

In these months of sheltering-in-place, most of us, oddly enough, have had to do a great deal of navigating. Not typical navigation – over moor and mountain. But deep navigation – reaching inside, sometimes almost in desperation, seeking our center, looking deep within for guidance and strength in the midst of so much outward uncertainty and threat.

Prolonged adversity and anxiety wear us down. These months have been exhausting.

And yet, I also wonder if there has been a gestation of sorts going on in many of us – it has been a full nine months! ----- I wonder what gift or gifts might be a-borning, that each of us might bring forth -- out of these very days...

I think of the magi carrying their gifts as they traveled. Are there gifts that have emerged in us while navigating this difficult year? Things that we will carry forward, that will become part of who we are to others? On the personal level, they might be much smaller than we think they have to be, to be valuable – and yet be just the right size. I hear the magi brought gold, frankincense and myrrh. But that's only one kind of gift. Some of the most valuable gifts are invisible.

I have felt that this time for me has been a little like a rock tumbler, with me being the rough rock that's been getting tumbled. I have a lot of rough edges. To get a beautiful tumbled stone, a gemologist adds grit in different degrees of coarseness to the tumbler barrel over many days, so that the rock, as it tumbles around and around, gradually becomes smoothed. Have these months felt at all like that for you? I don't say I'm coming out smooth, but a few of my hard edges have been rubbed down -- a little more gentleness might be emerging.

What are some gifts that you might be carrying forward out of these months? I live alone, so I've had one set of challenges. For folks in a close family, it's another set. Essential workers. People with two jobs – no job. Each of us has had a very personal set of circumstances to navigate this year.

What might be emerging in you? Could it be a new or renewed appreciation of small things; a changed relationship to your body? A new understanding of someone -- maybe yourself? A new appreciation of your limits? A change in your relationship to work, or study? A renewed commitment to social activism or spiritual practice? A surprising capacity, or flexibility? A new humility. It might be a tolerance for being alone; or the willingness to listen -- or, perhaps, a clearer sense of what matters?...

I think we are the magi, bringing our gifts, the gifts of our evolving, rough selves. Here at the nine months' mark of this pandemic, with a vaccine thankfully on the horizon -- we bring ourselves and our newborn gifts forward, to join in the ongoing work of building true community.

The penultimate line in one of Rumi's famous poems reads, "Let the beauty you love be what you do." I suggest we can also say, "Let the beauty you are be what you bring. There are hundreds of ways to kneel and kiss the ground."