

Who has awakened you recently?

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Rachel Naomi Remen, MD, wrote the foreword to *Making Healthcare Whole: Integrating Spirituality Into Patient Care* by Christina Puchalski, MD, and Betty Ferrell, RN, PhD. She begins the foreword with recounting a seminar with Joseph Campbell given for physicians on experiencing spiritual reality. He was showing religious visualizations of mystery. One was a dancing Shiva. She recalls:

“I remember being struck by the beauty and joy of the little figure, dancing with abandon in a ring of bronze, one foot lifted high in the air and the other resting on the back of a little man, crouched in the dust, completely absorbed in something that he was holding between his hands. Looking more closely, I could see that the focus of his attention was a leaf. Others, too, were struck by the beauty of the figure, but we were all trained observers and posers of questions and so one of us spoke up and asked Campbell, ‘What is that little man doing there?’ ‘Aha,’ Campbell explained, ‘That little man is someone who is so caught up in the study of the material world that he does not know that the living god is dancing on his back.’”

The story struck me. Dr. Remen noted that Joseph Campbell, after a silence, just smiled. I suspect it was a smile that each of us has in moments when we realize we can really get stuck in and so absorbed by the “material world” of our ministry that we missed the mystery of life and the living God in our midst. Thank God for the myriad of ways we are awakened to the foolishness of our ways in those moments, as a patient, an associate, a colleague, a friend alerts us and awakens us to the mystery about us.

Who has awakened you recently? Who alerted you to the dancing Shiva on your back?

May this May provide you many moments of such awakenings!