

The Guest House

This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.
A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
As an unexpected visitor.
Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house empty of its furniture,
still treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out for some new delight.
The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing and invite them in.
Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent as a guide from beyond.

- Jalaluddin Rumi, trans. by C. Barks (*The Essential Rumi*)

The coronavirus is *not* sent as a divine *punishment*. But something not unrelated: in this crisis, God may well be calling us all to account, holding us responsible for the wellbeing of our world. It doesn't mean God willed this crisis to happen — or any of the horrors and holocausts of history. It means that nothing happens apart from God, because God isn't something that exists apart from the world: the world is a part of God, and God participates in each part of the world. God feels and suffers it all — with us. But God also *calls* to us to face the meaning of this punishing plague, to face the interdependence of us all — an interdependence that our civilization conceals from us, that this contagion reveals to us.

God did *not* create the pandemic in order to *test* any of us; God didn't create the pandemic! But perhaps we are being tested. Not by the torments of a bully God, but by invitation to rise to the occasion. To find the courage and the care that will sustain us....

We might not fix much that is already too badly broken. But in a new, dark hopefulness, might we become creative collaborators? Even with the Creator, the one who triggers the simplest matter and the subtlest minds to new creation?

This is not a story of top-down creating. This new creation comes as we cooperate with each other and with the divine source of every other. This is new creativity in and through whatever chaos besets us. The chaos might feel like the Apocalypse. But remember that *apokalypsis*, at least in the Bible, does not mean The End of the World. It means *revelation*: not a final closing down, but a great *dis/closure*....

In whatever chaos we experience, we recycle everything that we can: ecologically and socially, democratically and theologically. We do not wait for a dictatorial fix from on high. We enter into creative collaboration in a process we can neither predict nor control. For the process of the new creation remains mysterious. “The new heaven and earth” translate no longer as supernatural intervention or afterlife escape — but as the radical renewal of atmosphere and earth.

- Catherine Keller, https://medium.com/@dostlund_42808/a-letter-from-catherine-keller-1930029c4914

The crowd abandons truth as it searches for a target upon which it can express the pent-up rage it feels. I say “it” because the angry crowd takes on a life of its own. The crowd is now in search of a scapegoat, whose role it is to bear the sin of the crowd.

This is why if you follow an angry crowd—even if it calls itself Christian—you are likely to be wrong. Even if you’re not wrong in the actual issue, you will probably be wrong in spirit. So never follow an angry crowd. Never! An angry person is bad enough, but an angry crowd is diabolical! Without any hyperbole, I insist that a crowd under the sway of an angry spirit is the most dangerous thing in the world. Massacres, slaughters, crusades, pogroms, genocides, and the Holocaust are what can happen when people follow an angry crowd in search of a scapegoat. Let us be clear on this: Jesus does not lead his people as an angry crowd. Jesus does not lead his people to join an angry crowd. Jesus never leads anything other than a gentle and peaceable minority.

The angry crowd, in its cruel sacrifice of a scapegoat, is the opposite of Jesus’s teaching of cosuffering love for neighbor and enemy. The crowd, with its shared fantasies of imagined enemies, is an exercise in unholy unity. But here is why it’s such a powerful deception: it doesn’t feel unholy. It feels holy; it feels spiritual; it feels patriotic; it feels right. It has a deeply religious aura to it. It is a spiritual experience. The spiritual experience of expressing a shared hostility can even be confused for the Holy Spirit ... because of how it feels.

- Brian Zahnd, *Farewell to Mars*

Blessing to Open the Heart

It may astonish you
how quietly this blessing
arrives.

No hammering
at the door.
No chiming
of the bell.

It has given
no warning,
sent no message
in advance,

yet with a suddenness
that somehow comes
as no surprise,
it is there
on the doorstep
of your heart.

Peer out,
and you will see
this blessing is no stranger.
You already know
every word
it has come to say.

I am merely here
to tell you
how this blessing
is a remembering,
a returning;
how it asks of you
what you already long
to do:

open
open
open.

- Jan Richardson

in “By Way of the Heart” 2019

Between the dogmatism of fear-based fundamentalism and the Battlestar Galactica new-ageness of Hollywood, down there in the cracks, there is room, there is a necessity, for the sharing of real, personal, and experiential knowledge of God—of love. That is our mission, should we choose to accept it: to get that experience, to be fueled by that love, and to go forth and share whatever insights and inspiration we may have gained, while simultaneously supporting our communities and families in all ways feasible. We don’t need to worry about making converts. If we go out there shining with the light of God and brimming with love, it will be noticed. A door will be opened for the spirit to walk through. Whether that spirit gets discussed in Islamic, Jewish, Christian, or any other religious terms is not really material. It’s being awake to its presence that counts.

- Bruce Cockburn, *Rumours of Glory: A Memoir*

Both God’s truest identity and our own True Self are Love. So why isn’t it obvious? How do we find what is supposedly already there? Why should we need to awaken our deepest and most profound selves? And how do we do it? By praying and meditating? By more silence, solitude, and sacraments? Yes to all of the above, but the most important way is to *live and fully accept our present reality*. This solution sounds so simple and innocuous that most of us fabricate all kinds of religious trappings to avoid taking up our own inglorious, mundane, and ever-present cross of the present moment.

As James Finley says, “The greatest teacher of God’s presence in our life *is* our life.” For some reason, it is easier to attend church services than quite simply to reverence *the real*—the “practice of the presence of God,” as some of our saints have called it. Making this commitment doesn’t demand a lot of dogmatic wrangling or managerial support, just vigilance, desire, and willingness to begin again and again. Living and accepting our reality will not feel very spiritual. It will feel like we are on the edges rather than dealing with the essence. Thus most run toward more esoteric and dramatic postures instead of *bearing the mystery of God’s suffering and God’s joy inside themselves*. But the edges of our lives—fully experienced suffered, and enjoyed—lead us back to the center and the essence, which is Love.

- Richard Rohr

This slow and sudden time:
sudden shifts to keep our distance
structures shifting to expose the cracks
all those gaps people fall through
there they are, laid bare;
and in this setting, in amongst the huddling and
puzzling, catch the deep longing for restoration.
Longing not for the “normal,” those old days and
ways,
not for the spectacle, but a slow kind of glory, a
realm
built under duress, in the mundane daily
turns and choices and approaches; a realm where

glory translates to being one in purpose, glory in
finishing the
work we are given to do:
given to do this day, this next step
to the tune of that Ancient realm’s song about
a place where the vulnerable thrive and the solitary
gather
a place away from the deluge that washes away the
barely established shoot
a place of gentle rain that refreshes the land.

- Agnes Kramer-Hamstra

“Getting Through Together” – Collected Readings during Pandemic (03/20-07/07)

We live in a world of unreality and dreams. To give up our imaginary position as the center, to renounce it, not only intellectually but in the imaginative part of our soul, that means to awaken to what is real and eternal, to see the true light and hear the true silence.... To empty ourselves of our false divinity, to deny ourselves, to give up being the center of the world in imagination, to discern that all points in the world are equally centers and the true center is outside the world, this is to consent.... Such consent is love.

- Simone Weil, *Waiting for God*

the hard season
will
split you through
do not worry.
this is grief
your face will fall out and down your skin
and
there will be scorching.
but do not worry.
keep speaking the years from their hiding places.
keep coughing up smoke from all the deaths you
have died.
keep the rage tender

because the soft season will come.
it will come.
loud.
ready.
gulping.
both hands in your chest.
up all night.
up all of the nights.
to drink all damage into love.

- therapy by nayyriah waheed

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Chantel Moore's Healing Walk Protocols - Dr. Imelda Perley (Opolahsomuwehs)

Brothers and Sisters, Elders and Youth, let us join our heavy hearts, our furious minds, our gentle spirits to follow the ancient tracks of our people to stand up for justice, to sing our songs of healing, to invoke all our spirit helpers to guide us towards our peaceful perseverance during this tragedy and pandemic.

We will walk in both silence and chants to honour our emotions and heal both our historical and contemporary agony of injustice. We will carry our gifts of language to bless our purpose and refrain from using profanity that does not belong to our language. Our women will carry our gift of compassion in a bowl of water to be brought to a designated sacred place. We will wear our ceremonial skirts and shirts to honour our nations colours and pride

Our voices will echo love not hate. Our Smudging will help us to comply with our Wampum Laws of peace and to minimize displaying acts of anger that may disrespect our cause.

Our Healing Walk should never be called a “protest”, this is not our traditional word, we instead use “*Ikatomone*”(eek-gut-moh-neh) which translates to “let’s guard” our way of life, our languages, our ceremonies, our rights to declare justice. Our Sacred Drums will soothe our shared anguish as we converge our thoughts to healing Chantel’s family and her memory. Our Sacred Pipes will invoke our power to connect to our ancestors who are walking with us within our DNA. Our Red Shawls will be a symbol for all MMIWG* and their families. Our Moccasins will allow us to walk with stamina, a gift from our four-legged relatives, and mostly to leave our sacred tracks to honour those who went before us and to leave behind for those yet to be born!

- (**Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls*)

Many of my sisters would draw from that well: the Hebrew midwives who defied Pharaoh by delivering the babies of slaves, the despised Samaritan who scandalized a town for daring to speak to the Messiah....the mamas who saw their boys lynched and the grandmas who saw their grandsons gunned down....I too would return to it, years later when Sarah banished me to the wilderness again, this time with a little boy clinging to my legs.

Just one person in all your sacred Scripture dared to name God, and it wasn't a priest, prophet, warrior, or king. It was I, Hagar – foreigner, woman, slave.

Don't you dare forget.

- Rachel Held Evans, *Inspired*

The exercise of imagination is dangerous to those who profit from the way things are because it has the power to show that the way things are is not permanent, not universal, not necessary. Having that real though limited power to put established institutions into question, imaginative literature has also the responsibility of power. The storyteller is the truth teller.

We will not know our own injustice if we cannot imagine justice. We will not be free if we do not imagine freedom. We cannot demand that anyone try to attain justice and freedom who has not had a chance to imagine them as attainable.

- Ursula Le Guin, *The Wave in the Mind*

Cynics seek darkness wherever they go. They point always to approaching dangers, impure motives, and hidden schemes. They sneer at enthusiasm, ridicule spiritual fervor, and despise charismatic behavior.

People who have come to know the joy of God do not deny the darkness, but they choose not to live in it. They claim that the light that shines in the darkness can be trusted more than the darkness itself and that a little bit of light can dispel a lot of darkness. They point each other to flashes of light here and there, and remind each other that they reveal the hidden but real presence of God.

- Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Return of the Prodigal Son*

When I am Among The Trees

When I am among the trees,
especially the willows and the honey locust,
equally the beech, the oaks and the pines,
They give off such hints of gladness.
I would almost say that they save me daily.

I am so distant from the hope of myself,
in which I have goodness, and discernment,
and never hurry through the world
but walk slowly, and bow often.

Around me the trees stir in their leaves
and call out, "Stay awhile."
The light flows from their branches.

And they call again, "It's simple," they say,
"and you too have come
into the world to do this, to go easy, to be
filled
with light, and to shine."

- Mary Oliver

Providence watches over each of us as we journey through life, providing us with two guides: repentance and remorse. The one calls us forward. The other calls us back. Yet they do not contradict each other, nor do they leave the traveler in doubt or confusion. For the one calls forward to the Good, the other back from the evil. And there are two of them, because in order to make our journey secure we must look ahead as well as back.

- Kierkegaard

“Getting Through Together” – Collected Readings during Pandemic (03/20-07/07)

Blessed be the longing that brought you here
And quickens your soul with wonder.

May you have the courage to listen to the voice of
desire
That disturbs you when you have settled for
something safe.

May you have the wisdom to enter generously into
your own unease
To discover the new direction your longing wants
you to take.

May the forms of your belonging—in love,
creativity, and friendship—
Be equal to the grandeur and the call of your soul.

[...]

May your mind inhabit life with the sureness with
which your body inhabits the world.

May your heart never be haunted by ghost-
structures of old damage.

May you come to accept your longing as divine
urgency.

May you know the urgency with which God longs
for you.

— John O'Donohue, From “For Longing,”

It's the things you were born to that give you satisfaction in this world, Greta. Leastwise, that's what I think. And maybe the fog's one of them. Not happiness, mind! Satisfaction isn't always happiness by a long sight; then again, it isn't sorrow either. But the rocks and the spruces and the fogs of your own land are things that nourish you. You can always have them, no matter what else you find or what else you lose."

- Julia L. Sauer, *Fog Magic*

You can't listen to the Thanksgiving Address without feeling wealthy. And, while expressing gratitude seems innocent enough, it is a revolutionary idea. In a consumer society, contentment is a radical proposition. Recognizing abundance rather than scarcity undermines an economy that thrives by creating unmet desires. Gratitude cultivates an ethic of fullness, but the economy needs emptiness. The Thanksgiving Address reminds you that you already have everything that you need. Gratitude doesn't send you out shopping to find satisfaction; it comes as a gift rather than a commodity, subverting the foundations of the whole economy. That's good medicine for land and people alike....

The words are simple, but in the act of their joining, they become a statement of sovereignty, a political structure, a Bill of Responsibilities, an educational model, a family tree, and a scientific inventory of ecosystem services. It is a power political document, a social contract, a way of being – all in one piece. But first and foremost, it is the credo for a culture of gratitude.... It's such a simple thing, but we all know the power of gratitude to incite a cycle of reciprocity.

- Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*

It makes me wonder how seeing has made me blind—by giving me cheap confidence that one quick glance at things can tell me what they are, by distracting me from learning how the light inside me works, by fooling me into thinking I have a clear view of how things really are, of where the road leads, of who can see rightly and who cannot. I am not asking to become blind, but I have become a believer. There is a light that shines in the darkness, which is only visible there.

—Barbara Brown Taylor, *Learning to Walk in the Dark*

The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you.
Don't go back to sleep.
You must ask for what you really want.
Don't go back to sleep.
People are going back and forth across the doorsill where the two worlds touch.
The door is round and open.
Don't go back to sleep.
- Rumi

Everything is Waiting for You

Your great mistake is to act the drama
as if you were alone. As if life
were a progressive and cunning crime
with no witness to the tiny hidden
transgressions. To feel abandoned is to deny
the intimacy of your surroundings. Surely,
even you, at times, have felt the grand array;
the swelling presence, and the chorus, crowding
out your solo voice. You must note
the way the soap dish enables you,
or the window latch grants you freedom.
Alertness is the hidden discipline of familiarity.
The stairs are your mentor of things

to come, the doors have always been there
to frighten you and to invite you,
and the tiny speaker in the phone
is your dream-ladder to divinity.

Put down the weight of your aloneness and ease
into
the conversation. The kettle is singing
even as it pours you a drink, the cooking pots
have left their arrogant aloofness and
seen the good in you at last. All the birds
and creatures of the world are unutterably
themselves. Everything is waiting for you.

- David Whyte

One way to practice “Drive all blames into one” (a Buddhist slogan) is to begin to notice what it feels like when you blame someone else. What’s actually under all that talking and conversation about how wrong somebody or something is? What does blame feel like in your stomach. When we do this noticing we see that we are somehow beginning to cultivate bravery as well as compassion and honesty. When these really unresolved issues of our lives come up, we are no longer trying to escape but are beginning to be curious and open toward these parts of ourselves.

“Drive all blames into one” is a healthy and compassionate instruction that short-circuits the overwhelming tendency we have to blame everyone else; it doesn’t mean instead of blaming the other people, blame yourself. It means to touch in with what blame feels like altogether. Instead of guarding yourself, instead of pushing things away, begin to get in touch with the fact that there’s a very soft spot under all that armor, and blame is probably one of the most well-perfected armors that we have.

- Pema Chödrön, *Start Where You Are*

[Jesus] certainly called us to dying to self, but his idea of dying to self was not through inner renunciation or guarding the purity of his being but through radically squandering everything he had and was. John the Baptist's disciples were horrified because he banqueted, drank, and danced. The Pharisees were horrified because he healed on the Sabbath and kept company with women and disreputables, people known to be impure. Boundaries meant nothing to him; he walked right through them.

What seemed disconcerting to nearly everybody was the messy, freewheeling largeness of his spirit. Abundance and a generosity bordering on extravagant seemed to be the signatures of both his teaching and his personal

style. [...] He seems not to count the cost; in fact, he specifically forbids counting the cost. [...] All will come of its own accord in good time and with abundant fullness, so long as one does not attempt to hoard or cling.

It is a path he himself walked to the very end. [...] Thus he came and thus he went, giving himself fully into life and death, losing himself, squandering himself, "gambling away every gift God bestows" (cf. Rumi). It was not love stored up but love utterly poured out that opened the gates to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Over and over, Jesus lays this path before us. There is nothing to be renounced or resisted. Everything can be embraced, but the catch is to cling to nothing. You let it go. You go through life like a knife goes through a done cake, picking up nothing, clinging to nothing, sticking to nothing. And grounded in that fundamental chastity of your being, you can then throw yourself out, pour yourself out, being able to give it all back, even giving back life itself. That's the kenotic path in a nutshell. Very, very simple. It only costs everything.

- Cynthia Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Jesus: Transforming Heart and Mind*

There's more than one answer to these questions

Pointing me in a crooked line

And the less I seek my source for some definitive

The closer I am to fine

- Emily Ann Saliers (Indigo Girls)

The law of growth is rest. We must be content in winter to wait patiently through the long bleak season in which we experience nothing whatever of the sweetness or realization of the Divine Presence, believing the truth, that these seasons which seem the most empty are the most pregnant with life.

— Caryl Houselander

If we are to stand and act with hope in the tragic gap and do it for the long haul, we cannot settle for mere “effectiveness” as the ultimate measure of our failure or success. Yes, we want to be effective in pursuit of important goals. But when measurable, short-term outcomes become the only or primary standard for assessing our efforts, the upshot is as pathetic as it is predictable: we take on smaller and smaller tasks—the only kind that yield instantly visible results—and abandon the large, impossible but vital jobs we are here to do.

We must judge ourselves by a higher standard than effectiveness, the standard called faithfulness. Are we faithful to the community on which we depend, to doing what we can in response to its pressing needs? Are we faithful to the better angels of our nature and to what they call forth from us? Are we faithful to the eternal conversation of the human race, to speaking and listening in a way that takes us closer to truth? Are we faithful to the call of courage that summons us to witness to the common good, even against great odds? When faithfulness is our standard, we are more likely to sustain our engagement with tasks that will never end: doing justice, loving mercy, and calling the beloved community into being.

- Parker Palmer, *Healing the Heart of Democracy*

"Things to Believe In"

trees, in general; oaks, especially;

burr oaks that survive fire, in particular;

and the generosity of apples

seeds, all of them: carrots like dust,

winged maple, doubled beet, peach kernel;
the inevitability of change

frogsong in spring; cattle
lowing on the farm across the hill;
the melodies of sad old songs

“Getting Through Together” – Collected Readings during Pandemic (03/20-07/07)

comfort of savory soup;
sweet iced fruit; the aroma of yeast;
a friend's voice; hard work
seasons; bedrock; lilacs;

Mysteries, Yes by Mary Oliver

*Truly, we live with mysteries too marvelous
to be understood.*

*How grass can be nourishing
in the mouths of the lambs.
How rivers and stones are forever
in allegiance with gravity
while we ourselves dream of rising.
How two hands touch and the bonds*

moonshadows under the ash grove;
something breaking through
- **Patricia Monaghan**

*will never be broken.
How people come, from delight
or the scars of damage,
to the comfort of a poem.*

*Let me keep my distance, always, from those
who think they have the answers.*

*Let me keep company always with those who say
“Look!” and laugh in astonishment,
and bow their heads.*

It is the second Sunday in Advent. For a year I have been attending Mass at this Catholic church. Every Sunday for a year I have run away from home and joined the circus as a dancing bear. We dancing bears have dressed ourselves in buttoned clothes; we mince around the rings on two feet. Today we were restless; we kept dropping onto our forepaws.

No one, least of all the organist, could find the opening hymn. Then no one knew it. Then no one could sing anyway.

There was no sermon, only announcements.

The priest proudly introduced the rascally acolyte who was going to light the two Advent candles. As we all could plainly see, the rascally acolyte had already lighted them.

During the long intercessory prayer, the priest always reads “intentions” from the parishioners. These are slips of paper, dropped into a box before the service begins, on which people have written their private concerns, requesting our public prayers. The priest reads them, one by one, and we respond on cue. “For a baby safely delivered on November twentieth,” the priest intoned, “we pray to the Lord,” We all responded, “Lord, hear our prayer.” Suddenly the priest broke in and confided to our bowed heads, “That’s the baby we’ve been praying for the past two months! The woman just kept getting more and more pregnant!” How often, how shockingly often, have I exhausted myself in church from the effort to keep from laughing out loud? I often laugh all the way home. Then the priest read the next intention: “For my son, that he may truly forgive his father. We pray to the Lord.” “Lord, hear our prayer,” we respond, chastened.

A high school stage play is more polished than this service we have been rehearsing since the year one. In two thousand years, we have not worked out the kinks. We positively glorify them. Week after week we witness the same miracle: that God is so mighty he can stifle his own laughter. Week after week, we witness the same miracle: that God, for reasons unfathomable, refrains from blowing our dancing bear act to smithereens.

Who can believe it?

- Annie Dillard, *Teaching a Stone to Talk*

**no safe place : thoughts after reading frederick
Buechner**

So there's no safe place. God, it seems,
might insert himself into any conversation,
any century. Might settle in - any old place,
as he quintessentially did in the West Bank,
Palestine, small town called Bethlehem.
The story is - God breathed himself
into the womb of a woman, turning himself
over to her umbilical care, folding himself
into fetal position, pressing and turning
inside Mary, 'til she, breathing hard, bore down.
Mary's womb turned inside out - amniotic

water, gasping infant, placenta spilling
into the night, messy and miraculous
as any birth anywhere and not a safe place.
Did he know - he must have - when he took on
flesh and fingernail and bone marrow,
he would be at our mercy?

For us too, no safe place. For you see what
he's done - given notice how he, at any time,
might break into our conversation, West Bank,
West Coast, Bethlehem, Vancouver. There's no place
safe from his radical willingness to be among us.

- Sheila Rosen

Fight all error, but do it with good humour, patience, kindness and love. Harshness will damage your own soul and
spoil the best cause

- St. John of Kanty

How the Light Comes

I cannot tell you
how the light comes.
What I know
is that it is more ancient
than imagining.
That it travels
across an astounding expanse
to reach us.
That it loves
searching out what is hidden,
what is lost,
what is forgotten
or in peril
or in pain.
That it has a fondness
for the body,
for finding its way
toward flesh,
for tracing the edges
of form,
for shining forth
through the eye,

the hand,
the heart.

I cannot tell you
how the light comes,
but that it does.
That it will.
That it works its way
into the deepest dark
that enfolds you,
though it may seem
long ages in coming
or arrive in a shape you did not foresee.

And so
may we this day
turn ourselves toward it.
May we lift our faces
to let it find us.
May we bend our bodies
to follow the arc it makes.
May we open
and open more
and open still
to the blessed light
that comes.

- Jan Richardson

“Getting Through Together” – Collected Readings during Pandemic (03/20-07/07)

The birds they sang
At the break of day
Start again
I heard them say
Don't dwell on what has passed away
Or what is yet to be

Ah, the wars they will be fought again
The holy dove, she will be caught again
Bought and sold, and bought again
The dove is never free

Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack, a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in

We asked for signs
The signs were sent
The birth betrayed
The marriage spent
Yeah, and the widowhood
Of every government
Signs for all to see

I can't run no more
With that lawless crowd
While the killers in high places
Say their prayers out loud
But they've summoned, they've summoned up

The Map You Make Yourself
For Women's Christmas

You have looked
at so many doors
with longing,
wondering if your life
lay on the other side.
For today,
choose the door
that opens
to the inside.
Travel the most ancient way of all:
the path that leads you
to the center
of your life.

A thundercloud
They're going to hear from me

Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack, a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in

You can add up the parts
But you won't have the sum
You can strike up the march
There is no drum
Every heart, every heart
To love will come
But like a refugee

Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack, a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in

Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack, a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in

That's how the light gets in
That's how the light gets in

- Leonard Cohen, "Anthem"

No map
but the one
you make yourself.
No Provision
but what you already carry
and the grace that comes
to those who walk
the pilgrim's way.
Speak this blessing
as you set out
and watch how
your rhythm slows,
the cadence of the road

drawing you into the pace
that is your own.
Eat when hungry.
Rest when tired.
Listen to your dreaming.
Welcome detours
as doors deeper in.
Pray for protection.
Ask for guidance.
Offer gladness
for the gifts that come,
and then
let them go.
Do not expect
to return

by the same road.
Home is always
by another way,
And you will know it
not by the light
that waits for you
but by the star
that blazes inside you,
telling you
where you are
is holy
and you are welcome
here.
- Jan Richardson

“Hallo, Eeyore,” said Christopher Robin, as he opened the door and came out. “How are *you*?”

“It’s snowing still,” said Eeyore gloomily.

“So it is.”

“*And* freezing.”

“Is it?”

“Yes” said Eeyore. “However,” he said brightening up a little, “we haven’t had an earthquake lately.”

*



The wind was against them now, and Piglet’s ears streamed behind him like banners as he fought his



way along, and it seemed like hours before he got them into the shelter of the Hundred Acre Wood and they stood up straight again, to listen, a little nervously, to the roaring of the gale among the tree-tops.

“Supposing a tree fell down, Pooh, when we were underneath it?”

“Supposing it didn’t,” said Pooh after careful thought.

Piglet was comforted by this, and in a little while they were knocking and ringing very cheerfully at Owl’s door.

- A. E. Milne

Those who live in grace are freed from the necessity of taking themselves, their circumstances, their morality and opinions, their piety and beliefs, too seriously. They are free to laugh and play as children of God. As important as repentance is, we are not saved by our much weeping, any more than we are saved by acts of penitence. And the expression of salvation freely given and received is not weeping but laughter, or at least a weeping become laughter. Laughter and lightheartedness, at their fullest and freest, are the gift of divine grace.

- Conrad Hyers, *And God Created Laughter*

We all need to be told that God loves us, and the mystery of the Annunciation reveals an aspect of that love. But it also suggests that our response to this love is critical. A few verses before the angel appears to Mary (Luke's gospel) another annunciation occurs; an angel announces to an old man, Zechariah, that his equally aged wife is to bear a son who will “make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”this son is known to us as John the Baptist. Zechariah's response: “How will I know that this is so?” ...is radically different from Mary's “How can this be?”

...While Zechariah is seeking knowledge and information, Mary contents herself with wisdom, with pondering a state of being. God's response to Zechariah is to strike him dumb during the entire term of his son's gestation, giving him a pregnancy of his own. He does not speak again until after the child is born....I read Zechariah's punishment as a grace, in that he could not say anything to further

compound his initial arrogance *when confronted with mystery*. When he does speak again, it is to praise God; he's had nine months to think it over.

Mary's “How can this be?” is a simpler...more profound response. She does not lose her voice but finds it. Like any of the prophets, she asserts herself before God saying, “Here am I.” There is no arrogance, however, but only holy fear and wonder. Mary proceeds – as we must do in life – making her commitment without knowing much about what it will entail or where it will lead. I treasure the story because it forces me to ask: When the mystery of God's love breaks through into my consciousness, do I run from it? Do I ask of it what it cannot answer?am I virgin enough to respond from my deepest, truest self, and say something new, a “yes” that will change me forever?

- Kathleen Norris “Annunciation.”

But the weeks of quarantine went on, I was surprised to find myself coping fairly well, sleeping soundly without bad dreams. An inner voice told me — this could be because you're just too dumb to notice what's really going on — but I thought that having researched acedia for over 20 years, I might be more prepared to handle it. There's some truth in that, but just knowing what acedia is, and what it does, doesn't mean that I don't still experience it. Like anger, pride, and all the other bad thoughts, it's part of who I am....

I tackled books I'd always meant to read, and streamed good films. I accepted any small writing projects that came my way, paid or not. I knew that physical exercise would help me mentally and physically, and while it was no longer possible for me to go to a gym for cardio workouts, I could take walks. I began going out in the early mornings, just around the block at first, but gradually expanding my range. Simply being out of doors was good for me, and it was inspiring to see so many people who were hard at work, delivering mail, collecting garbage, driving busses and HandiVans, and walking their dogs. This diverse community was going strong, and I treasured the chance to thank the postal workers, or to visit briefly - and at distance - with people about their dogs. I discovered that Airedales are not into social distancing.

All of this helped me defeat acedia - mostly because it connected me with other people, and acedia thrives on dis-connection. It suggests that we roll up in a ball, because we're all alone in the world, and no one cares. Instead, I signed up for webinars and concerts, events that I never would have been able to attend in the Before Time. I began gathering on Zoom with friends. I attended church online and found that although worship on Zoom is dreadful it's better than nothing. All of this served to take my mind off myself and my troubles, and stop acedia's deadly spiral of self-absorption and despair.

Turning away from the self and considering the needs of others is an essential step in fighting acedia. And a faith community is uniquely suited to help with this.

- Kathleen Norris, [“Acedia, Today”](#)

Late have I loved you

Late have I loved you, O Beauty so old and so new: late have I loved you!

And look! You were within me, and I was outside myself: and it was there that I searched for you.

In my unloveliness I plunged into the lovely things which you created: you were with me, but I was not with you. Those created things kept me far away from you: yet if they had not been in you, they would have not been at all. You called and shouted: and broke through my deafness. You flamed and shone: and banished my blindness. You breathed your fragrance on me: and I drew in my breath and I pant for you. I have tasted you: and now I hunger and thirst for more. You have touched me: and I have burned for your peace.

- From *Confessions*, Augustine of Hippo

I accept and absorb all the strength of the earth, to keep my body hard and strong;
I accept and absorb all the energy of the sun, to keep my mind sharp and bright;
I accept and absorb all the life force of the oceans, to cleanse my body and bring me life;
I accept and absorb all the power of the wind, to cleanse my spirit and bring me strength of purpose;
I accept and absorb all the mystery of the heavens, because I am part of that vast unknown.
I believe god to be all these elements and the force that unites them.
From these elements I have come, and to these elements I shall return, but the energy that is me will never be lost.

- Peter Jepson-Young, *The Dr. Peter Diaries*

The quality of light by which we scrutinize our lives has direct bearing upon the product which we live, and upon the changes which we hope to bring about through those lives. It is within this light that we form those ideas by which we pursue our magic and make it realized. This is poetry as illumination, for it is through poetry that we give name to those ideas which are — until the poem — nameless and formless, about to be birthed, but already felt. That distillation of experience from which true poetry springs births thought as dream births concept, as feeling births idea, as knowledge births (precedes) understanding.

- Audre Lourde

A Blessing Called Sanctuary

You hardly knew
how hungry you were
to be gathered in,
to receive the welcome
that invited you to enter
entirely—
nothing of you
found foreign or strange,
nothing of your life
that you were asked
to leave behind
or to carry in silence
or in shame.

Tentative steps
became settling in,
leaning into the blessing
that enfolded you,
taking your place
in the circle
that stunned you
with its unimagined grace.

You began to breathe again,
to move without fear,
to speak with abandon
the words you carried
in your bones,
that echoed in your being.

You learned to sing.

But the deal with this blessing
is that it will not leave you alone,
will not let you linger
in safety,
in stasis.

The time will come
when this blessing
will ask you to leave,
not because it has tired of you
but because it desires for you

to become the sanctuary
that you have found—
to speak your word
into the world,
to tell what you have heard
with your own ears,
seen with your own eyes,
known in your own heart:

that you are beloved,
precious child of God,
beautiful to behold,
and you are welcome
and more than welcome
here.

- Jan Richardson, from
Circle of Grace

Klaas, all I really wanted to say is this: we have so much work to do on ourselves that we shouldn't even be thinking of hating our so-called enemies. We are hurtful enough to one another as it is. And I don't really know what I mean when I say that there are bullies and bad characters among our own people, for no one is really "bad" deep down. I should have liked to reach out to that [bully] with all his fears, I should have liked to trace the source of his panic, to drive him ever deeper into himself, that is the only thing we can do, Klaas, in times like these.

And you, Klaas, give a tired and despondent wave and say, "But what you propose to do takes such a long time, and we don't really have all that much time, do we?" And I reply, "What you want is something people have been trying to get for the last two thousand years, and for many more thousand years before that, in fact, ever since [humankind] has existed on earth." "And what do you think the result has been, if I may ask?" you say.

And I repeat with the same old passion, although I am gradually beginning to think that I am being tiresome, “It is the only thing we can do, Klaas, I see no alternative, each of us must turn inward and destroy in himself all that he thinks he ought to destroy in others. And remember that every atom of hate we add to this world makes it still more inhospitable.”

And you, Klaas, dogged old class fighter that you have always been, dismayed and astonished at the same time, say, “But that—that is nothing but Christianity!”

And I, amused by your confusion, retort quite coolly, “Yes, Christianity, and why ever not?”

- Etty Hillesum, (letter written from Westerbork before she was transferred to Auschwitz)

I Feel Sorry for Jesus

People won't leave Him alone.
I know He said, wherever two or more
are gathered in my name...
But I bet some days He regrets it.

Cozily they tell you what he wants
and doesn't want
as if they just got an e-mail.
Remember “Telephone,” that pass-it-on game

where the message changed dramatically
by the time it rounded the circle?
Well.
People blame terrible pieties on Jesus.

They want to be his special pet.
Jesus deserves better.
I think He's been exhausted
for a very long time.

He went into the desert, friends.
He didn't go into the pomp.
He didn't go into
the golden chandeliers

and say, the truth tastes better here.
See? I'm talking like I know.
It's dangerous talking for Jesus.
You get carried away almost immediately.

I stood in the spot where He was born.
I closed my eyes where He died and didn't die.
Every twist of the Via Dolorosa
was written on my skin.

And that makes me feel like being silent
for Him, you know? A secret pouch
of listening. You won't hear me
mention this again.
- Naomi Shihab Nye

Jesus said, "If those who lead you say to you, 'See, the kingdom is in the sky,' then the birds of the sky will precede you. If they say to you, 'It is in the sea,' then the fish will precede you. Rather, the kingdom is inside of you, and it is outside of you. When you come to know yourselves, then you will become known, and you will realize that it is you who are the children of the living father. But if you will not know yourselves, you dwell in poverty and it is you who are that poverty."

— The Gospel of Thomas

I Need to Breathe Deeply

Eternal Friend,
grant me an ease
to breathe deeply of this moment,
this light,
this miracle of now.

Beneath the din and fury
of great movements
and harsh news
and urgent crises,
make me attentive still
to good news,
to small occasions,

and the grace of what is possible
for me to be,
to do,
to give,

to receive,
that I may miss neither my neighbour's gift
nor my enemy's need.
– Ted Loder, *Guerrillas of Grace*

Human nature, when it is seeking power, wants either to play the victim or to create victims of others. In fact, the second follows from the first. Once we start feeling sorry for ourselves, we will soon find someone else to blame, accuse or attack—and with impunity! It settles the dust quickly, and it takes away any immediate shame, guilt, or anxiety. In other words, it works—at least for a while.

When we read today's news, we realize the pattern has not changed much in all of history. Hating, fearing, or diminishing someone else holds us together for some reason. Scapegoating, or the creating of necessary victims, is in our hard wiring. Philosopher René Girard (1923–2015) calls “the scapegoat mechanism” the central pattern for the creation and maintenance of cultures worldwide since the beginning.

The sequence, without being too clever, goes something like this: we compare, we copy, we compete, we conflict, we conspire, we condemn, and we crucify. If we do not recognize some variation of this pattern within ourselves and put an end to it in the early stages, it is almost inevitable. That is why spiritual teachers of any depth will always teach simplicity of lifestyle and freedom from the competitive power game, which is where it all begins. It is probably the only way out of the cycle of violence.

It's hard for us religious people to hear, but the most persistent violence in human history has been “sacralized violence”—violence that we treated as sacred, but which was, in fact, not. Human beings have found a most effective way to legitimate their instinct toward fear and hatred. They imagine that they are fearing and hating on behalf of something holy and noble: God, religion, truth, morality, their children, or love of country. It takes away all guilt, and one can even think of oneself as representing the moral high ground or being responsible and prudent as a result. It never occurs to most people that they are becoming what they fear and hate.

This week we enter Holy Week, the days leading up to Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection. As long as we deal with the real meaning of evil and sin by some means other than forgiveness and healing, we will keep projecting, fearing, and attacking it over there (“scapegoating”), instead of “gazing” on it within ourselves and “weeping” over it. The longer we contemplate the cross, the more we recognize our own complicity *in* and profits made *from* the sin of others. Forgiveness demands three new simultaneous “seeings”: I must see God in the other; I must access God in myself; and I must experience God in a new way that is larger than an “enforcer.” That is a whole new world seen in three dimensions. The real “3-D”!

- Richard Rohr

Purity does not lie in separation from, but in a deeper penetration into the universe. It is to be found in the love of that unique boundless Essence with penetrates the inmost depth of all things and there, from within those depths, deeper than the mortal zone where individuals and multitudes struggle, works upon them and molds them.

Bathe yourself in the ocean of matter; plunge into it where it is deepest and most violent; struggle in its currents and drink of its waters. For it cradled you long ago in your preconscious existence; and it is that ocean that will raise you up to God.

— Teilhard de Chardin

[Kalle] told me that for some time now he hasn't been spending much time on politics or the magazine because he is taking care of his ninety-five-year-old mother-in-law. He said, "Taking care of her is far more important to me than all my other work put together." ...

Is Kalle to trust his feeling that in taking care of this old woman he is doing something significant?

Do you not know in your bones that any belief system that denies that significance must be part of the problem? Can you bear to live in a world in which what he is doing doesn't matter? We only keep performing the tasks that keep the world-devouring machine running by quelling that feeling of significance. We steel ourselves to do what some abstract reasoning tells us we must do, in the interests of practicality. Occasionally, this "practicality" means "what will help heal the ecosystem, bring about social justice, and enable the survival of our species," but for most people, most of the time, practicality involves money or other means of security and comfort. And money, in our current system, generally comes through our participation in the conversion of nature into products, communities into markets, citizens into consumers, and relationships into services. If your heart isn't in all that, you will find that practicality often contradicts the urging of the heart.

- Charles Eisenstein, *The Beautiful World Our Hearts Know Is True*

On a summer morning
I sat down
on a hillside
to think about God –

a worthy pastime.
Near me, I saw
a single cricket;
it was moving the grains of the hillside

this way and that way.

How great was its energy,
how humble its effort.
Let us hope

it will always be like this,
each of us going on
in our inexplicable ways
building the universe.

—Mary Oliver, *Song of the Builders*

Did you know the word "conspire" means to breathe together? Take a breath. Now blow it out again. There! You have just launched a conspiracy. You can hear the word "spirit" in there too – to conspire – to be filled with the same spirit, to be enlivened by the same wind. That is why the word appeals to me, anyhow. What happens between us when we come together to worship God is that the Holy Spirit swoops in and out among us, knitting us together through the songs we sing, the prayers we pray, the breaths we breathe. It can happen with two people and it can happen with two thousand people. It can scare us or comfort us, confuse us or clarify things for us, but as far as I can tell the Holy Spirit never bullies us. We are always free to choose whether or how we will respond.

There is some very fine teaching available on the Holy Spirit; and I hope none of you is satisfied with it. I hope none of you rests until you have felt the Holy Spirit blow through your own life, rearranging things, opening things up and maybe even setting your own head on fire. There is nothing you can do to make it happen, as far as I know, except to pray "Come, Holy Spirit" every chance you get. If you don't want anything to change in your life, then for heaven's sake don't pray that, but if you are the type of person who likes to stand out on the porch when there is a storm moving through so you can feel the power that is pushing the trees around, then you are probably a good candidate for the Holy Spirit prayer.

- Barbara Brown Taylor, *Pentecost Sermon, 2016*

@echohawkd3 (Abigail Echo-Hawk) tweeted on June 2, 2021:

“For the children [broken heart] the 215 they found in a mass grave, and for the thousands yet to be found”

When they buried the children
What they didn't know
They were lovingly embraced
By the land
Held and cradled in a mother's heart
The trees wept for them, with the wind
they sang mourning songs their mother's
didn't know to sing
bending branches to touch the earth
around them. The Creator cried for them

the tears falling like rain.

Mother Earth held them
until they could be found.
Now our voices sing the mourning songs.
with the trees. the wind. light sacred fire
ensure they are never forgotten as we sing
JUSTICE

-abigail echo-hawk

Optimism

More and more I have come to admire resilience.
Not the simple resistance of a pillow, whose foam
returns over and over to the same shape, but the sinuous
tenacity of a tree: finding the light newly blocked on one side,
it turns in another. A blind intelligence, true.
But out of such persistence arose turtles, rivers,
mitochondria, figs -- all this resinous, unretractable earth.

- Jane Hirshfield

To recognize one's own in the alien, to become at home in it, is the basic movement of spirit, whose being
consists only in returning to itself from what is other

- Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*

Every year
the lilies
are so perfect
I can hardly believe

their lapped light crowding
the black,
mid-summer ponds.
Nobody could count all of them --

the muskrats swimming
among the pads and the grasses
can reach out
their muscular arms and touch

only so many, they are that
rife and wild.
But what in this world
is perfect?

I bend closer and see
how this one is clearly lopsided --
and that one wears an orange blight --
and this one is a glossy cheek

half nibbled away --
and that one is a slumped purse
full of its own
unstoppable decay.

Still, what I want in my life
is to be willing
to be dazzled --
to cast aside the weight of facts

and maybe even
to float a little
above this difficult world.
I want to believe I am looking

into the white fire of a great mystery.
I want to believe that the imperfections are nothing
--
that the light is everything -- that it is more than the
sum
of each flawed blossom rising and fading. And I do.
- Mary Oliver, *The Ponds*

As Heinz and I walked out of the church on that day behind Mark’s small wooden coffin, I had the sense that we were walking naked. We stood together in the vestibule as friends and colleagues came to embrace us. How could we possibly go on living? Did we even want to? At that moment, I desperately longed to escape from this life, seeking either our lost child or oblivion. It was then that I had seemed to see that vision of a huge net made of ropes, surrounding all of us, with open spaces through which we might be propelled into infinity, yet bound with knots that held us in this world... a net of thick rope, with knots strong enough to anchor a ship in turbulent waters or tether an airplane in a hurricane. What drew me back to the *Gospel of Thomas* was a particular cluster of sayings that seemed to speak of what that vision meant – especially sayings that were previously unknown, strange, and compelling.

For unlike the *Gospel of Mark*, which pictures Jesus announcing that “the kingdom of God is coming soon,” as a catastrophic event, the end of the world, the *Gospel of Thomas* suggests that he was speaking in metaphor:

Jesus says: If those who lead you say to you, “The kingdom is in the sky,” then the birds will get there first. If they say, “it is in the sea,” then the fish will get there first. Rather, *the kingdom of God is within you, and outside of you. When you come to know yourselves then... you will know that you are the children of God.*

Here, with some irony, Jesus reveals that the kingdom of God is not an actual *place* in the sky – or anywhere else – or an *event* expected in human time. Instead, it’s a state of being that we may enter when we come to know who we are, and come to know God as the source of our being.

In Thomas, then, the “good news” is not only about Jesus; it’s also about every one of us. For while we ordinarily identify ourselves by specifying how we differ, in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, background, family name, this saying suggests that recognizing that we are “children of God” requires us to recognize how we are the same – members, so to speak, of the same family. These sayings suggest what later becomes a primary theme of Jewish mystical tradition: that the “image of God,” divine light given in creation, is hidden deep within each one of us, linking our fragile, limited selves to their divine source. Although we’re often unaware of that spiritual potential, the *Thomas* sayings urge us to keep on seeking until we find it: “Within a person of light, there is light. If illuminated, it lights up the whole world; if not, everything is dark.” Emerging from a time of unbearable grief, I felt that such sayings offered a glimpse of what I’d sensed in that vision of the net. They helped dispel isolation and turn me from despair, suggesting that every one of us is woven into the mysterious fabric of the universe, and into connection with each other, with all being, and with God.

Elaine Pagels, *Why Religion?* pp 233-235

“And” by Paul Dupuis

And I cry when they are happy
And I cry when they are sad
And I fight when they are vicious
And when they're sane I am half mad
And their honour's not my business
And their nights are sticks and stones
And their highs aren't my decisions
And how they dig deep in my bones.

And in the morning how they haunt me
And in my chills I cry to God
And how the music's simply music
And how I hear my tears applaud
And how my heart knows it is fallen
And how my soul is stoned and chained
And how I utter and I utter
Crimson blood the page is stained.

And how my love weeps in a ballad
Seven thousand drops of gold
And the poets they are laughing
And the gamblers bow and fold
While the minutes tick for hours
Deep within the months and years
While I rhyme at sobbing flowers
With a jester's cloak of tears.

And how the trees they search for sunshine
But how they wither without rain
Within a world lacking water
And the oceans have been drained
And how the stars they wander lonely
And the moon is never full
And how the comets are ripped shadows
Within this nothing that I mull.

And how you feel the superficial
From those close and dear to you
For they shall never hear the voices
Nor shall they know the world is blue
And how you thank God for this blessing
And how you find a peace in this
Within this empty empty writing
Within this sadness full of bliss.

And then a river smiles in calmness
And then the trees grow green and bright
And all this beauty's simply stunning
And then the afternoon is light
And then the birds lay down a ballad
And the decaf taste so good

And how the children play in kindness
And all love is understood.

And then the maple leaves are dancing
Within a gentle waltz of joy
And how my pen begins a journey
And then its ink's a little coy
Of a magic born of wishes
Where goodwill is feeling well
And how I touched a piece of heaven
And I have walked another hell.

For I had lost my pen while walking
And I was loaned one just to use
And how I lost an early sadness
And how I found a better fuse
And three times I sort of smiled
And how they turned into a grin
And how I thanked God for the moment
And how I watched the joy begin.

And in this world how I welcomed
Every breath that I had drawn
Every teardrop that had fallen
Every morning's breaking dawn
And in the quiet I found freedom
And in my chains there was a mirth
And every heartache that had hurt me
And then I understood their worth.

And then I stopped to eat a cracker
And I had a piece of cheese
And then I drew a draught of water
That did much much more than please
And as my mood grew silent passive
Within this joy of solitude
And how I thanked God for the moment
And for this sweet soft interlude.

And the TV had no motion
And how the radio was mute
And perhaps my pen was rapid
For which my mind cannot dispute
That in the coming of the welcomed
Upon this Sunday afternoon
On this first day of September
Which seemed to come a little soon
As I walk I walk together
And not alone another mile
Within a true insane surrender
And I surrendered with a smile.

Tend, Attend

1. Ezekiel saw those bones
those first nation children
destroyed and scattered
under the curse of blind power;
a valley of shattered generations
cries out.
2. John, in exile, witnessed
a living river breathing
and trees on either side
lush with leaves; those
leaves, for the healing
of the nations, for the
healing of the nations.
3. And here we are, shepherds each,
witness to that valley of bones,
standing between that valley and
the river, the tree full leafed.
4. Whatever my charge, my realm:

this vulnerable one in my care
this city bus I drive
this garden I tend
this coffee shop I oversee
Tend
Attend
Tenderly shepherd
that there may be:
safety those birds need, to fledge
soil those seedlings need, to root
a quiet peace that invites silenced ones to
try out their voices.
Curl your hand around
that plump toddler fist
but ready to let go
as away she sways
on her own unsteady legs.
Tend
Attend
- Agnes K-H

Miracles happen because of the willingness to open the door into your pain. Open your ears and your eyes to the elusive, invisible, silent presence of healing, of the power of God to heal, which moves as quietly, as undramatically, as the wind moves.

- Frederick Buechner, in *A Crazy, Holy Grace*

If I say “I am jealous,” it describes the whole of me, and I am overwhelmed with its implications. The completeness of the statement makes me feel contemptuous of myself. It is little wonder I fear letting another know when my identity with the feeling is such that it describes the totality of who I am. But suppose that each of us understood the multiplicity of his life. What if it were such common knowledge that only an ignorant person would ever be heard to say, “Well, if he is that way, I want nothing to do with him,” as though they “way” of a person could be known just because one of his selves was glimpsed for a moment.

If I respect the plurality in myself, and no longer see my jealous self as the whole of me, then I have gained the distance I need to observe it, listen to it, and let it acquaint me with a piece of my own lost history. In this way I come into possession of more of myself and extend my own inner kingdom. Suppose we come to know that every recognition of anger and jealousy and greed and sloth is an opportunity to life, out of the waters of unconsciousness a tiny piece of submerged land.”

– Elizabeth O’Connor, *Our Many Selves*, p. 23

Wishing Well

Outside the Met a man walks up sun
tweaking the brim sticker on his Starter cap
and he says pardon me *Old School* he
says you know is this a wishing well?
Yeah *Son* I say sideways over my shrug.
Throw your bread on the water.
I tighten my chest wheezy as Rockaway beach
sand with a pull of faux smoke on my e-cigto cozy the
truculence I hotbox alone
and I am at the museum because it is not a bar.
Because he appears not to have changed
them in days I eye the heel-chewed hems
of his pants and think probably he will
ask me for fifty cents any minute now wait
for it. A smoke or something. Central Park displays
the frisking transparency of autumn. Tracing
paper sky, leaves like eraser crumbs gum
the pavement. As if deciphering celestial
script I squint and purse off toward the roof
line of the museum aloof as he fists two
pennies from his pockets mumbling and then
aloud my man he says hey my man I'm going

to make a wish for you too.

I am laughing now so what you want
me to sign a waiver? He laughs along ain't
say all that he says but you do have to
hold my hand. And close your eyes.
I make a starless night of my face before
he asks are you ready. Yeah *dawg* I'm ready.
Sure? Sure let's do this his rough hand
in mine inflates like a blood pressure cuff and I
squeeze back as if we are about to step together
from the sill of all resentment and timeless
toward the dreamsource of un-needing the two
of us hurtle sharing the cosmic breast
of plenitude when I hear the coins blink against
the surface and I cough up daylight like I've just
been dragged ashore. See now
you'll never walk alone he jokes and is about
to hand me back to the day he found me in
like I was a rubber duck and he says you got to let
go but I feel bottomless and I know he means
well though I don't believe
and I feel myself shaking
my head no when he means let go his hand.
- Gregory Pardlo

There are those who seek knowledge for the sake of knowledge – that is curiosity. There are those who seek knowledge to be known by others – that is vanity. There are those who seek knowledge in order to serve – that is love. - *St. Bernard of Clairvaux*

[Reflecting on his mother's life of avoiding her pain:]

But I think that the price that one pays by dealing with your pain by forgetting it, by stuffing it aside, by not looking at it, is that some part of you doesn't grow. I think the part of her that didn't grow was what might have been the compassionate part of her, the part of her that by sort of looking at her own pain would have opened her up to the sense that other people were in pain, and then she might have been able to reach out into other people's lives. She never did.

- Frederick Buechner, *A Crazy, Holy Grace*

A few years ago, Ed and I were exploring the dunes on Cumberland Island, one of the barrier islands between the Atlantic Ocean and the mainland of south Georgia. He was looking for the fossilized teeth of long-dead sharks. I was looking for sand spurs so that I did not step on one. This meant that neither of us was looking very far past our own feet, so the huge loggerhead turtle took us both by surprise. She was still alive but just barely, her shell hot to the touch from the noonday sun. We both knew what had happened. She had come ashore during the night to lay her eggs, and when she had finished, she had looked around for the brightest horizon to lead her back to the sea. Mistaking the distant lights on the mainland for the sky reflected on the ocean, she went the wrong way. Judging by her tracks, she had dragged herself through the sand until her flippers were buried and she could go no farther. We found her where she had given up, half cooked by the sun but still able to turn one eye up to look at us when we bent over her. I buried her in cool sand while Ed ran to the ranger station. An hour later she was on her back with

tire chains around her front legs, being dragged behind a park service Jeep back toward the ocean. The dunes were so deep that her mouth filled with sand as she went. Her head bent so far underneath her that I feared her neck would break. Finally the Jeep stopped at the edge of the water. Ed and I helped the ranger unchain her and flip her back over. Then all three of us watched as she lay motionless in the surf. Every wave brought her life back to her, washing the sand from her eyes and making her shell shine again. When a particularly large one broke over her, she lifted her head and tried her back legs. The next wave made her light enough to find a foothold, and she pushed off, back into the water that was her home. Watching her swim slowly away after her nightmare ride through the dunes, I noted that it is sometimes hard to tell whether you are being killed or saved by the hands that turn your life upside down.

— Barbara Brown Taylor, *Learning to Walk in the Dark*

P.S. Post Script

And some time make the time to drive out west
Into County Clare, along the Flaggy Shore,
In September or October, when the wind
And the light are working off each other
So that the ocean on one side is wild
With foam and glitter, and inland among stones
The surface of a slate-grey lake is lit
By the earthed lightning of a flock of swans,

Their feathers roughed and ruffling, white on white,
Their fully-grown headstrong-looking heads
Tucked or cresting or busy underwater.
Useless to think you'll park or capture it
More thoroughly. You are neither here nor there,
A hurry through which known and strange things pass
As big soft buffetings come at the car sideways
And catch the heart off guard and blow it open.

- Seamus Heaney

Much of the early work of contemplation is discovering a way to observe ourselves from a compassionate and nonjudgmental distance until we can eventually live more and more of our lives from this calm inner awareness and acceptance. In a contemplative stance, we find ourselves smiling, sighing, and weeping at ourselves, much more than needing either to hate or to congratulate ourselves—because we are finally looking at ourselves with the eyes of God.

Actually, what is happening is we are letting God gaze at us, in the way only God can gaze—with infinite mercy, love, and compassion. God initiates a positive gaze, which now goes in both directions.

- Richard Rohr

IN THE BUSH, knee-deep in snow, laying tobacco down and offering prayers of thankfulness for the life of my mother, I became aware of silence. It was full and rich and tangible; I could almost reach out and touch it. I smiled then. Smiled because it becomes so simple when you surrender grief to the ongoing act of living, to being, to becoming. You become aware of the silences that exist between words, between actions, choices, results, changes. That's where you grow - in those silences. All that you feel is all that you are, and all that you know is all that you know, and you emerge from that silence ready to live out loud again: sore and blue and jubilant, outrageous and raucous and clamouring for more. The sound of silence. The sound of self emerging.

-Richard Wagamese, *Embers*

Because sometimes we
travel heavy
and those heady times we
can barely
imagine the freebody
movement of
dance.
Because sometimes we
travel dark
and from those hard paths we
can't even
conjure an image of
sunrise
or moonrise
or starlight
or fire.
Because sometimes we
travel solo

and those lonely times we
forget all the others
we've travelled with
lovingly
travelled with
home.
Because sometimes we
need to be
travelling lightly
because sometimes we're in need of
regular reminding
that light comes in circles
and waves
and small moments
and light
comes to find us
and light comes with hope.
- Pádraig Ó Tuama

If you think
the Eccentric God who made
the octopus
is gonna judge you
for your sins,
I'm afraid you've missed
the mark.

If you think this
Wild God
that spins galaxies
as a pastime
cares to get fussy
about your mistakes
or has ever made anything
that wasn't born

perfect and luminous,
you might need to repent.

If you can't yet admit
how lovable
and infinitely worthy
the fullness of your human nature is
and if you think God
wants to do anything
but perpetually pour
an abundance
of love gifts
upon you,
well, my dear, your soul
just might need
to go to confession.

– Chelan Harkin, *Susceptible to Light*

Aanjigone is the idea that one needs to be very, very careful with making judgments and with the act of criticism. *Aanjigone* is a concept that promotes the framing of *Nishnaabeg* values and ethics in the positive. It means that if we criticize something, our spiritual being may take on the very things we are criticizing...

To me this means that we must not spend all of our time interrogating and criticizing. We need to spend an enormous amount of energy recovering and rebuilding at this point. Critique and revelation cannot in and of themselves create the kinds of magnificent change our people are looking for. We can only bring about the change by engaging in *Biskaabiiyang* (i.e. “to look back,” to reclaim the best of one's roots).

- Leanne Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*

I began this chapter with a few lines from George Herbert’s poem, *The Bag*, and now I return to them again.

Hast thou not heard, that my Lord Jesus died?
Then let me tell thee a strange story.
The God of power, as he did ride
In his majestic robes of glory,
Resolved to light; and so one day
He did descend, undressing all the way.

It is a strange story indeed. The kenotic God we are given – the God of the early church mothers and fathers – comes to us not through might but meekness, not through force but humility. “Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold your king is coming to you, gentle, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’” One might be left wondering if there ever were robes of glory to begin with. I suspect not. We certainly do not find them in the human expression of God revealed in Christ. This God undresses. This God takes off anything that would separate God from the Other. This God empties and pours out Love – which is God Godself. This leads me to imagine that if there ever is a robe to be worn, we will find God in a continual act of taking it off and passing it on throughout eternity. This is because *God is self-giving, self-emptying, kenotic Love*.

- Jessica Williams, *Kenotic Love and the Soul’s Transformation*

God’s Grandeur

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with
toil;
And wears man’s smudge and shares man’s smell:
the soil

Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.
And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs
—
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright
wings.
by Gerard Manley Hopkins

“The son of the man” is the expression Jesus almost exclusively used to describe himself. In Hebrew the phrase simply means “a human being.” The implication seems to be that Jesus intentionally avoided honorific titles, and preferred to be known simply as “the man,” or “the human being.” Apparently, he saw his task as helping people become more truly human...

Jesus. . . was not content to preach about a myth; he had to discover how that myth related to the actualities of his own life and those of his disciples. In everyday situations as well as in his entire ministry he was engaged in the process of forcing the myth up against the hard facts of life, making what truths it held to become real and alive... Without the myth, Jesus might not have been able to accept the cross; without the cross we would never have known how much truth lay beyond even the revelatory powers of this myth.

- Walter Wink, *The Human Being*

Psalm Ghazal II

Why are You so far from my kneeling thoughts?
For the length of my days, will this be so?
Anger gives iron to the blood. Without it,
we’d have no strength to lift up goodness.
Count the fingers on your right hand.
That many more times than Christ you’ve tracked
’round the sun.

This is what was bequeathed us

This is what was bequeathed us:
This earth the beloved left
And, leaving,
Left to us.

No other world
But this one:
Willows and the river

Luke

His Gospel is itself a living creature,
A ground and glory round the throne of God,
Where earth and heaven breathe through human
nature
And One upon the throne sees it is good.
Luke is the living pillar of our healing,
A lowly ox, the servant of the four,
We turn his page to find his face revealing
The wonder and the welcome of the poor.

This Morning

This morning the redbirds’ eggs
have hatched and already the chicks
are chirping for food. They don’t
know where it’s coming from, they
just keep shouting, “More! More!”
As to anything else, they haven’t
had a single thought. Their eyes
haven’t yet opened, they know nothing
about the sky that’s waiting. Or

God made the trees and the trees are the wind’s
harp.

What song will you choose for your heart’s
dialogue?

When you are buried, love, the dust will sing out;
the flowers will cup no bitterness from your bones.
- Joanna Solfrain

And the factory
With its black smokestacks.

No other shore, only this bank
On which the living gather.

No meaning but what we find here.
No purpose but what we make.

That, and the beloved’s clear instructions:
Turn me into song; sing me awake.
- Gregory Orr

He breathes good news to all who bear a burden,
Good news to all who turn and try again,
The meek rejoice and prodigals find pardon,
A lost thief reaches paradise through pain,
The voiceless find their voice in every word
And, with our Lady, magnify our Lord.

- by Malcolm Guite,

the thousands, the millions of trees.
They don’t even know they have wings.

And just like that, like a simple
neighborhood event, a miracle is
taking place.

- Mary Oliver

“Getting Through Together” – Collected Readings during Pandemic (03/20-07/07)

When I say I’m religious, it has to do less with belief than with what I’m exposed to on a regular basis, what my symbol system is, what my practice is in terms of being a Christian in a community – these are what end up forming belief – like I believe in grace because I’ve experienced grace through the story of Jesus and the receiving of the Eucharist and the messiness of being in a community of other Christians. Take the Good Friday liturgy, for example. The fact that we have access to this story of who God is in the presence of suffering allows us to have a reference point for when suffering happens in our lives. We get this frame or container – these stories, liturgies, and practices – which help us to know how to hold the tragedy, violence, and suffering we experience in the world and in our lives. If we didn’t have that framework, it would just feel so free floating. Religion at its best allows us a kind of rootedness that I find meaningful.

– Nadia Bolz Webber, *Accidental Saints*

If anyone asked me to define an artist or a prophet, I think that I would say that he is the one who dares to act on the bold belief that he has a word to speak that would be healing if it could be heard. Actually, all human beings way down deep hold this belief about themselves. The sorrow is that except for rare moments most of us are overcome by forces of disbelief. In time we come to remember that our lives are for the greening of the earth and the greening of one another.

–Elizabeth O’Connor, Cry Pain, Cry Hope

I want to kiss the world beautiful
I want to kiss the world fine
Shoulder to shoulder, cheek to cheek
That don't sound much like a crime
I want to kiss the world beautiful
I have no name for this desire
I believe in light, but don't know what to write
With the darkness drawing near
I want to kiss the world beautiful

Lay down this life I think I would
Give up my shoes and all of my views
Don't know why just think I should
I want to kiss the world beautiful....

Sometimes it's just more important to love
Than to always have it right

- Martyn Joseph

Why waste time proving over and over how great you are, when you could be getting better? Why hide deficiencies instead of overcoming them? Why look for friends or partners who will just shore up your self-esteem instead of ones who will also challenge you to grow? And why seek out the tried and true, instead of experiences that will stretch you? The passion for stretching yourself and sticking to it, even (or especially) when it’s not going well, is the hallmark of the growth mindset. This is the mindset that allows people to thrive during some of the most challenging times in their lives.

-Carol Dweck

When we are uncaring, when we lack compassion, when we are unforgiving, we will always pay the price for it. It is not, however, we alone who suffer. Our whole community suffers, and ultimately our whole world suffers. We are made to exist in a delicate network of interdependence. We are sisters and brothers, whether we like it or not. To treat anyone as if they were less than human, less than a brother or a sister, no matter what they have done, is to contravene the very laws of our humanity. And those who shred the web of interconnectedness cannot escape the consequences of their actions.

Forgiving and being reconciled to our enemies or our loved ones are not about pretending that things are other than they are. It is not about patting one another on the back and turning a blind eye to the wrong. True reconciliation exposes the awfulness, the abuse, the hurt, the truth. It could even sometimes make things worse.

It is a risky undertaking but in the end it is worthwhile, because in the end only an honest confrontation with reality can bring real healing. Superficial reconciliation can bring only superficial healing.

-Desmond Tutu

Very often I will avoid the truth until my face goes red like a toddler avoiding her nap; until limp-limbed, she finally stops flailing and falls asleep and receives rest – the very thing she needs and the very thing she fights. When someone like me, who will go to superhero lengths to avoid the truth, runs out of options – when I am found out or too exhausted to pretend anymore or maybe just confronted by my sister – it feels like the truth might crush me. And that is right. The truth does crush us, but the instant it crushes us, it somehow puts us back together into something honest. It’s death and resurrection every time it happens.

-Nadia Bolz-Weber, *Pastrix: The Cranky, Beautiful Faith of a Sinner & Saint*

I can’t make the
world be peaceful
I can’t stall tanks
from roaring down roads
I can’t prevent children
from having to hide in bunkers
I can’t convince the news to
stop turning war into a video
game
I can’t silence the sound of
bombs
tearing neighborhoods apart
I can’t turn a guided missile
into a bouquet of flowers
I can’t make a warmonger
have an ounce of empathy

I can’t convince ambassadors
to quit playing truth or dare
I can’t deflect a sniper’s bullet
from turning a wife into a
widow
I can’t stave off a country being
reduced to ash and rubble
I can’t do any of that
the only thing I can do
is love the next person I
encounter
without any conditions or
strings
to love my neighbor
so fearlessly that
it starts a ripple

that stretches from
one horizon to the next
I can’t force peace
on the world
but I can become a force
of peace in the world
because
sometimes all it takes
is a single lit candle
in the darkness
to start a movement
“Lord, make me a candle
of comfort in this world
let me burn with peace”
~ john roedel

Blessing the Seed

I should tell you
at the outset:
this blessing will require you
to do some work.
First you must simply
let this blessing fall
from your hand,
as if it were a small thing
you could easily let slip
through your fingers,
as if it were not
most precious to you,
as if your life did not
depend on it.
Next you must trust
that this blessing knows

where it is going,
that it understands
the ways of the dark,
that it is wise
to seasons
and to times.
Then—
and I know this blessing
has already asked much
of you—
it is to be hoped that
you will rest
and learn
that something is at work
when all seems still,
seems dormant,

seems dead.
I promise you
this blessing has not
abandoned you.
I promise you
this blessing
is on its way back to you.
I promise you—
when you are least
expecting it,
when you have given up
your last hope—
this blessing will rise
green
and whole and new.
— Jan Richardson

The wounded child inside many males is a boy who, when he first spoke his truths, was silenced by paternal sadism, by a patriarchal world that did not want him to claim his true feelings. The wounded child inside many females is a girl who was taught from early childhood that she must become something other than herself, deny her true feelings, in order to attract and please others. When men and women punish each other for truth telling, we reinforce the notion that lies are better. To be loving we willingly hear the other's truth, and most important, we affirm the value of truth telling. Lies may make people feel better, but they do not help them to know love. — bell hooks, *All About Love: New Visions*

Christ Has No Body (*Teresa of Avila, 1515–82*)

Christ has no body but yours, No hands, no feet on earth but yours, Yours are the eyes with which he looks Compassion on this world, Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good, Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, Yours are the eyes, you are his body

In this way, great harm was done to your identity and your culture. Many families were separated and great numbers of children fell victim to these attempts to impose a uniformity based on the notion that progress occurs through ideological colonization, following programs devised in offices, rather than the desire to respect the life of peoples.

This is something that unfortunately, and at various levels, still happens today — that is, ideological colonization. How many forms of political, ideological and economic colonization still exists in the world today, driven by greed and thirst for profit with little concern for peoples, their histories and traditions and the common home of creation. Sadly, this colonial mentality remains widespread. Let us help each other together to overcome it.

Listening to your voices I was able to enter into, and be deeply grieved, by the stories of the suffering, hardship, discrimination and various forms of abuse that some of you have experienced, particularly in the residential schools. It's chilling to think of determined efforts to instill a sense of inferiority, to rob people of their cultural identity, to sever their roots and to consider all the pertinent personal and social efforts that this continues to entail — unresolved traumas that have become intergenerational traumas.

- Pope Francis – from his apology, translated from Italian

From responses reported by CBC: Fellow survivor Jennifer Wood, an Ojibway woman from Neyaashiinigiing First Nation in Ontario who is now living in Winnipeg, is celebrating.

"You could probably hear a sigh of relief and a lot of tears across this country from our First Nations survivors who have been standing by, watching, waiting, anticipating to hear the pope's apology. He just blanketed an entire country with some hope."

But Wood needs him to visit Canadian soil to say those words again, which she hopes will lend more credence to what survivors have said for years.

It is not enough for the priests and ministers of the future to be moral people, well trained, eager to help their fellow humans, and able to respond creatively to the burning issues of their time. All of that is very valuable and important, but it's not the heart of Christian leadership. The central question is, "Are the leaders of the future truly men and women of God, people with an ardent desire to dwell in God's presence, to listen to God's voice, to look at God's beauty, to touch God's incarnate Word and to taste fully God's infinite goodness?"

—Henri Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership*

Seen - For Easter Day

You had not imagined
that something so empty
could fill you
to overflowing,

and now you carry
the knowledge
like an awful treasure
or like a child
that curls itself
within your heart:

how the emptiness
will bear forth
a new world
you cannot fathom
but on whose edge
you stand.

So why do you linger?
You have seen,
and so you are
already blessed.
You have been seen,

and so you are
the blessing.

There is no other word
you need.

There is simply
to go
and tell.

There is simply
to begin.

-Jan Richardson

Annunciation

Even if I don't see it again—nor ever feel it
I know it is—and that if once it hailed me
it ever does—
And so it is myself I want to turn in that direction
not as towards a place, but it was a tilting
within myself,
as one turns a mirror to flash the light to where

it isn't—I was blinded like that—and swam
in what shone at me
only able to endure it by being no one and so
specifically myself I thought I'd die
from being loved like that.

- Marie Howe

An Empty Garlic – Rumi

You miss the garden,
because you want a small fig
from a random tree.
You don't meet the beautiful woman.
You're joking with an old crone.
It makes me want to cry
how she detains you,
stinking-mouthed, with a hundred
talons, putting her head
over the roof edge to call down,
tasteless fig, fold over fold, empty

as dry-rotten garlic.
She has you tight by the belt,
even though there's no flower
and no milk inside her body.
Death will open your eyes
to what her face is. Leather spine
of a black lizard. No more advice.
Let yourself be silently drawn
by the stronger pull
of what you really love.

Christ is risen. Don't debate it, or try to prove it or understand it. That's like trying to prove that the moon is lovely. Just let it be true. Give up, and let it be. Don't try to guess (which is all we could do) what kind of body, what sort of process. Just let the sun rise. Let God have the way of love and life. Let goodness overpower evil, love drive out fear, life defeat death. Christ is risen. Don't try to make it into a theory; let it be a mystery. Let it haunt you, let it startle you, let it push you out of bed in the morning, let it draw you into love. Christ is risen. Let Christ rise in you.

- Steve Garnaas-Holmes <http://unfoldinglight.net/>

“Getting Through Together” – Collected Readings during Pandemic (03/20-07/07)

The old song of my spirit has wearied itself out.
It has long ago been learned by my heart;
It repeats itself over and over,
bringing no added joy to my days or lift to my spirit.

I will sing a new song.

I must learn the new song for the new needs.
I must fashion new words born of all the new
growth

of my life – of my mind – of my spirit.
I must prepare for new melodies that have never
been mine before,
that all that is within me may lift my voice unto God.
Therefore, I shall rejoice with each new day
and delight my spirit in each fresh unfolding.
I will sing, this day, a new song unto the Lord.

- Howard Thurman

The one journey that ultimately matters is the journey into the place of stillness deep within one's self. To reach that place is to be at home; to fail to reach it is to be forever restless. At the place of 'central silence,' one's own life and spirit are united with the life and Spirit of God. There the fire of God's presence is experienced. The soul is immersed in love. The divine birth happens. We hear at last the living Word.

- N. Gordon Cosby

I am not ready to accept the ancient concept of prayer as a dialogue. Who are we to enter a dialogue with God? The better metaphor would be to describe prayer as an act of immersion, comparable to the ancient Hebrew custom of immersing oneself completely in the waters as a way of self-purification to be done over and over again. Immersion in the waters! One feels surrounded, touched by the waters, drowned in the waters of mercy.

- Abraham Joshua Heschel

From the On Being podcast:

Krista Tippett: I want to ask you... this ancient, animating question, what does it mean to be human?

David Whyte: Well, one of the interesting qualities of being human is, by the look of it, we're the only part of creation that can actually refuse to be ourselves. And as far as I can see, there's no other part of the world that can do that. The cloud is the cloud. The mountain is the mountain. The tree is the tree. The hawk is the hawk. And the kingfisher doesn't wake up one day and say, You know, God, I'm absolutely fed up to the back teeth of this whole kingfisher trip. Can I have a day as a crow? You know, hang out with my mates, glide down for a bit of carrion now and again? That's the life for me. No. The kingfisher is just the kingfisher. And one of the healing things about the natural world, to human beings, is that it's just itself.

But we as human beings are really quite extraordinary, in that we can actually refuse to be ourselves. We can get afraid of the way we are, and we can temporarily put a mask over our face and pretend to be somebody else or something else. And the interesting thing is, then we can take it another step of virtuosity and forget that we were pretending to be someone else and become the person we were, on the surface at least, who we were just pretending to be in the first place.

So one of the astonishing qualities of being human is the measure of our reluctance to be here, actually. And I think one of the great necessities of self-knowledge is understanding and even tasting the single malt essence of your own reluctance to be here: all the ways you don't want to have the conversation, all the ways you don't want to be in the marriage, you don't want to be a parent, you don't want to be visible in a leadership position, you don't want to be doing this work.

“Getting Through Together” – Collected Readings during Pandemic (03/20-07/07)

And this is not to give it away. This is just to understand what lies between you and a sense of freedom in it. And I think self-compassion has to do with this ability to understand and even to cultivate a sense of humor about all the ways you just don't want to be here – so to embody your reluctance and, therefore, once it's embodied, to allow it to actually start to change into something else. Things only solidify when they're kept at a distance. As soon as they're embodied, they actually start to take on a kind of seasonality. And you're actually, by embodying it, by feeling it fully, allowing it to start to change into something else.

