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For Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion



What Ritual Does...

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Part Four: Ritual is a Form of Activism

Engaging ritual as an individual or as a collective act of embodiment challenges ideas about the source and nature of our intelligence and for some it challenges ideas about how we arrive at knowing. As a form of activism, ritual invites us into the process of *restorying* that counters colonizing stories which perpetuate cultural and gender hegemony. Rituals also take the diverse traditions of old narratives and gives them meaning for the present context or need. The *restorying* in ritual also centers diverse intelligences (bodily-kinesthetic, environmental, rhythmic, visual, auditory, social, etc.,) in a nonhierarchical manner. It affords us to remember our own story in relationship to the transcendent, to remember a people's story in relationship to the unseen yet felt power of spirit.

Our ritual *restorying* is another form of both our personal and collective agency. Ritual focuses on lived and innate capacities that are in operation to benefit us and community. Imagine that – using our intelligence for our personal and collective benefit, not for institutions or capitalizing agendas. We get to use our *restorying* in ritual to practice “being” while welcoming others into the same practice. This is primarily the role of community participation in ritual; to show our authentic selves. Whether it is the *restorying* of a grief ritual, the *restorying* of a ritual for renewal and rebirth, a ritual of covenant or a ritual of invocation; the community's role is to authentically show up.

Here is where ritual begins to counter models of acceptability, belonging, worthiness posited by dominant forces or groups that exclude, marginalize, and perpetuate othering. If the intent is transformation and ethical change, ritual can construct a valid and mutually beneficial pathway for creating community strong enough to hold one another's truths.

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