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One Little Bird

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One Little Bird

Recently, a small finch found an open window to our chapel, and made the mistake of flying in instead of going back out. Once inside the large, enclosed space, it flew upwards, where there was no possible exit. Of four large clear glass windows lower down, one was also a door to the outside, which I opened. After gently approaching the bird with a dusting pole, I was able to coax it to come down and ultimately to find its way out.

I was pleased to have helped that one particular bird, whereas I hardly give a thought to the many of its kind who are seen and heard all around the grounds at this time of year. Why spend time and energy on one little bird when there are so many that receive no attention from me other than to enjoy their generic presence in the environment?

When we directly encounter individual persons, events, or creatures in their particular needs, we seem inclined to come to their aid. We also freely take on responsibilities for the benefit of groups and agencies that meet broad areas of social concerns. But immediate needs that come to our attention seem to merit spontaneous desires to be of assistance. Perhaps we value life: human, animal, and plant, more than we might think or say we do. Perhaps we have learned from experience that, even at the price of some inconvenience, and contrary to some opinions we might hold and even assert to others, we take pleasure in helping out in situations where we might make a positive difference.

Some of our behavior we have learned unconsciously from parents, teachers, friends, and others by observing and imitating them in some of their habitual ways of speaking and acting. We have also learned by consciously reading, studying, attending classes, and participating in workshops. But perhaps more significantly, we have learned some of our most valuable and significant life-lessons when personally confronted with an immediate need, whether of a child who becomes separated from its parents in a store, a house-plant that is dying for lack of water, or a bird that gets into the house.

We find out, sometimes to our surprise, that we spontaneously act in ways that we would not have thought typical of us. We might usually take a whack at an offending bug, avoid wailing children, and stay away from all forms of plant-life, and yet find that we have something in us that "wants to help" when a particular necessity seems to be addressed directly to us. We are capable of change and adaptation that does not require a gradual learning-curve, especially when we find ourselves personally challenged not in some

intellectual dialogue, but with an appeal to our humanity that, like beautiful music or gorgeous scenery, goes directly to our hearts.

If we seek understanding for some of our caring behavior, we could reflect on the effects upon us, rather than upon the objects of the help we have given. Our fulfillment has far less to do with visible results than with the degree to which we act from the heart.

A little bird told me.