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- *Balance and its many applications*

God, who is the Creator of all, is a part of your lives, regardless of the directions that your paths often lead, for life is in many ways a balancing act. You speak of health as a matter of balance, but the sense of balance is so much more central to human life than issues of physical health and well-being. It is about balance that we wish to direct your prayerful thought.

When we speak about balance, we really refer to your capacity to accommodate, for balance is not a way of weighing what's good and what's bad and trying to find equal measure of both. The balance that is so important to each of you is the balance that is achieved by your capacity to understand and to bring into your life experiences all that does happen. The individual who seems to suffer in far greater measure than others may actually have a life whose balance is profound and thorough. Another individual who seems to have an equal amount of challenges and successes, however defined, may in truth be experiencing a life that is contrary to the meaning of balance. Don't make the mistake of equating good and evil, but rather consider the fact that all paths are different from others, and yet what is truly sought after is the strength to work beneficially with whatever twists and turns the path may pull a life.

Each of you has much to be grateful for, and each of you has your share of events and relationships, of responsibilities that have brought pain, loss, sorrow. You cannot compare your lives with anyone else's and say that because of what you experience and what another experiences that one of you seems to live a "charmed life" while another suffers unduly. Suffering is often long-lasting, but it is not permanent. Your capacity to endure and to find God is a capacity that each of you has control of to a greater or lesser degree. That balance that we all seek, both humans and spiritual, is a balance of acceptance because of a recognition that all remains within the view of God.

Your connection to God is the very source of the balance that is sought after. As your ability to feel God's presence in all that you experience improves and becomes more frequent, your lives will actually become more balanced. The pain can endure, but the sense of endless suffering is dissipated. All life experiences pain, for it is pain that helps to distinguish human from spirit life. We are fully aware of the distances that exist between us and the perfection of love that is God, but there is no deep pain, whether physical or emotional. We are free of that experience, but that experience itself is very much a component of human life.

Much has been said recently about the suffering of many in one country or another, and that suffering is real. It is painful. It is agonizing in the slowness of the world's response, but such pain is not endless. The balance that is needed can be said

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in part to be a balance based on faith. It is not specifically a faith in God but a faith that somehow the suffering is not permanent, however painful it may be.

You know the expression “a sad heart does not lead to a happy life.” Negative thoughts do not lead to a positive life, but you cannot ignore what creates pain and loss. That is not what we are suggesting, for when pain and loss are experienced, they must be acknowledged. They must be taken in, experienced, dealt with, consumed, and you will ultimately be nourished by them.

You are not expected to have lives whose answers are constant and complete. Your lives, by the very nature of being human, are going to be punctuated more often than not by questions: “What does this mean? What does that mean? Why must I go through this? Why must someone else go through that?”

There are so many questions that arise in a human experience that actually bring into question the reality of God. “If God is all-powerful, why is ‘something’ allowed the freedom to happen? If God is benevolent, why isn’t life filled only with what is good?” These questions have been considered for many generations, and there are many answers that are provided, but the answer that we see to be the most valid is that you are given in those trials the opportunity for balance. You are given an opportunity to find somehow the presence of a loving reality that is God. Your lives will never be pain-free, for if they were, there would be no opportunity for balance to be achieved.

There is balance in personal life, balance in corporate life, balance in international relationships. That balance never implies dominance, for when there is dominance, there is no balance. But where there is unevenness, there can be balance, for again, balance can be seen as a strength to accommodate, to take in, to grow from, to strengthen.

When you pray for balance, you often pray that all will be perfect. One prays for peace with an expectation that real peace will be observed. Peace is a process; it is never a product. One works toward peace if peace is also defined as an accommodation. Peace is not perfection. Peace is not simply the absence of strife. Peace really is the accumulation of energy that allows for a give-and-take, that allows for an ability to endure.

Peace is, of course, about human dignity, but peace often exists, real peace, in the absence of an equality of human dignity being affirmed. You can have balance even in war time, or you can have imbalance when all is peaceful. The peace is part of the *who* that was referred to earlier. The peace is the *who*; it is not only the *what*. When you achieve balance, you achieve an ability to deal with the varieties of how peace is accommodated.

Much of what you learn in human life is really devoted to a kind of balance, an ability to see several sides of an argument, not acknowledging that one side must

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prevail but rather acknowledging that all sides have a piece of what is needed for accommodation. That is balance.

When there is balance in a relationship, it is not an equality of power. It is an equality of love. Power is not the issue. In the Middle East, there is certainly no balance in power, but there can and will be a balance defined as the ability of each party to accommodate, to respect, not necessarily to agree but to respect the validity of other viewpoints. Accommodating does not mean giving up one's own position. Rather, accommodating implies a coming together of many perspectives, of finding a kind of common ground upon which to build even stronger relationships.

As you proceed on your pathway, think not that your road is easier or more difficult than someone else's. Avoid making any comparisons. Avoid comparing the validity of one person's behavior vis-à-vis another's. Rather than be consumed by judgment, seek ways to find yourself consumed by a sense of common purpose, by a sense that you're all part of the creation. You all have a place at the table. You may have different forms of nourishment, but you all deserve to share the feast. That feast is the balance, for in sharing that feast, you allow all to carve out their own means of sustenance and value, priorities. In allowing those various expressions to flourish, you are creating the balance of which we speak.

We love you all, not because of what you do in your lives, but in your efforts to find common ground, to find a shared experience that helps to see the unity of all creation. You are blessed in your search, the search for balance. You are blessed in your agony and your ecstasy. You are blessed when you try to become who you are, and you are blessed when you see yourselves failing to become who you really are.

Allow yourselves to define the balance that is needed in ways that are specifically helpful to each, and in so doing, you will experience more fully the presence of the grand Creator.

Amen.