

Minilogue for January 2026

One of my favorite movies of all time is a quirky and compelling 1981 film called “My Dinner with Andre.” The story consists entirely of a conversation between two real-life theater friends, Wallace Shawn and Andre Gregory — essentially playing themselves — as they share a meal in a fancy New York restaurant. Occasionally, a waiter interrupts them to remove a plate or fill a glass, but otherwise Shawn and Gregory are the only faces on the screen throughout the film.

The script, originally written by Shawn, explores the differences between the two men’s temperaments and their life experiences. The friends hadn’t seen each other in a long time, and the conversation is wide-ranging indeed, with Andre doing most of the talking. He had dropped out of the theater world to travel the globe, and he recounts, to his companion’s slack-jawed amazement, his many wild and mind-boggling adventures exploring the far fringes of consciousness and human experience. Wallace, on the other hand, lives a quiet, unremarkable domestic life in Manhattan with his wife. His ambition seems rather modest in comparison to Andre’s, as he explains in almost apologetic but emphatic fashion:

*I have a list of errands and responsibilities that I keep in a notebook. I enjoy going through the notebook, carrying out the responsibilities, doing the errands and crossing them off the list. **I just don’t know how anyone could enjoy anything more!***

In the context of the conversation, Wally feels that he must defend his life, which seems small and inadequate compared to that of his globe-trotting friend, but there is also something brave and honorable and beautiful about Wally’s own little ‘to do list,’ and it’s funny how that scene from the movie — the moment when Wally confesses his simple satisfaction at completing tasks on his to-do list — is the one that stands out in my memory more than forty years after first seeing the film.

Lately, I’ve been thinking that I should really consider my own nightly habit of creating a to-do list for the following day to be part of my spiritual practice. Each evening, I sit mindfully, meditatively, even prayerfully, writing and reflecting on the day that has passed, and considering the goals that I have for the morrow. Setting my intention in this way helps me to focus on the things that matter most, the priorities that emerge from my deepest values and desires. Of course, life is complicated and unpredictable, so I must always hold my list lightly, knowing that plans must be flexible enough to change in the face of changing circumstances. Nevertheless, having my little agenda in hand is somehow comforting. It serves as a kind of miniature moral compass, helping me to navigate the complexities of life

with some integrity and serenity. My mentor, James Luther Adams, used to talk about the moral task of finding one's "centerstance in the midst of circumstance."

Do you keep a to-do list? If so, do you consider it a spiritual exercise or merely a management tool? Aligning your day-to-day activities with your deepest core values requires intention, and the discipline of maintaining a daily to-do list can help in that process of creating a more grounded and centered life. The word, *agenda*, in Latin, simply means 'to be done.' To 'have an agenda' – a list of things to be done – does not imply any kind of hidden sinister plot, nor is it simply a secular technique of soullessly efficient self-management. Creating an agenda is, more seriously, precisely the kind of little personal ritual that can bring your heart's desire and deepest wisdom into play as you plan your day. As we share our 'to do' lists with one another, we create a *shared agenda*, a *shared mission*, one that calls us to 'SEARCH for wisdom, CARE for community and ACT for justice.' May this new year be blessed with all our deepest values and best intentions, and may we be blessed in turn by the many gifts of life and love.

In good faith,

Rev. Bruce

√ ~~Write January Newsletter Column~~