received last Friday.

The crux of the matter is one of miscommunication and differences of interpretation. Over the past year I have drawn designs out of tattoo magazines that captured my attention. I love art, and tattoos, but to me it was only art. Many of the pictures I sent Mom she saw all kinds of references to my crime.

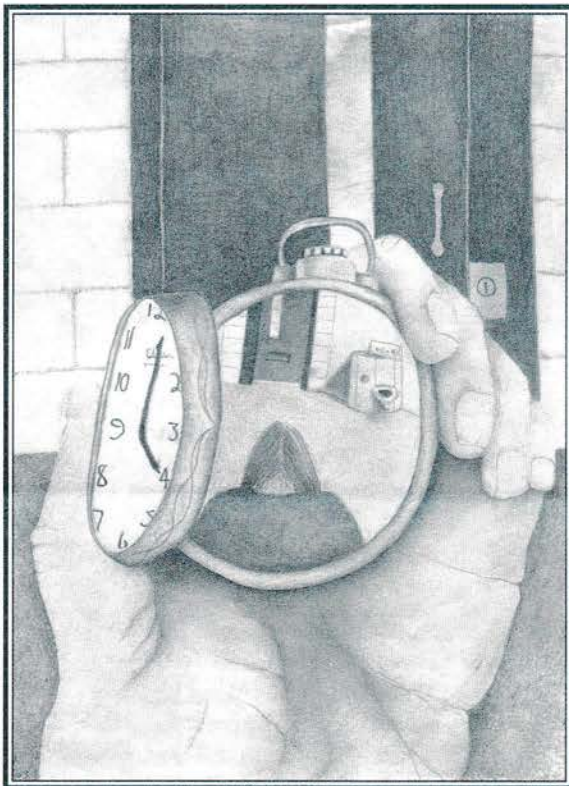
Because of the very personal nature of my crime, Mother thought I was harassing her and taunting her with Anne's murder (my sister.) Nothing could be further from the truth. I want only to bring some healing into my mom's life, NOT more pain. I am so deeply ashamed at the pain and havoc I caused, I do not revel in it.

I seem totally unable to convince my mother that my mistake was honest, my artwork a gift, and my intentions benevolent. She is so caught up in the preconception of me as a lying, manipulative, murderer, that she seems to twist everything I do to fit that mold.

As you might imagine, my first (second, third,...) reaction to her letter was indignation, anger, and fear (she threatened to cut off all visits, calls, money, etc...) But over the last several days of meditation, prayer, journaling, etc...I have come to a much deeper understanding. I am more able to see what preconceptions and expectations she has of me and how they distort her vision. Instead of anger I feel a deep pain and sorrow. I do not feel a need to forgive her, but rather feel a deep compassion for her.

I can't tell you what a fundamental change this is in my way of thinking and feeling. I feel like I broke through some terrible walls and see a brand new day.

Yet I still have this very "earthly" problem and spiritual dilemma. What is "right"? I want to help my mother see me, and my actions, in truth. I love her so much. I am afraid that I will lose her just because of my social and emotional shortcomings. I don't always (maybe ever) know what to do to help her. I want to learn but I have a very hard time seeing things from her perspective.



Artwork by Larry A. Pierce, Leavenworth, Kansas

How do I help her? How do I salvage this situation? Is it best to just accept all the blame she can dump on me? I have apologized for causing her pain and tried to explain that it was an honest mistake but she maintains that I am not capable of making mistakes of this magnitude. What a lofty view she has of her son!

I feel it is right to try and get her past her "baggage" about me - but I fear I will destroy our relationship and accomplish nothing! Please advise me if you can.

B

Dear B,

I'm glad you said you know that I would have no easy answers, because you're right. This problem between you and your mother is not just the artwork; that artwork is just the little sharp pin that reopened the deep wound between you from all that has happened. The blood and pus is all coming out again, and there's not much that the pin can do to close it back up.

The best thing for you to do is see it clearly. Before you ever sent that artwork to your mom, she's always feeling torn between love for her son and hatred toward her daughter's killer. You can understand with great compassion how difficult it must be for your mother to deal with this. Considering this, you should never again be angry with her for anything under any circumstances. She is in a terrible, instinctive conflict in her soul. Let go of the idea of arguing against her. Your actions put her in this struggle, so you should be one person who is *always* sympathetic to that struggle.

That means you should also be super-sensitive before you send her artwork, to avoid any further "pin-pricks" that could arise from those images, whether you intended them or not. Your intention means nothing; it's her interpretation you need to consider. You owe her that sensitivity forever.

I hope you can iron things out with her, because she does love you and needs you as you love and need her. It would be terrible for her to lose her son as well as her daughter. I would encourage you to apologize with no qualifications, no excuses, and to say that you promise to look far more deeply at the images you draw and what they might convey. You can say once again that you swear you did not knowingly mean anything cruel, but that you understand her reaction and feel terrible about it. Let her "win" this battle, then be much more sympathetic and sensitive in the future. Tell her you appreciate the dilemma you have put her in, and that you are so grateful she has not cut you off entirely.

I am happy to have your friendship and so glad our books are helping you in this tough journey, little brother. You've got some powerful opportunities here to learn more humility and kindness, and we send you every blessing to do that.

Love, Bo

NEWS, NOTES, AND OFFERINGS

PARTNERS WITH GOD

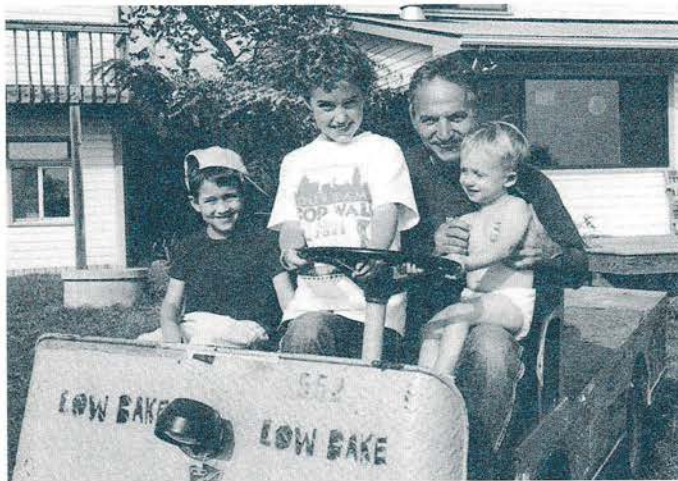
Bo & Sita Lozoff were recently honored at the graduation ceremony of One Spirit Interfaith Seminary in New York. The seminary bestowed upon them its first annual "Partner With God" award for the Lozoff's lifelong example of faith-based service, mercy and compassion. Bo & Sita recently celebrated their thirty-seventh wedding anniversary.

EX-CONS MEET WITH THE DALAI LAMA

In conjunction with many Buddhist groups throughout the country, the Richard Gere Foundation sponsored an historic meeting between twenty former prisoners and His Holiness the Dalai Lama on September 17th in New York City. Two of our staff, Kevin Dessert and Carl Hoornaert, were among the twenty former inmates invited to discuss their prison experiences and personal transformation with His Holiness, as well as discussing the most pressing needs of prisoners seeking to use their time productively. The meeting was videotaped and plans are underway for a book and video to be produced from those tapes.

OUR "10-20-30" CELEBRATION IN '04

As we mentioned in our last newsletter, we have three anniversaries coming up: The 30th anniversary of the Prison-Ashram Project, the 20th anniversary of the publication of *We're All Doing Time*, and the 10th anniversary of our community, Kindness House. We will host a celebration here the first weekend of June. We'll offer dormitory and outdoor accommodations to as many as we can fit, and help direct others to nearby motels, campgrounds, etc. We look forward to people from around the world joining us for a weekend of friendship and fun.



Bo and friends

As usual, there will be no fees or costs associated with this weekend event. Food, lodging, entertainment (the legendary Bo Lozoff Rock & Blues Band!!) will be free to all. If you would like to donate toward the costs of the celebration, or to our travel fund, to help recently-released prisoners or others to get here, please make a note to that effect when you send a contribution. If you would like to reserve space for yourself, write us soon, specifying indoors or outdoors.

KARMA BOOK STILL AVAILABLE TO PRISONERS

Larson Publications has funding to send out more free Karma books. The book *What Is Karma?* by Paul Brunton, is being offered free to prisoners in the US and Canada. The book is a positive view of karma: What karma is, how it works, its relation to forgiveness and freedom, and how to get it working for you. (Please check your regulations to make sure you can receive the book. Also, be sure to tell them about any special requirements, and include your ID#.) Write:

Larson Publications, Dept K
4936 Route 414
Burdett, NY 14818

100-DAY NOBLE SILENCE PROGRAM

Free Dharma instructions (meditation, Buddhist spirituality) are available for anyone in or out of prison, and to institutions anywhere in the USA or Canada. This is NOT a book, but rather instructions. For more information write: (Please send a SASE if possible.)

Dharma Instructions, NFPP
23611 NE SR26
Melrose, FL 32666

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please check out
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a little good news

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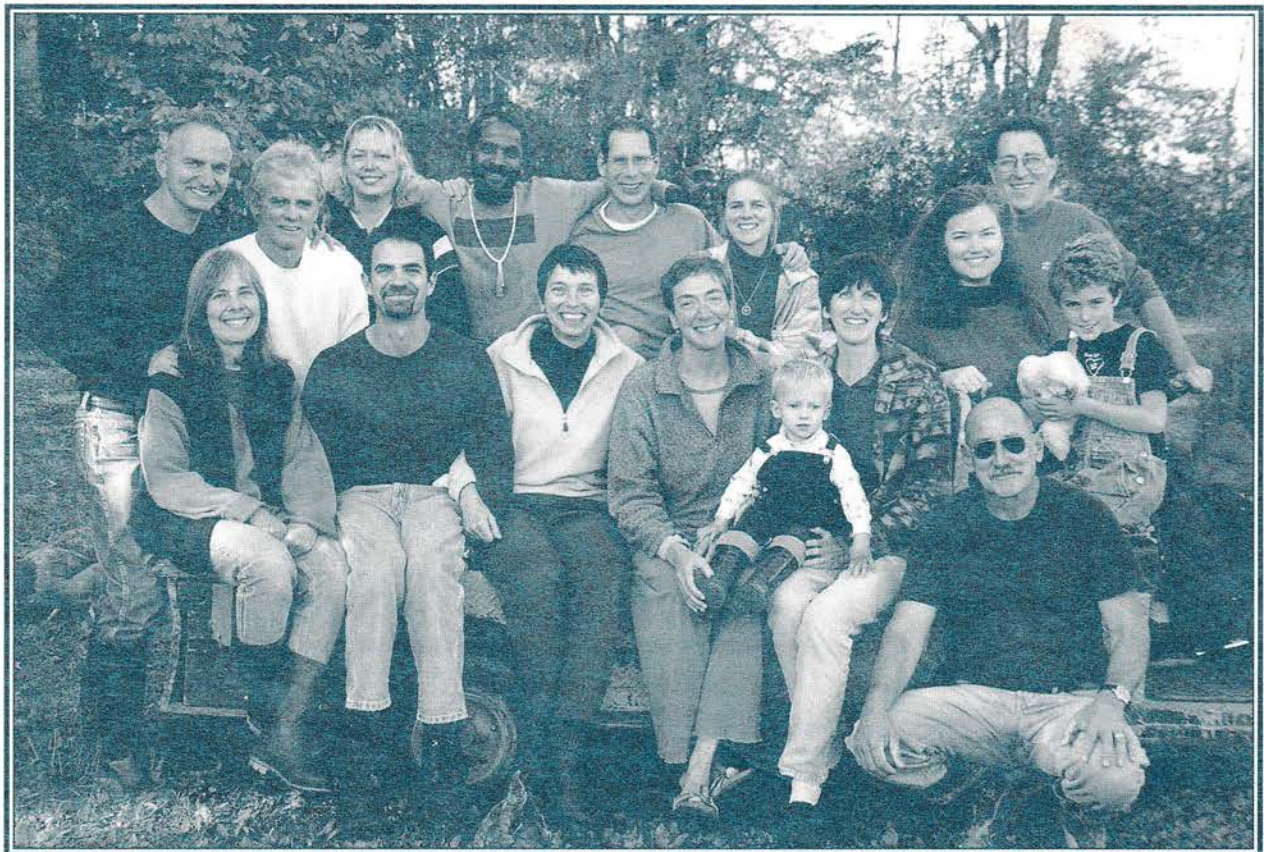
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