



MARIA'S STORY: "Seeing, Being Seen, Helping Others See" As told by one who has seen her – Angela Rogerson

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One of the great privileges of Spiritual Accompaniment is hearing the stories people have to tell. Here is something "Maria" shared with me recently.

Seeing and being seen

Maria is a single woman who used to be a business executive. Ten years ago she took the decision to leave the security of a well-paid job, and work in a retreat centre. To supplement her income she took a job in a home caring for mentally and physically infirm elderly people.

She decided to mark her ten-year anniversary by inviting 10 friends to celebrate with her. **She asked each person to bring her a word. The first word was "Seen."** The friend had chosen this word remembering a passage from Genesis 16:13, the story of Hagar in the desert:

**"She gave this name to the Lord
who spoke to her,
'You are the God
who sees me,'
for she said,
'I have now seen
the One who sees me.'"**

The friend had witnessed Maria hearing the call of God, being seen by Him. It put Maria in mind of her experience at the start of the Spiritual Exercises, sitting with the question **"How is God looking at you?... Does He look at me/us? Does he make his face shine on me/us... Really??"**

Helping others see

The friend recognised Maria's gift of seeing the Other in the frail, elderly and disabled ones she works with. **And she helps them to see God.**

Later Maria went on to describe an Easter celebration in the Care home, where she distributed musical instruments (tambourines, rain sticks, seed balls) and invited the residents to share in the song and music making. An old man in a wheelchair, normally silent and serious, found that his severe tremor produced a wonderful percussive sound and broke into a shining grin of pleasure.

"We are put on this earth but a little time, that we may learn to bear the beams of love." (William Blake). Maria knows that her work brings pleasure and vitality and joyful creativity. The presence of love is at its heart.

**"... see one another;
just as I have seen you ... you also are
to see one another."** John 13:34 (adapted)

