

Session 45

Hello Beasty!

The objectives of this session are:

- to examine the ideas of family, love and loyalty and how they can overcome fear, uncertainty, anger and selfishness
- to explore the idea of living each day to the fullest and appreciating all the joy and beauty that life has to offer
- to consider that acceptance and letting go of anger is a step to spiritual maturity
- to examine the idea that each of us is responsible for our own actions, choices and decisions and the consequences of those actions and choices
- to consider that each of us has elements of hero and villain within us – and how we choose to act upon these elements

Materials and supplies you will need:

- a DVD of the movie, *Maleficent*
- DVD player and TV monitor
- at least one copy of the UU hymnal, *Singing the Living Tradition*
- pencils and paper (optional)
- poster board (optional)
- flipchart and markers (optional)

Things to do ahead of time:

- locate the DVD and rent it from the library or video store if necessary
- If you will not be watching the whole film, use the DVD menu to select scene #10 (Goodnight Beasty). Make sure to pay particular attention to scenes that portray how Maleficent grows to love Aurora and how this helps her to let go of her anger and rage.
- watch the movie in its entirety (even if you have seen it before)

Session Outline

Entering Activity: Check-in and chalice lighting (10 min)

Premiere: Introducing and watching an excerpt of the movie, *Maleficent* (45 min)

Plot Points: Loving and Letting Go (15 min)

Wrap Up: Closing Words. (3 min)

Entering Activity

Ask for a volunteer to light the chalice and share with the group (or ask for a volunteer to read) opening words (#458) from *Singing the Living Tradition*.

“Mindful of truth ever exceeding our knowledge
and community ever exceeding our practice,
reverently we covenant together,
beginning with ourselves as we are,
to share the strength of integrity and the
heritage of the spirit in the unending
quest for wisdom and love.”

- Walter Royal Jones, Jr. -

Begin the session with a brief check-in: ask participants to check-in with their names and how they would answer these key questions: Have you ever wished you could fly? If you could only do one of these, which would you rather be able to do: fly or have magical powers? Remind the group that anyone always has the right to pass during times of sharing.

After everyone has had the chance to respond, begin the introduction of the movie.

Premiere

Watching Maleficent

Introduce the video by telling the group you will be watching an excerpt from the movie *About Time*. Ask if anyone has already seen it. If anyone has, ask them if they would be willing to share the premise of the film with the group. If not, introduce the video yourself by saying something to the effect of the following:

Maleficent, a powerful fairy, lives in the Moors, a magical forest realm bordering a corrupt human kingdom. As a young girl, she meets and falls in love with a human peasant boy named Stefan, whose affection for Maleficent is overshadowed by his ambition to better his station in life. As they grow older, the two grow apart, and she becomes protector of the Moors. When King Henry tries to conquer the Moors, a grown Maleficent forces him to retreat. Fatally wounded in battle, he declares that whoever kills Maleficent will be named his successor and marry his daughter Leila. In response, the grown Stefan visits Maleficent in the Moors, where he drugs her but cannot bring himself to kill her. Instead, Stefan uses iron, which burns fairies, to cut off Maleficent's wings. He then presents them to the king as evidence of her death. Maleficent awakens to find herself wingless. Anguished by Stefan's betrayal, she declares herself Queen of the Moors, forming a dark kingdom with Diaval, a raven to whom she gives human form. He acts as her wings, spy, and confidant.

Sometime later, Diaval informs Maleficent that Stefan, who is now king, is hosting a christening for his newborn daughter, Aurora. Bent on revenge, Maleficent arrives uninvited and curses the infant princess: on

her 16th birthday, she will prick her finger on the spindle of a spinning wheel, putting her into a deep sleep from which she will never awaken. When Stefan begs for mercy, Maleficent offers an antidote: The curse can be broken by true love's kiss. Stefan sends Aurora to live with a trio of pixies until the day after her 16th birthday, while he destroys all the spinning wheels in the kingdom and hides them in the castle dungeon. He sends his armies to find and kill Maleficent, but she surrounds the Moors with an impenetrable wall of thorns. Despite her initial dislike for Aurora, Maleficent begins to care for the girl when the incompetent pixies inadvertently put her in danger. After a brief meeting with the young Aurora, Maleficent watches over her from afar. When Aurora is 15, she encounters Maleficent and, aware of being watched over, calls her "fairy godmother".

Begin the video and watch scenes #11 (Goodnight Beastly) through scene 20 (A New Queen.) In these scenes, Years later, Aurora has grown into a beautiful young lady, nearing her 16th birthday. She happens upon the Moors one evening, and Maleficent puts her to sleep, while Stefan's men continue their hunt for Maleficent. They think they see her when they see Aurora walking around, though they dismiss her as a peasant girl. Maleficent turns Diaval into a wolf, who scares the men away. They take Aurora deeper into the Moors. When she awakens, she is enchanted by all the beauty and the creatures she sees. She sees Maleficent and thinks she is her fairy godmother, having recognized her and Diaval since childhood. Diaval takes his human form and greets the princess. Maleficent puts her to sleep again and lets her sleep in her cottage. Realizing she cares for the girl, she tries to revoke the curse, but because she made it so that no power on earth can undo it, she fails. Diaval, knowing that Maleficent has changed her feelings towards Aurora, says that true love's kiss

can still break the spell, but Maleficent says she cursed her that way because there is no such thing.

Aurora later meets Prince Philip, and the two are smitten with each other. On the day before Aurora's 16th birthday, Maleficent, hoping to avoid the curse, invites her to move to the Moors. When the pixies inadvertently tell Aurora of her parentage and of Maleficent's true identity, a horrified Aurora runs away to her father's castle. Meanwhile, King Stefan, mad with paranoia, sits in his castle talking to Maleficent's severed wings, and even refuses to see Queen Leila on her deathbed. After a brief reunion with Aurora, Stefan locks her away in her room for safety. However, she is drawn by the curse to the dungeon, where a spinning wheel pricks her finger and she falls into a death-like sleep. Intent on saving her, Maleficent abducts Phillip and infiltrates Stefan's castle to have him kiss Aurora and break the curse, but Philip's kiss fails. Maleficent apologizes to Aurora, swears no harm will come to her, kisses her forehead and breaks the spell. Aurora forgives Maleficent and they attempt to leave the castle, but Maleficent is trapped in an iron net and attacked by Stefan and his guards. Maleficent transforms Diaval into a dragon, and he lifts the net off her, but is driven back by the guards. Stefan beats and taunts Maleficent, but before he can kill her, her wings, freed from his chamber by Aurora, fly back to her and reattach themselves. Maleficent overpowers Stefan and carries him onto a tower, but cannot bring herself to kill him. Stefan attempts once more to kill her, but plummets off the tower to his death.

A short time later, Maleficent has found peace in her heart and undoes the dark magic in the Moors, restoring it to its former beauty. Aurora is crowned queen of both the human kingdom and the Moors, with Phillip coming to the Moors to join the other creatures in celebration. The narrator finishes the story by revealing that she is

Aurora, as they once called her "Sleeping Beauty". She adds that in the end, it took one who was both a hero and a villain to make things right ... And her name was Maleficent.

Stop the DVD as the credits begin to roll.

Plot Points

Loving and Letting Go

Begin the discussion by asking for general impressions, and things which occurred to the group as they were watching the video. Then, if no one brings it up, ask the group to consider:

When does Maleficent begin to change her feelings toward Aurora? What effect do these feelings have on Maleficent? When Aurora first sees the beauty of the moors, Maleficent watches her from a distance in hiding. Aurora senses her presence, and she says, "Come out, don't be afraid." Is Maleficent afraid of Aurora? Why or Why not? Just as Aurora begins to delight in the Moors, Maleficent casts a sleep spell on her and returns Aurora to her bed in the cottage. Why do you think she does this? What has experience taught Maleficent about loving humans? Why do you think that King Stefan and Queen Leila entrust Aurora's care to the three Pixies? What do you think is the reason that King Stefan begins to lose his mind, or his grip on reality? (One answer might be that his dementia is a result of his guilt and paranoia over what he did to Maleficent.) What do her wings mean or symbolize to Maleficent? Do you think that Aurora would be the same person if she had been reared in the castle with her mother and father instead of being brought up by the Pixies? Why do you think that Aurora was the key to uniting the two kingdoms? In the end, what kills King Stefan? What makes Maleficent's kiss "True love's kiss" to break the spell? Was that what you expected? What does this

movie say about good and evil? Do you agree that Maleficent is “both a hero and a villain?” Why or why not?

Wrap Up

Closing Words.

Invite a participant to extinguish the chalice while you or one of the participants read these closing words, Closing thought #694 from *Singing the Living Tradition*:

“May the love which overcomes all differences,
which heals all wounds,
which puts to flight all fears,
which reconciles all who are separated,
be in us and among us
now and always.”

-- Frederick E. Gillis --

Taking It One Step Further:

If your group will be watching the entire movie rather than just an excerpt, here are some additional ideas to expand the experience:

More Discussion

How does Maleficent react to the loss of her wings? How does this loss change her personality? How does she react to the birth of Aurora? What is it that keeps young Stefan and Maleficent apart? Why is Stefan so driven by ambition? Does he value power and social position more than love? If he had made different choices, could Stefan have been the human to unite the two kingdoms instead of Aurora? What part does

Diaval play in the story? Is he a hero or a villain? The three Pixies; Knotgrass, Flittle and Thistlewit were once loyal to Maleficent when she was young. Why do you think that they changed their allegiance? Discuss the irony of the curse that Maleficent places on Aurora being broken only by “true love’s kiss.” Why do you think that Aurora was able to capture what was left of Maleficent’s heart? What enables Maleficent to finally let go of her anger toward Stefan and the human world? What keeps Stefan from letting go of his guilt and hatred? How does this lead to his demise?

More Activities

Ask the group if they can make a list of songs, stories or movies with the theme of true love or love overcoming hate. Consider: How do each of these songs, stories or movies approach the idea of “true love?” What do they all have in common? How are they different?

Have a “Love movie” marathon. Write a sequel to this movie with multiple story lines. For instance, one story line could involve Stefan asking Maleficent to marry him and they unite the two kingdoms by defeating King Henry together. See how many alternate story lines you can create.



