Spirituality
Soul Seeing



(Unsplash/Zhyar Ibrahim)

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"As far back as I can remember, I always wanted to be a gangster."

That's Ray Liotta in "Goodfellas." As far back as this good fella can remember, I always wanted to be a priest, centerfielder for the Cubs and a movie star.

I wanted to be a priest like Fr. Jack Gorman. who had a great jump shot and was loved by all the kids at St. Andrew's parish; a centerfielder like Bob Talbot who made spectacular catches in his "one wild and precious" Crow-Armstrong summer of '54; and a movie star like Marlon Brando, who followed his conscience and got Eva Marie Saint in "On the Waterfront."

I did become a priest for three years, then changed my mind and got married for 54 more. I got to be centerfielder for the Cubs, too, for one life-changing afternoon. But I've been a movie star all my life. Haven't we all?

Aren't we each the star of the movie we call our life? You are the star of your movie, and I am a supporting actor in it. I am the star of my movie, and you are a supporting actor in mine. As stars, we cast ourselves in the role of hero or victim. Our supporting actors play friends, villains or colorful characters who spice it up. We project our movies on a little screen in the back of our foreheads that face our brains. That is the world we see. We call that screen human consciousness.

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The thing is, those movies are no more real than the ones that come from Hollywood. We're not the characters we seem to be, or would like to be, or hate being. We pretend they are real because life outside the theater of our mind is hard and often impossible to understand. Just as artists employ cinema to make sense of existence or to distract us from the pain of being human, we interpret everything we see as a scene in our own personal drama or comedy. We are the writers and directors of our movies, as well as its stars.

But trouble comes when we think our movie is the truth of our lives; suffering begins when we identify with the character we are making up as we go along. In the movie

"Purple Rose of Cairo," the character played by Jeff Daniels walks off the screen because he wants to experience reality. We walk into the screen to escape reality, to get away — at least for a while — from a world that doesn't make us happy. But our movie can morph from black and white Kansas to technicolor Oz and back again in an instant, just as our dreams can turn into nightmares while we are asleep.

We're all asleep in the balcony of our minds, and like the Everly Brothers' "Little Susie" we need to wake up and get back home. Home is divine consciousness, where "we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). To wake up, we have to give up the ghost and let God remove the reel from the projector so that God's pure light can illuminate the screen. When that happens, everything comes alive. We are no longer imposing a story on it. We are letting God reveal what is Real. We call that Christ consciousness, and we can't project it. It comes to us unscripted and unrehearsed when we least expect it. It is not a movie anymore, but pure awareness. It is soul seeing. It lasts only a moment but can bring us back home.

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It happened to me the other day as I was sitting on a park bench, feeling sorry for myself. A relationship I felt I needed in my life to be happy had come to an end. We had both decided it was time to move on but for days all I could see was the scene of our parting on that little screen behind my forehead. I couldn't change the reel. The movie got to be too painful, so that day I finally just gave up and asked God to see for me.

My attention turned to a park bench about 20 yards to my left. A young caregiver sat cross-legged on the pavement, rubbing lotion on the legs of an old woman who sat on the bench. I saw love, kindness, caring and compassion. God had given me a glimpse behind the curtain to what was really there.

I was out of the movie.

I got up and walked to the other bench. The young woman looked up and I said, "I couldn't help watching. You're a wonderful caregiver." She shrugged her shoulders to indicate she didn't speak English, and took out her phone and typed something. It was a translator. She showed me the screen. It read, "My lady is going to be 98 years old tomorrow. It's her birthday."

I touched the woman's hand. "Happy Birthday!" I said. "Thank you for being here."

We may each be the star of our own little independent movie, but it's easy to imagine that all of us are supporting each other in one great big Movie in the Mind of God, where everything is happening all at once. In fact, if the mystics and quantum physicists are right when they say there is no such thing as time, we're all just watching a Movie that has already happened! It's a Story God tells on an endless Imax screen that spans all time and space, from the Big Bang to dinosaurs to the Star Child. Our free will is how we respond to each scene.

"And ... oh, Auntie Em, there's no place like home!"