

A
CROSS
Of
SIMPLICITY

Poems, Prayers, and Interior Paths

These are reflections through an interior landscape
of living a soulful spirit in prison.
Also included are the author's simple pen and ink
drawings which may reflect as parables.

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Contents of the Journey

- I **Despair Feeds the Desire 5**
- II **Spiritually Speaking 14**
- III **Tears of Blind Lions 31**
- IV **TEN PEN POEMS 40**
- V **What? Nothing i.e. everything 53**
- VI **Haiku Happenstance 62**
- VII **A Fond Natural Possession 69**

(a fragment of voice in life)
- VIII **Without a Right From and Anti-Rapport 83**

A Signpost of the Trail

(an introduction to these interior paths)

“Poetry is not like reasoning, a power to be exerted according to the determination of the will. A man cannot say, ‘I will compose poetry’ for the mind in creation is as a fading coal which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness; this power arises from within...” (Shelly)

Dear Reader,

These reflections are born out of adversity, meditation and inspiration. They reflect personal faith struggles, examinations of conscience, inner conviction and some resolutions. They are about growing and living a faith in a difficult environment. They are the results of my first ten years in prison attempting to seek God in contemplation, prayer, Bible studies, and sacred readings. Most of them were first scratched out in twilight hours, dim lighting and sleepless nights. These are not the results of staring at and trying to fill up a blank sheet of paper. Their origins are from scrawlings on scrap paper, tea bag wrappings and book margins. They come to me without me. In many ways I don't write them; they write me. They are inspired from spiritual masters, poets, saints and wise writings. They are grown out of an active prayer life and personal devotions in the Psalms and canticles of Scripture. Thus they are deeply personal to me from that inner heart.

I once read “poetic creation is an indecipherable mystery, like the mystery of man.” (Lorca) Ecclesiastes says God has placed eternity in our hearts and no one can figure out what he has done. And Solomon calls this a beautiful thing (3:11). From that mystery; that indecipherable secret place within our hearts; there we find God. So I like to believe it is from that spot from which these reflections come. The mystery of God and of faith is a wonderful powerful thing.

The fact that I write from prison I imagine raises the question of what crime I committed. That however, is not particularly what this is about. I just hope that nagging question does not have to be a stumbling block. I simply undeservedly ask for mercy and an ability of the reader to see past my sins and crimes. In this way I pray these meditations may be a blessing. I am humbly asking for acceptance in the contradiction of the Cross and it's Grace.

Thus in that spirit pray this prayer with me:

O Lord, my heart is not proud
nor haughty my eyes.
I have not gone after things too great
nor marvels beyond me.
Truly I have set my soul
in silence and peace.
As a child has rest in his mother's arms,
even so my soul.
O my soul, hope in the Lord
both now and forever. (Ps. 131)

"Not I, not I, but the wind that blows through me!" (D. H. Lawrence)

Blessed be!

Stephen Lawrence



The kingdom of God is within.

I

Despair Feeds the Desire

“Underlying the poet’s life there is really the
despair of being able to become what is wished,
and this despair feeds the wish.”

Søren Kierkegaard

“Let my lips speak of meditation
My heart full of insight.
I will turn my mind to poetry
With the verse I will solve my problem.”

(cf.Ps.49.3,4)

The Way of a Pilgrim

By my nature I am a foolish sinner
By the mercy of God I am a Christian
By conviction I am a prison inmate.
By vocation I am a monastic hermit
By grace I am simply called to prayer.

“Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.”

(A thousand times a day;
“...have mercy on me a sinner.”)

“Christian”

I wear His name in Grace.
Any righteousness that happens
is by His!

A Gift To Be

"Father in heaven...what is it to be a human being...would that from the lily and the bird we might this time learn silence, obedience, joy!"

Soren Kierkegaard

**"Tis the gift to be simple,
Tis the gift to be free.
Tis the gift to come down
To where we ought to be."**

**Tis the gift to be silent,
Tis the gift to really see.
Tis the gift without a sound
To pray in all sincerity.**

**Tis the gift to be content
In what is placed before me;
In what is all around
To see His will in conformity.**

**Tis the gift to be simple
Tis the gift to be care-free.
Tis the gift to have in ample
All for my security.**

**Tis the gift to be in suffering
And be still in pure peace.
Tis the gift of simplicity,
To not be deceived.**

**Tis the gift of obedience
To His Word unconditionally.
Tis the gift of silence
In sweet serenity.**

-to be who I'm meant to be.

Here's a Test

"When you have robbed a man of everything, he's no long in your power. He is free again."

Alexander Solzhenitzyn

"Freedom is just another word
for nothing left to lose."
Is this a statement of sad despair
or of deep Peace?
Is this a feeling of how un-fair
or of great release?
When such things are heard
They are so easy to confuse.

Sometimes —
Tis a cross to be simple.
Tis a cross to be free.
Tis a cross to come down
To the place we ought to be.

Tis the gift to let go
of the self we only know
and of all the other things
which only suffering brings.

How do we get from the one word:
of despair; Grief;
(suffering through a cross of loss)
to the other word:
Freedom
and gain relief?

Give Us This Day

“Only unconditional obedience can with unconditional accuracy find the moment...unconditionally undisturbed by the next.”
Søren Kierkegaard

Tomorrow—
O that unblessed day
which does not exist;
invented by delusion
and created only in disobedience;
in fantasy,
in worry.

There is today; it is – and I am.
A today. Blessed day. Today always.
In solemn silence and obedient surrender.
Oh the serenity of the silent acceptance, the
unconditional happiness of the today!

There is no tomorrow – it never comes;
only today, as it is, as I am.
The more true it is the
more present I am –to myself, today;
then there is Joy,
being today.

Today is Joy.
I Am Today.
I Am this day.
I Am Joy Present Today.

Present to myself joy is Present time.
Oh blessed Today!
“Today I have begotten you.”
“This is the day the Lord has made.” I am Joy in it.
(out of it I am worry and despair.)
Today; a marvel to my eyes.
A very Present help in this Today.

In The Day

This is the day the Lord has made

A marvel to our eyes

A light that never fades

A life that never dies.

This is the Lord's day

a voice that speaks of peace

hear what He's to say;

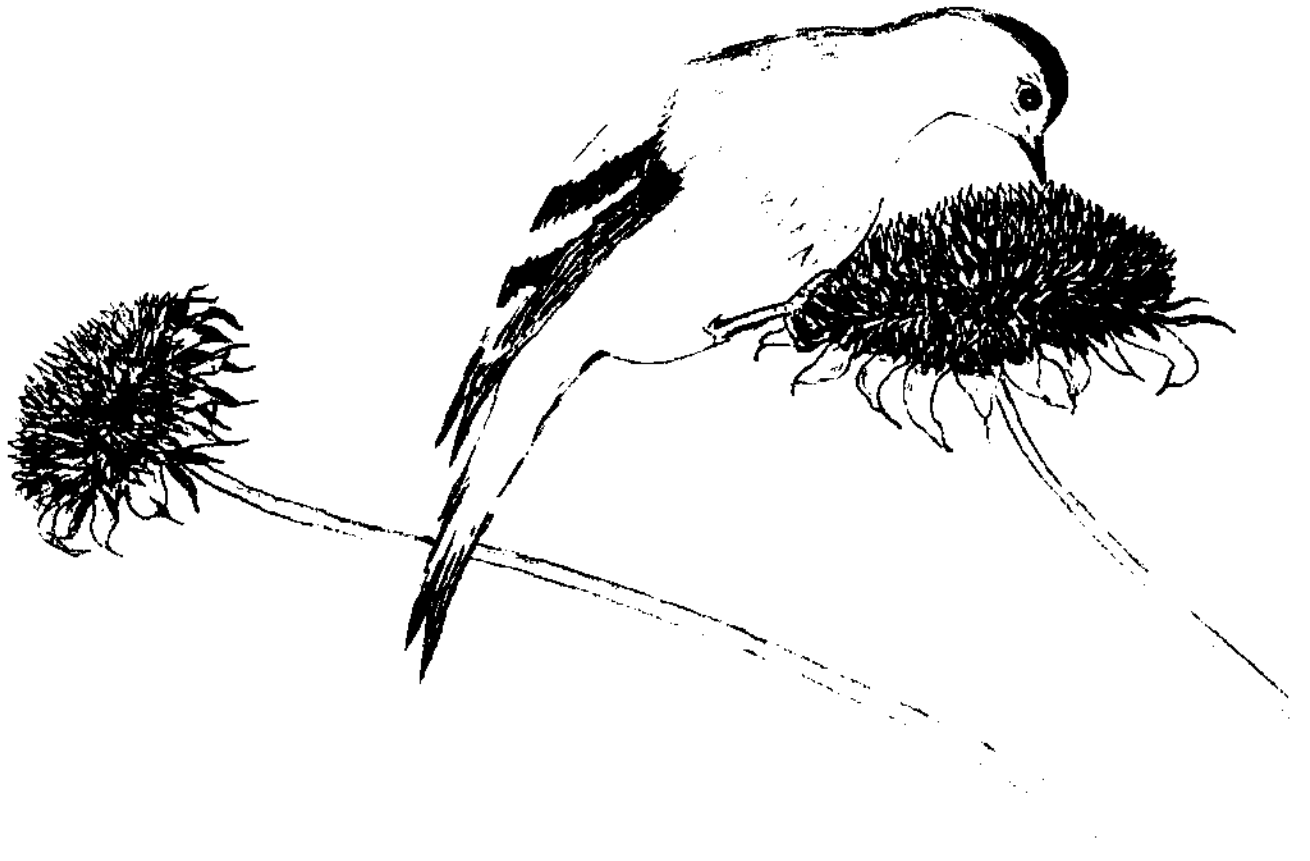
A joy that will not cease

A day of peace for His friends

where mercy and faithfulness embrace;

An ever now that never ends

the place we seek His face.



Look at the birds of the air...

The Lily and the Bird

“But if you have learned silence, learning obedience will surely come.”

Søren Kierkegaard

Look at the lily and bird
Abandon yourself to this sight.
Lose yourself in it; see and learn;
That not to love is to hate.
Learn from the lily and the bird
To be in any circumstance
As simplistically undisturbed;
Is explicit obedience;
Shall be this your only concern.

Unconditionally obey,
just like the lily and bird.
And when at night to God you pray
your true petition will be heard.
“Our Father, let Thy will be done,
In heaven as also on earth.”
In prayer so silent, so solemn.
For you only one Master serve.
“Lead us not into temptation.”
So surely He will keep His word.
And your God will not abandon
you, or the lily and the bird.

A Bird's Song In Solitude

There is an old order in solitude
in which God is found;
an ecstasy in peace,
a common order in solitude
from which we find all;
our common-ness in all.

In a tightly enclosed white square cell
under a canopy of stars in a still dark night;
a soft gentle cloud floating by,
a trail of streaming rays of moon beaming
down through dark beautiful blue openings;

I the convicted sinner, offender
sing praise and raise my hands
in fearful excitement.
Stars circling above my head
with eyes rolled back smiling,
I grin at the lurking danger.
I ignore the screams from a dark jungle of fear
and make my peace with a dark curtained room.

O Old man
grimacing in the moon
send me to my cell,
there I shall keep to it
and keep it well.

There shall I find my soul
And worship in my space
Together in union with you
Like a pair of old worn shoes.

Someone once said
"Birds don't sing because they have an answer. They sing because they have a song."
Birds don't sing because
they have something to say
Yet their tune speaks volumes,
 --and only to the soul.

Find your soul
and you shall be saved.
Then you can hear what
the birds are saying.

Because animals are unaware
they do God's will freely.
I wish my love and obedience to Him
were as spontaneous as
a bird's song.

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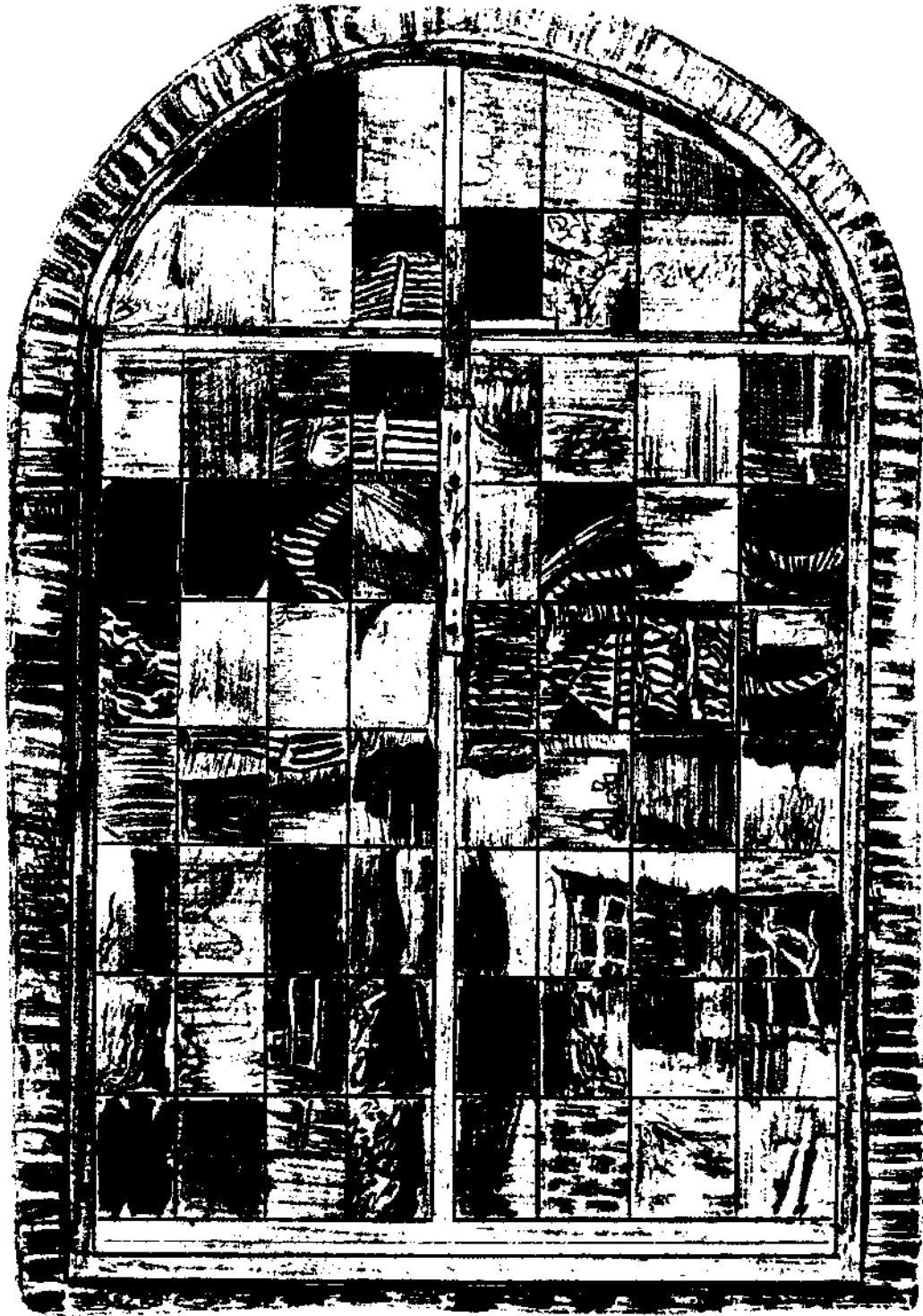
Spiritually Speaking

“Spiritually speaking, everything is possible, but in the world of the finite there is much which is not possible. This impossible, however, the knight makes possible by expressing it spiritually, but he expresses it spiritually by waiving his claim to it.”

Johannes De Silento

“My heart overflows with noble words. To the king
I must speak the song I have made; my tongue
as nimble as the pen of a scribe.”

Psalms 45:1



Looking through a window
integrates the outside with the inside.
Such are the windows of the heart.

An Isaac Laugh

"They laughed because laughing felt better than crying."

Frederick Buechner (Wishful Thinking)

Why did Abraham and Sarah laugh?

- ◇ They laughed to keep from crying.
- ◇ They laughed to keep from cursing.
- ◇ They laughed in desperation
- ◇ They laughed to keep from expecting the unreasonable.
- ◇ They laughed because to believe would mean to expect and accept the impossible.
- ◇ They laughed because they wanted it too badly.
- ◇ They laughed to keep from daring to dream.
- ◇ They laughed to keep from feeling the sting of disappointment.
- ◇ They laughed to keep from resenting the facts.
- ◇ They laughed to keep from feeling the anger.
- ◇ They laughed to keep from feeling anything.
- ◇ They laughed from a long past life of failures.
- ◇ They laughed because they wanted to believe, and just couldn't.
- ◇ They laughed because deep down they so wished it to be true.
- ◇ They laughed because it was just all too painful to deal with.
- ◇ They laughed because they were dealing with God.

My Spiritual Fruit

My love is a red apple, thin skinned and easily bruised,
yet tender white and sweet underneath.

My joy is a tangy tangerine; tart and citrus
to even at times bitter,
giving a firm smile to lips puckered.

My peace is a bowl of red juicy tomatoes, meaty and firm,
yet ready to be sliced and spiced for eating.

My patience is a yellow banana with brown spots,
slender and curved waiting to be peeled.

(The meat of a banana has three long parts

splitting from the middle: kindness, goodness, gentleness.)

Kindness like sweet strawberries giving blessings to many.

Goodness like blackberries growing wild
and spontaneously in unusual places.

Gentleness like soft juicy peaches melting in the mouth.

Faithfulness is like large striped watermelon with
its thick tough rind protecting a
tender blood red core and productive seeds
hidden inside.

And self-control; like grapes, the fruit of the vine,
when fermented and spirited grow wild
and out of control,
but when revered becomes a
holy communion.

Like St. James

Let me say not that I have faith
But let me practice my faith in trusting surrender.
Let me say not that I have love
But let me practice my love in acts of kindness.
Let me say not that I am humble
But let me practice my humility in unselfishness.
Let me say not that I am patient
But let me practice my patience in silent waiting
(in not complaining).
Let me say not that I have joy
But let me practice my joyfulness in praise
and thanksgiving.
Let me say not that I am peaceful
But let me practice my serenity in a quiet calm longsuffering.
Let me say not that I am good
But let me practice being good in politeness.
Let me say not that I am knowledgeable
But let me practice what I know in self-control and gentleness.
Let me say not that I am wise
But let me practice wisdom in fearful discernment.
Let me not say that I am strong
But let me say that I am weak and rely upon God's faithfulness.
Let me say not that I am anything----
nor can do any of these things;
But let me walk in God.

A Pentecost Psalm

“When Israel come forth from Egypt....from an alien people...” Psalm 114

When the church came forth from Israel,
The Bride of Christ from Jerusalem,
His Body became the Lord’s temple,
Our hearts became His kingdom.

The Spirit moved at the sight:
the Waters flowed forth from the City,
Tongues of Fire fell like rain
and Wind blew like rushing water.

Why was it, Water, that you freely flowed,
that you turned back, O God on your course?
Tongues why did you fall like fire;
Sounds, like a mighty rushing wind?

Tremble, O church before the Lord
In the presence of the God of the Twelve,
Who turns hearts in a pool of baptism
and flows forth Springs of water. Selah

“There is a river whose streams
 Make glad the city of God” (Ps 46:4)
There is a Spirit which gleams
Joy for the people of God!

The Waters saw you, O God, (Ps. 77)
the Spirit saw you and ignited.
Mercy and power flowed down
Like a mighty rushing fire;
inflamed by the wind.

The depths of men's hearts
were moved with terror.
Your Gospel Voice flashed to and fro;
and no one heard a sound
except the blowing of the wind.

Your Spirit lighted up the world,
the earth was moved by Your stillness,
When Your Way led Your people
through the paths of righteousness;
and no one saw Your footprints. Selah

“We shall drink from the stream
by the wayside
and therefore we shall lift up our heads.” (Ps. 110:7)

ISAIAS 24

The wine was once a sweet and tender cup.
But now bitter is the beer to its drinkers.
The band played loud revelry to sup'
And now the song is sour to its singers.

The party comes to a quickened halt,
The lights turned out; with trash the room is filled;
and suddenly we realize we are at fault.
The dancing is abruptly stilled,
We revelers sway under our guilt and violence.
We reel like drunkards in the street.
The screaming guitar is silenced.
Stilled is our prancing and our beat.

Our crimes have set the table,
our guilt pours the cup to brim,
the skins filled to burst;
The soup too thick with fat to ladle,
The bread and wine; our sin,
The meat on the plate; our curse.

This is the awful table to which Jesus comes for us.
This is the bitter cup He prayed to pass.
Yet for our sins His flesh and blood is given to sup'
With the Cross upon His back He bore us;
His death has become our saving cup.
Now His rising is our joyous life to last.
Praise Jesus!
Who did not let the bitter cup to pass.

Romans Nine

Many may look at me and say
"There but for the grace of God
go I." That's nice and all,
Good for them but what about:
is your Grace for me nigh?
Lord will you lead me the way?
Can to the potter say the pot,
"He does not understand me!"
Or to its modeler the clay,
"Why did you make me this way?"

Lord, will I be a vessel of Your glory?
Or will I be a vessel of Your wrath?
A fine China cup to pour tea in?
Or just a pot for others to pee in?
Lord, what is my story?
Show me my path.

Lord will Your mercy be upon me?
Why do I continue to struggle any longer?
Where is my hope in Thee?
Will I be a vessel of dishonor?

Welcome indeed the heritage that falls to me.
Let me "Your chosen" be called.
Lord I trust in Thee
Let me be Your Jacob, not Esau.
I will accept Your saving fate chosen for me
Help me to stand and to not fall.

I chose to be God's elect
I believe I am and so I am.
So God works His saving effect.
If I believe not – so I am not.
That is what I believe.
Through His Cross I am sought.
Yet this I cannot even conceive
By His mercy I am bought.
Only God Knows His marvelous plan.
Only in faith's mystery I stand.



137

By the rivers of Babylon
there we sat down.
There we hung our harps upon
the poplars there.
There our captors asked us for songs
but we just wept
By the rivers of Babylon.

By the rivers of Babylon
there we just wept.
"Sing to us one of Zion's songs,"
our oppressors scorned.
How can we sing, O Lord, our songs
in a foreign land?
By the rivers of Babylon.

By the rivers of Babylon
may I lose my skill
If I remember not Zion;
my one treasure.
My greatest treasure lies beyond
in my Zion—
Even by the rivers of Babylon

By the rivers of Babylon
may I lose my tongue
If ever I forget Zion;
My one true Joy
How I long to sing that song;
Zion's new song—
Leaving the rivers of Babylon.

By the rivers of Babylon
recall, O Lord;
our fall in Jerusalem;
how they tore it down.
Our hopes dashed against the stones,
our hearts broken;
By the rivers of Babylon.

O sing how long, how long
for that new song?
O sing how long, how long
to sing that song?
Coming down from up above
the new city
Upon the rivers of Babylon.

Happiness Happens

The heavens declare the happiness of God.
The firmament shows forth His delight.
Living life in awareness cries out the gladness of God.
The gladness of God cries out in mindfulness.
The days put forth His pure delight.
From one end of the sky the sun
bursts forth from his chambers in utter joy.
And he runs his course to the other end
like a champion celebrating his runner's high.
And nothing is left untouched by his constant mirth.
Truly happiness is our natural state.
When all the inner obstacles can be removed,
In contentment, acceptance,
enlightenment to authentic reality
(which is the light of the sun as divine will);
Happiness remains.
(though maybe hidden at times by clouds or dusk)
Happiness happens for us in the gladness of God
And nothing is left untouched by His gladness.

Canticles the 2nd

Look the winter is now past;
the rain is over and done,
none ever can last.
The time of pruning is come.

Flowers have appeared in the land
the Vine's early fruit is at hand
the cooing of the doves is heard
the heart strings are stirred.

Blossoming fragrance has come
How lovely is His Dove
The Rose of Sharon;
His banner over me is love.

O do not arouse or awaken love
until it so desires.

Wait for the Spring Doves to come.
Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you.
O Spirit Dove ignite your fires,
Like a lily among thorns are you.

From the hiding places in the mountains
My dove show me your face
The flowing of your streams and fountains
in the heart's most secret place.

Let me hear your sweet voice
To my soul so lovely and sweet.
O let my spirit rejoice
When your fruit I have to feast.

Catch for me the dirty little foxes
That run about so wild ruining vineyard's bloom.
Restore to me my terrible losses.
Come, arise my beloved soon.

How lovely are your dwelling places.
The moment is too fast and never lasts.
The time here is now for your presence.
All too quick the quiet wind passes.

The Joy of the Lord Is Our Strength

(Neh. 8:10)

Let our praises praise
Our thanksgiving give thanks
The strength of our days
In the joy the Lord gives.

Our faith believes
our trust waits.
Our worries, love relieves.
Our prayer contemplates.

Our Joy is Peace dancing;
our Peace is Joy resting,
upon the Lord's bosom;
Jesus ever blessing.

In the end praise praises
Thanksgiving gives thanks.
Our joy rejoices
in the Spirit our heart raises;
we lift up our voices.

Let God Be praised
to defeat our enemies;
by such He has ordained
to silence the foe in me

Lift up His glory
He has begun His reign.
Tell of His Majesty.
Blessed be the Name.
Share the Testimony
In heaven and earth the same

In us the Spirit prays
In Jesus our loves love
 - breaking through the
 underlying unity
 -Jesus prays
in sacred intercessions whereof
we come before Blessed Trinity
 Where openness is all;
 In all is one.
 Hear the call
 Be the Son.

The Number of Times

"God has a thousand years to make a day;
I have but one day to make eternity – today!"

Christian De Cherge' OCSO
(French Monk martyred in Algeria, 1996)

There is no time with God:
a thousand years, a single day:
it is all the same.

There is no rhyme with God:
a thousand tears , a simple play:
it is ALL -- that He came.

A thousand tears about too many cares:
it is all the same

A thousand hairs and too many grains
of sand running through the glass;
To You it is all one, even for to die.

A thousand years in the sand to pass.
But it was that one single hair at last
flickering on my neck that caught Your eye.

It is all one for You the same: time to pass.
this moment and a hundred thousand in the past,
--and all those ahead: so what is the care of time?

What is the time of care?
But You fell for that stray hair
and gave Your all for this heart of mine
--so small. For that You came.
Now, so—it is all one.

A thousand years pass in the night
like yesterday come and gone
Our days pass away in the flight
through hours dark and long.

Our life is over like a sigh.
Seventy or eighty years
is the shortness of our time
and these filled mostly by pain and tears.

Let us know the passing of our life
that we may gain wisdom of heart
Peace mixed all along in the strife
Both affliction and Joy from the start.

“Lord make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us,
for as many years as we have seen trouble.” (Ps 90, a prayer of Moses)

III

Tears of Blind Lions

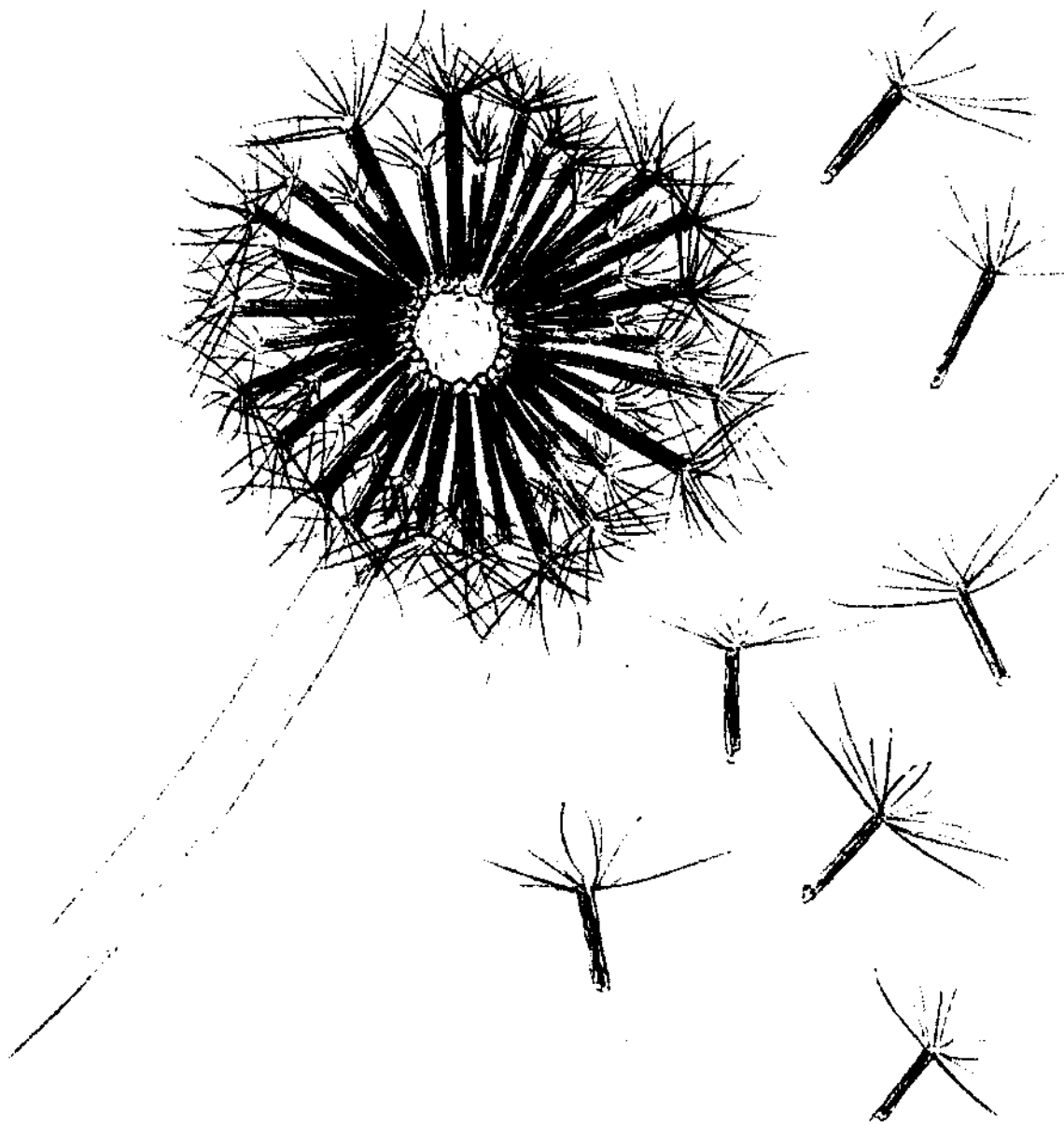
“When one tries to speak lovingly of God,
all human words become like tears of
blind lions seeking sources in the desert.”

Leon Bloy

“It is good to give thanks to the Lord,
to put words together to your name,
O Most High,

your love in the morning to proclaim,
by the unrhymed verse or the poem,
with the murmuring sound of the koan.”

(cf. Ps. 92)



God is Love

O God,

You are wrapped in light as with a robe

You are covered in dark as behind the black veil of widows.

You are draped in color as the blending of the rainbow's hues.

You are powdered in pollen as stamens surrounded by love petals.

You are fleeting in sound as the warblers songs, as in their carols.

My Lord,

You are the color of clear in spring waters pure.

You are the rushing of waves in the ocean's surfs,

--foam flowing to and forth

the tides never still; ever crashing waters.

And still You are the rocks to cry;

"Thus far and no further!"

--no matter how they try.

My Love,

You are the air that swells my chest held in expansion.

You are the warmth in the breath I sigh.

You are the salt in the sweat of my brow;

The musky, lathery smell of my skin.

You sparkle the shine in the center of my eye.

My Jesus,

Every bird that sings

to me Your name brings.

Each breeze Your fragrance;

the sweetness of Your remembrance.

My God,

You are the darkness of my night,

-the stillness of my silence,

-the emptiness of my time,

-the empty humm of passing moments.
You are the clattering of my mind,
-the flowing stream of my consciousness;
-even the very distractions
of my thinking and my time.
You occupy every one of my days' occurrences.
You are my living essence.

Lord, concealed in all of these.
In Love You reveal Yourself true to me.

Deepen My Love

“So in each of us the Christian person is that which is fully open to all other persons, because ultimately all other persons are Christ”

Thomas Merton

- + Lord in loving others we love You.
In loving others we find our love for You.
Yet still conversely, I cannot love others until
I first love You.
And You have loved me first!
Deepen my love for You Lord.

- + Help us to realize that we cannot be with You
when we reject, judge and condemn each other.
Help us to recognize You, in some way, in all others.
Help us to see that in turning away from others
we turn You away from us.

- + When we accept each other we accept You.
When we befriend another we befriend You.
When we love one another, each unconditional,
we love You unconditionally.
And in kindness and caring for one another
we worship You
and show You our love
and adoration for You.

“My God, my Mercy”
(Ps. 59:17, 143:2 – Vulgate)

“It is mercy, not misery, that makes a person happy,
but miseria is the home of misericordia.”

-St Bernard of Clairvaux

My God; My Mercy!

It is your mercy I address to my misery.

Your heart is sorrowful because of my sorry heart.

Have mercy on me your most miserable servant.

It is my miserable state which makes your heart miserable.

Your heart is heart-sore (misericordia) for me.

As is my miserable heart for you.

The misery of my heart makes my heart sore in longing for you.

And it is the tender compassion of your heart which makes

Your heart passionately sore with me;

and for me in my misery.

My God; My Mercy!

It is my free-will which you have given me, which makes me a
miserable slave to my sin nature. Yet it is just my

free-will which enables me to love you. Oh miserable

state this is! But God, your love; “misericordia” is at

home in my misery. Your mercy is attracted to my misery.

For mercy’s natural home is in the misery of freedom – love.

God, in Jesus, Love is at home in my fallen misery, in mercy!

He Became Sin

"I stand before the cross and wonder." -Lois A. Cheney
(from God Is No Fool, 1969)

To know the Cross of Christ
is to know sin

-who is without it?

To see the Cross of Christ
is to see Truth and Justice

-who can stand it?

To feel the Cross of Christ
is to feel the sting of sin.

-who hasn't felt it?

To gaze at the Cross of Christ
is to gaze at the One cursed for sin.

-who isn't cursed?

To carry the Cross of Christ
is to invite Him in.

-who can bear it?

The disciples asked Jesus,
"Who then can be saved?"
He looked at them and answered,
"With man this is impossible,
but with God all things are possible."

"Can you drink this cup?"

Hosanna! Save!

Be Love!

"If I pray for love so as to have love and enjoy it, I lose it at once."

-Thomas Merton

Lord, I see that the purpose of Love is not to have love,
but to give love. Still yet it is not even to have enough love to give, but it is to BE LOVE.
Lord you know if I have something I will possess it;
Grab it, hold on to it, manipulate it; even while giving it.
But if something, like you, has me it possesses me; and flows through me. So you tell me to
experience
your love. BE LOVE.

WE AM: LOVE

Together One as Love. It is the pure Love of You loving Yourself in me. What does this leave of
me? Nothing! Yet everything! Oh! The fullness of the emptiness of Your Love! How can it be?
If it is just simply You loving You; where is my place in this? Yet you call me forth out of
Yourself; me in You only loving You! Oh! What a privilege that You would do such a wonderful
thing in the void of my wretched, deprived soul! And that I would encounter such Love as
participation;
Communion, wholeness...
then even as recipient and giver of what all is given: a "first love!"

I am: Before Him Be.

“For in Him we live and breathe and have our being.”
(Acts 17:28)

“And if the earthly no longer knows your name,
Whisper to the silent earth: I’m flowing.
To the flashing water say: I am.”

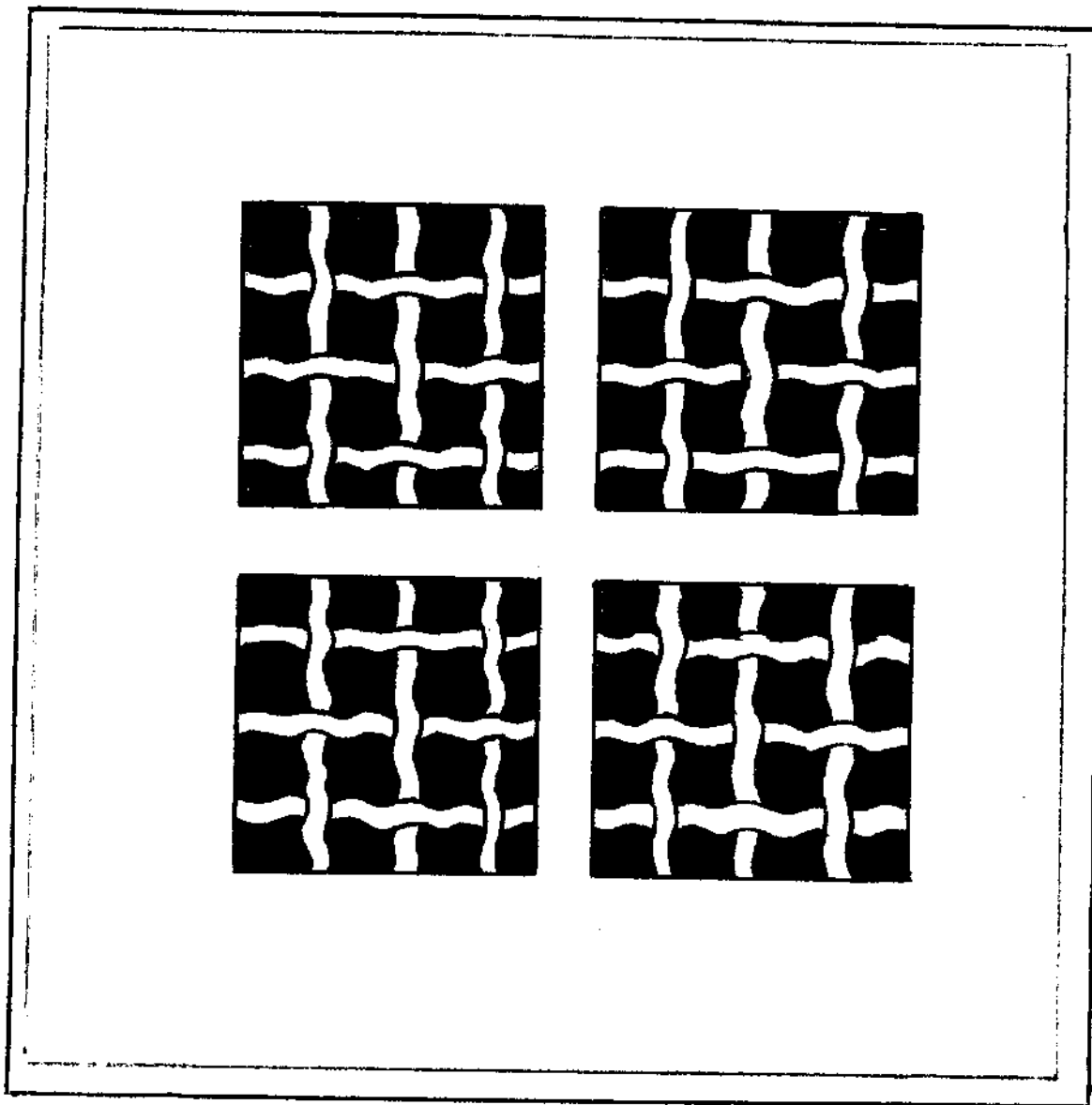
(“Sonnets of Orpheus”
Rainer Maria Rilke)

The earthly would not acknowledge Who he was,
So he whispered to them: I AM.
Before Abraham: I AM.
My blood flows for you,
upon your hands, or into your heart.

And if the world no longer knows who you are,
Whisper a prayer to your silent world:
my blood is flowing.
And to your chattering inner earth: I am.
Before Jesus, I am.
Before Him be
still.

Go In Beauty

The heavens declare
the Wonder of God
(mide): the bear
leaves tracks
in the clouds across the sky
billowy white soaring high
in blue contrast.
The sun shows forth all His handiwork
in daily nature's laws;
day after day puts forth a silent speech
night after night thunders bear claws
-a wordless knowing
the cloud of unknowing.
In the morning dawn dances (and finds)
fast the lady ant
At dusk: the bear reclines.
The daystar comes forth from its chambers
runs its course through its suspended tent
the firmament upheld without pillars
(while the moon away is sent):
marks time
And by design;
it all goes in beauty.
"Nih-Zhoni-go" the Navajo say
it all goes in beauty.



IV

**TEN
PEN
POEMS**

The Art Of Tea

The fancy of the rich
The blessing of the poor
The harvest of monkeys
The exotic of Eastern lore.

Ah tea—
The luxury of my cell.
How you bring blessing
-here to me.

My tea and my solitude
touch each other like breath and air.
Sometimes my cell is rude
And breathing becomes my prayer
God is in my morning tea as I become aware
And some psalms become my morning food.

The night is a still yellow calm
And cool blue the morning here.
But the day's loud heat comes fast;
I open with a quiet little psalm:
"Light, rescue me from my fear.
How long will this night last?"

Let the comfort of my morning pekoe
Be the comfort of Your Peace.
To flee the dark shadow
Send my cell the Paraclete.
Rescue me from the day's heat.
Praise to God in my morning tea.

What I Wear

Blues man "Blind Man Lemon" sang
Wondering if his clothes
Would fit into a match box.
I don't own the clothes I wear-
My shorts are even community shared,
Including as well my socks
And they don't always match.

Thomas Merton wrote in his journal on contemplation:
"What I wear is pants.
What I do is live
How I pray is breathe."

I liked that so I wrote in mine:
"What I wear is white,
Where I live is confinement
How I breathe-
Is prayer!"

I am not where I live
or what I wear,
nor with a lot of words.
What I am is in my prayer.

Johnny Cash wore black for the disfranchised
for the poor and the prisoner.
He said, "until times are brighter."
Now he wears white and sings a New Song
He understands it all by and by;
No longer now such a fighter.

When St Francis naked abandoned his world
Upon the first pauper peasant he saw
He asked for his humble poor robe.
This simple robe became the monastic habit.
He wanted to wear only the lowliest clothes.

My simple prison white I wear
Are my humble holy habits;
poor lowly and disreputable.
So now I live without a care
-to what I wear
Now simply what I am
is only in my life of prayer.

Birds Monastic

Morning warblers singing in my window
are harmonizing with my morning prayers.
Birds singing the antiphon responses.

Birds chirping chants like cloistral monks in choir,
Repetitious mantras like robed Buddhist.

Red or orange robed Buddhist in the ashram.
White robed monks or inmates meditating
Repetitious antiphons to the psalms.

Birds in repetitious tones of praises
Meditating upon the psalmody.

Air flows through nostrils in meditation.
The wind blows and the Spirit I inhale.
And this breath I know not from where it comes.

I breathe out my mantra cry for mercy.
I breathe in and I know not how it comes.

I know not except that I am in God.
I know not how; except that I am one
With the birds chanting praise in my window.

“All your creatures shall praise you, O Most High,
and all your friends shall repeat their blessings.”

(Ps. 145: 10)

At Home On Pilgrimage

Walking around
Circling the day room
Some will question
"Where' you going?"
"I'm walking home."
Am I there yet?
Oh! This is my home.

I am on pilgrimage
My heart is set on journey
I live for the coming age.
I travel mostly alone.
I've finally let go of the rage.
I've finally found my home
The road ahead I cannot see
But where I am I'll be at home.
And I know I am free
 Each day
One at a time, I turn a page.

MY Life is Over; In Your Hands

What does it mean to be free
and yet live in this prison?
What does it mean to see
the light and still be in this darkness?

How do I live in this prison
and live my life with You?
How do I live life without reason
and put myself into_____?

Your Hands
Your Love
In Babylon lands
and Zion above.

What does it mean to live in You
In the land of my exile;
though my life is through;
to keep peace still all the while?

How do I take my next breath?
How do I live with /without my sin?
For it is death!
My life is over in_____.

What does it mean to hear the silence,
Is darkness my only friend?
What does it mean to still the violence
In my soul that never ends.

How do I keep hope
Against hope in Love?
What does it mean the seeds to sow
-oooh
And make it all enough?

Your wounded hands
My injured love
In Babylon lands
And sweet white doves,

Coming down upon the water
Flowing free as the blood;
Spirit of the Desert Fathers
Coming down from above.

A Hermit In Between

The chirping of the hidden cricket
The croaking frog
The minor chord from the distant trees
Through still hours long
I hear the silence of the dark
In the night's sounding song.

an unceasing praying.

Ah the beauty of the surrounding silence
The Presence of God all around about us.
In the stillness of silence
The heart can finally find us.
Oh for more of such a bliss –ness

-an unknowing peace.

But I am a hermit among screaming
violent men in perversions,
a silent solitary surrounded
by incessant obscenities and televisions.
Still this is my community
to love and to endure;
to be a small light;
to bless and to be blest in my world
-in an inner quiet.

-a Presence deep.

As the prayer is actually said
in the space between the beads;
God is in the space between two thoughts.
Between the words in prayer God reads.
And that which binds all together
as the untouched string;
so fragile, elusive and precious;
is the Spirit Love He brings
which fills the space between.

**Dots of Lights
(to escape from fantasy)**

I see dots of lights
Through the peep holes
of my window, on the horizon;
a yellow street lamp, a white moving headlight;
a farm's porch light perhaps? A distant country home?
An antenna's red spot.
I wonder what it would be...
To be out there under such light?
I wonder who's driving the car?
Who's sitting on the porch?
Or alone under such a little lamp...
I wonder what it would be?

Anywhere but here
my mind wants to be.
Anywhere but present—
away from here my mind wanders.
Yet only to be here is—
Only to be Present
is to be real.
Alive
Living with God.
For only to be here is
 -only here is God!
The Present I AM
The very Present Presence
the only "to be-ness" of my very being.
And here there-in
is my only Peace.

So;
In spite of being unhappy much of the time
I am happy believing I can be happy in this place.

A Rubber Chicken Life

"Charles Emmerson Winchester III" pulls a rubber chicken from his symphony. Moments earlier seeking a calm relax rapt in tender escape from the insanity and death of the place. Jolted back to reality by that rubber chicken he cries out and screams to his father; "Get me out of here! Get me, the Hell, out of here!"

But ah, to accept, to bless, to even love
that rubber chicken: that is the meaning
and the secret to life.

Hugh Gallager wrote as an NYU applicant
to the question to define himself:

"I can make Thirty- Minute Brownies in twenty minutes."

How about Minute Rice in half an hour?

In that sentiment I write:

If men are from Mars and women from Venus

I must be from Pluto;

and Pluto is no longer even a "planet."

I am a refugee of a wounded love, and an outlaw in America.

I am the property of the state yet am a free man.

I believe what is "normal" is simply a setting on a washing machine

And what is "fair" is a carnival in the Fall.

I make abstract art; floral arrangements on paper, and I don't

watch t.v. I sleep about 4 hours at a time, and I've made

extraordinary four-course spreads using Ramen noodles,

pickles and chili packs.

The laws of Karma and seeds of sin apply to me

but the norms of society do not.

The I.D. card I carry says "Offender."

Does that give me a license to be offensive?

Yes, I am a card carrying member of this country club.

I do belong to this "gated community."

I am unforgiven, yet I have received much Grace.

I live, I love, I meditate, I take and give, yet I no longer

take my life so seriously.

I read, I write, I draw, and sing, and slow dance

to songs on my radio.

On weekends I stay in my house (my cell) for sometimes
three days straight.

I work and I pray, I eat and sleep and face the days
one at a time.

I make friends with weird, uncool, nerdy guys
and I do no longer cuss.

I believe Elvis and Hitler are long dead but I have
heard from Jesus. I believe I see him in others.

Long ago I discovered the meaning of life and I
found it meaningless,

and therein is my peace.

And I am not defined by any of this.

Lord You Came

"It's the fearless who love and the loveless who fear."

Joe Eli

Lord you came to a captive people to set them free.
So, Jesus in my prison remember me.

Freedom different from loosed bonds and chains.
A freedom for Peace in oppression while suffering remains.

A freedom for Comfort and strength to endure the heart pains.
A freedom for Joy in burdens while sorrow remains.

Lord have mercy on me a sinner.
In this type of Peace I'm only a beginner.

In this place where only "might is right"
Help me to live humbly in meekness in your sight.

Where only the strong live in love; others remain in fright
Help me to return in love all the hate and spite.

Here in fear they say, "kindness is weakness"
In truth only the courageous are kind and strong in meekness.

To live here in Peace I must walk here in Love!
I then find my release; making Peace in Your blood.

Lord you give me strength when I am weak
And give me Hope when in despair.
Your Peaceful Kingdom I seek
In Love you find me there.

Be Still

"Listen to the stones of the walls...they try to speak your name. Listen to the living walls."

-T. Merton

**In darkness
I stare at these concrete
blank, empty walls.
In the stillness of empty
time
I watch the paint chip.**

**In the empty spaces
I see mouths, eyes and noses;
all kinds of creatures'
faces.**

**These walls tell me I am home.
What do the walls say?
These bare walls teach me how little I really need to live.**

**O God, there is no snowflake that
was not designed by you .
There is no raindrop
that a place
was not 'dained to fall
in that spot.**

**There is no dark prison cell
that was not prepared
by you for me to be in.
There is no darkness
which you are not in.
What a holy place this is.**



In a dry, weary land without water...

V

What? Nothing i.e. everything

A Strange Empty Peace

Sitting in the emptiness of my cell
being still and quiet
in the emptiness of my shell
this shell of my body
where my soul empty dwells.

Sometimes the emptiness is nice
-a nice numbing effect.
A little more uncomfortable in other times
always a humbling place
Somehow I connect
the very Presence of God in that space.

There is a real passive peacefulness to nothingness.
A settled serenity to be empty; to surrender.
Even a purposeless driven meaninglessness
to the void of living as
Just being.
Simply Presence.
Letting go easy and tender.

From where comes this strange empty peace
Who can tell?
It is only a gift of Love from within.
The gift of being still,
in love at ease.
It comes in the heart when
the simple Spirit fills.

Still the empty space remains.
He is in the emptiness.
Not even as such to fill it
But all the same just to be it.
Still it all stays.
Emptiness is fullness;
Fullness is emptiness.

It is all the same.

Stoeltje – 55-

What is this emptiness?

“What? Nothing, i. e. everything!”

“Nothing in all the world

is so like God as stillness.” (Meister Eckhart)

Nothing is so empty

as perfect stillness.

Nothing so calm, so peaceful.

A stillness to curse in fear;

Or to in love bless.

Opus Dei

I don't think much of my meditations.
Yet they are my life.
I think too much in my meditations.
I'm supposed to be in a deep sitting zazen.

Moreover though
the fact is
my whole living has become
a sitting zazen;
An empty purposeless gaze.

But my monkey mind
continues its hoots and hawks
jumping from tree to tree.
And I just shake my head
and smile at it.
My mind over hazens;
sitting zazen.

Behold my God!

I don't do much in my meditations.
But I do them much.
It's an "Opus Dei" (a work of God);
and not mine.

My Zen Zion

Sitting za-zen in my Zen Zion
Dark matter moves through me
I am the closest thing
I have to who I am
-or am I?
-darkness
-desert flowers
-solitude
in pure prayer.
Where nothing changes
and nothing remains the same.

in solitude
allone with God
all loneliness in love.

Note: Henri Nouwen pointed out that when you add the letter "l" to the word alone you get, "all one." I like to see it as one word "allone"; alone synonymous with oneness. And the added letter "l" is for "love".

Nhat Hanh's Exile Dream

I go to a hill in the north.
I play there and leave things
on that hill. I plant trees
and build a wooden pagoda.
I play in the water of streams,
and from there I gain strength
to go forth
to meet friends and grow dreams.
The hill grows – leaves, flowers, poems.
The hill grows me. When I am gone
I become sad—lost and lonely for my hill.
Yet the hill never remains the same.

My Meditations

1. At 2:47a.m. time strips down and stands bare before me. I'm not really attracted to it unless I look upon it with love. And though it may seem at times even repulsive as is some nakedness, in calm still love there is a pleasantness to it. The thrill of pleasure has nothing to do with it -- or any kind of self stimulus. Even time's uneasy edge is gone from it. I examine it in its crude rawness and see its purity. To project any kind of thrill or feeling to it; as in being useful or productive or even fulfilling; is to violate its pureness before me. To do so is to inject my ego self into it -- and then its nakedness is hidden. No, that kind of raw time of night, this purity of darkness is completely bare of myself. Bare and utterly separate of me, yet I find that I am completely entangled into it in my very being. My very existence is one with it. This is when time becomes pure Presence. And I see in its purity that my very am-ness is wrapped up in union in its Presence. I am as I am in time as it is. The I AM -- becomes WE AM.
2. In this cool calm quietness of the morning, before the coming heat surge of the clamoring day's ruckus, I sit still and poised with folded legs beneath a big round bare belly. Like a lucky Buddha to be rubbed. There the idea is to connect with God, though my monkey mind seems to prohibit such with heeks and hawks of incessant thoughts of insane ramblings. The Scripture says. "Be still and know...." But stillness seems so illusive and the furthest place to my rushing stream of consciousness. Greater than the roaring rivers and stronger than

the mighty rushing wind is the Presence of God.
So I just sit there and let the flowing stream
Pass by, trying not to pay too much attention to the
flowing flood. And then the stillness is nice.

3. Deep underneath the rushing current the water
is calm and often very still. And if there is any
movement it is a smooth flowing of silk sheets
in the breeze. Deep is calling on deep
in the roar of waters. The quiet is lovely.
And my head grows light. Either from the night's sleep,
or from the Spirit's keep.

The Mystery of Our Faith

I said my morning prayers
to the birds singing the antiphons.
The psalmody accompanied
by the warblers in my window.
Sitting cross legged on my bunk
the cool Spring and damp
morning breeze blowing
whistling the slats
announces the new Season.

Christ has died
and the air still
calls that He's coming.

Christ has risen
Calling us to His Peace;
Comfort and fear not.

Christ will come again
Have hope.
Keep still.
Wait patiently upon the Lord.



VI

HAIKU HAPPENSTANCE

**“The central act of haiku is letting an object or event
touch us, and then sharing it with another.”**

- William J. Higginson

**Haiku = objective images written down outside mind
the result is inevitable mind sensation of relations.”**

**- Allen Ginsberg
(journal entry Berkeley 1955)**

Thirteen Ways to Face the Day

the day eyes open
centering sitting, psalmody prayer
...then coffee

saying amen
my eyes open,
i face the day

with fan running
headphones in place
i can begin

reading words
writing letters-
i have friends

the space
between us –
God in communion.

entrusting words
to incense soaring aloft
I say amen.

sipping caffeine
to classical music-
today's crutches

drinking tea
making haiku--
today's work

the space
between thoughts
finds God

Allone
in solitude
being one
loneliness in love

ding—
an elevator opens
going...where

coffee, tea, pop, juice
stains down the front of my shirt—
a drinking problem

a gift
giving up
times gives me —
nothing: i.e. everything

rain in my window
dims the light
the room softens

a bird bath
a warbler wiggles
sheds crystal water droplets
others flee away

snow blowing (or smoke?)
soars from the white mountain's peak;
a Timberline view

illuminated in the night
sparkles the trickling water
under my path; the moon

Spring

is that a wasp
oh, a hummingbird
collects pollen

is the sky on fire
or the clouds pushing
down the sun

a glowing horizon
pauses my night walk—
a moon rise!

on a midnight hike
glowing eyes dance through the trees
startled deer spots us

Summer

with every landing
puts together hands & feet
a fly bows and prays

a dragonfly descends
upon the pond—flapping wings
a perfect ripple forms

a beach walk at night
through thick fog at low tide—
where's the water's edge?

sleeping on the beach
the ocean breeze shoos away
pesky mosquitoes

wet laundry

on the line - white
flying clean

children chasing,
fireflies –here!.

-look here

now there—

- here!

-there

sugar orange slices
in a formal candy dish;
love in Nana's den

Autumn

warming hands on a coffee mug
the first cold morning of autumn
--my heart eases

is that fire
oh; the trees
turned autumn

yellow & orange leaves
fall unto a stream
flowing blue ripples circle

cool air
sweetens the smell—
an autumn rain

green leaves
now orange & yellow
then blown away
--falls

racing through traffic
running red lights—
a funeral procession

Rain Time

rain on my window
dims the room's light
my mind softens

rain in my window
the drip...
 drip...
 drip...
 drip...
 keeps time

time in my window

rain in my window
the drip
 drip
 drip
 stills time

rain in my window
with each drip
drip
doing time
with rain in my window

VII

**A Fond Natural Possession
(a fragment of voice in life)**

“Out of the quarrel with others
We make rhetoric.
Out of the quarrel with ourselves
We make poetry.”

--William Butler Yeats

Unfinished Love

"I love you with what is in me that is unfinished." Robert Bly

Thus my love for you is so imperfect.
But it is all I've got to love you ,
 this me incomplete.
Oh, it's this dividedness which makes
 me unfinished
Which causes so much unrest;
 Where is the peace?
My love for you is beyond my understanding.
Love's very passion is its fault.
Like a moth swirling in the porch light
 in the vicious cycle caught.

I love you with what is bitter and sweet;
Sweet to the palate; bitter to the heart,
Like candy to children: rotting the teeth
 and spoiling the will,
leaving my soul empty and incomplete.
The sweet sugar makes hyper;
 -restless; the inability to sit still.

My loneliness makes me want you.
But when I actually look at it
I'm not really attracted to you.

Someone once told me
I've got a lot of love to give.
But really I believe
It's actually just a lot of emotion
I've got on my sleeve.

One thing I've certainly learned,

Two things do I know:

I must not live my life on the cuff of my
sleeve.

Your love is much bigger than mine.

And one day you will complete my love,
and finish me.

Sufficient The Day

"Am I dead? And, if not, why not?" -James Wright

Bone I was born to be.
Dust I will return to see.
Dark and dirty
in dust I lie,
Soft and gritty
the flesh must die.

But for now I am born to be
in flesh and bone alive to see
this day's flowing blood and marrow.
But who knows about the morrow.

It Seemed Like A Dream

"Death will come and will have your eyes—this death which attends us..."

-Cesare Pavese

Oh if we could only see this
 which has our eyes.
We would grow up and quit
 being so foolish of ourselves
 -this death which attends us.
When this death touches ,
 our eyes can open
 and we can mature;
 and with those eyes
 see life.

Those eyes will come
Like the eyes on butterfly wings;
Stern yet fluttering about
 seemingly reckless.
Yet finally they settle
upon one as gentle as
a mysterious peace—
in not darkness but mystery.
Cease striving
Be still.

This Hope is the faded label
on a broken cup of death.
The handle has snapped off
so it cannot be grasped
 -resting precariously
on the back of my hand;
without a saucer.
 It is there, though
I have little control of it

my eyes running throughout
my being.

This cup made of the delicate
porcelain of Hope filled with death;
Can I drink this cup?

I will be released from this prison
That day I can already remember.
It seems like a dream
That day the Lord leads us captives out.
Be merciful to us Lord.
All too full with contempt are we
With our captors' disdain for us.
The Lord has done great things for us
Indeed we are glad.

(cf. Ps. 126,123)

A Walk In The Night

"Well as I know the roads, I shall never reach Cordoba." --Lorca

Standing on a little bridge
over trickling brook I saw
the Moon Rise on
my Dark Night. Before
I thought it was just the glow
of a distant town. I didn't know
what it was.

I didn't know what was coming,
It felt something ominous.

It came up large
over the hill shining through
distant silhouette trees.
I had to turn around
and go back. I had seen enough.

O Jerusalem
I can't get there from here.
Only you my soul glow
can get me there.

Cordoba overcomes me
distant and glowing
a white purity of sphere
Glowing and lonely in the
Distance of my long Night.

Nirvana,
I will never reach you!
Can you come to me?

Ah, kingdom within
Perhaps you're all
here already.

All one with
my Present now.

"See What You Hear"

-Jesus (cf. Mk 4:24)

"Sólo el misterio Nos hace vivir Sól el misterio" - Federico Garcia Lorca	(Only mystery lets us live. Only mystery)
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When I sing in the chapel of this prison
I know my voice doesn't know how to sing very well.
But I pose a question, please do tell;
"Do you know how to listen?"

Faith comes by hearing
and hearing by the ears.
But the substance that's telling
Do ears know how to listen?

Faith is the substance of mystery.
Only mystery touches the heart.
Ponder and wonder; "Taste and See"!
Only mystery touches the heart.

Nose,
Do you know how to smell?
"No I can only smell what scents
waft into my nostrils."
So I will have to keep a nose-gay of faith
to sense the Presence with the nostrils of my soul;
which can sense the substance of
non-things.

Ears,
Do you know how to see?
Do you know how to listen?
"No. We can only hear what waves
can move our drums so small."

So I guess I will have to hear
with an inner ear in my soul;
to listen to a Voice of faith
that my old hairy ears cannot hear.

Eyes,
Do you know how to listen?
Do you know how to see?

“No. We can only see what rays
of light penetrate our lenses.”

So I will have to see with the inner eyes of my spirit,
to perceive that Light which penetrates my heart;
what eyes cannot see.

Mouth,
Do you know how to taste?
Do you know how to speak?

“No. I can only say words I know
how to form with my tongue.”
(I can't even roll my 'r's.)

So I will have to pray and share with only my heart;
in the Spirit with groans too deep for words.
Then I shall taste His goodness with a savor
the tongue cannot touch.

Hands,
Do you know how to feel?

“No. We can only touch
with our fingers.”

So I will have to learn to bless others
with the hands of my obedience.
Then I shall feel a Peace and Joy beyond
simple emotion.
A love beyond comprehension.

Then I shall truly walk by faith and not by sight,
-in what eyes cannot see
and ears cannot hear.

See to Death: See to Life

“Death will come and will have your eyes—
this death which attends us
from morning to night, sleepless,
deaf, like an old remorse
or absurd vice.” - Cesare Pavese

Death has us to take life more seriously.
Still yet death would (at the same time) have us
so to not take my life so seriously.

Yes

Death will have us
and there is Joy.

But we would rather just ignore it
cling to our blindness.
Use our foolishness
so we just won't have to face it.

Death can rid me of my lies
this attendant to help me see my real self
this guide to lead me through life.

So death, yes, where is your sting?
How do you win?
The sting of death is my ignorance.
Death wins by my ignoring him
-staying in stealth
-in darkness.

He wants to charge in a surprise attack,
he would catch us off guard.
But shine light on his path
and the darkness dispells.

He ever attends us
And he has our eyes.
He looks right at us
and he looks just like us.

He says to us all, "I shall come to you."
"But just don't think about it all."

There can be a great victorious freedom in death;
 -in living death,
 if I could just see it,
if I could keep death ever before my eyes
The saints tell us this.
"...and the last enemy to be destroyed
is death."

Yes death attends us
But if we shall attend to death;
Oh the joy of such a peace.

Yes death has our eyes
But if we shall see to death;
Amen we shall see to life.

VIII

Without A Right

From an Anti- Rapport

“But if repentance were to emerge, one would first have to despair completely, to despair out and out, and then the spirit-life might break through from the very bottom.”

-Anti Climacus



Let both grow together...

No Virtue In A Vacuum

There is no virtue in a vacuum
For how can I turn the other cheek
Unless the right one is first struck?

-Blessed are the meek.

How can I go the extra mile
Until I'm forced to go the first;
-and all with a smile?

-They'll inherit the earth.

How can I die to my sin
Unless a cross of transgression is first
Upon my back lain?

-Blessed are those who hunger and thirst.

How can I forgive my brother ,
And practice love for such haters;
Unless first my brother offends me?

-Blessed are the peacemakers.

I must suffer for virtue
In many ways I must fail for virtue.
God help me when I fail
and suffer for virtue.

-Blessed are the merciful for they'll
receive mercy, even while so frail.

No virtue in a vacuum
No virtue without a trial
No virtue without vice
The test comes in the second mile.

-Blessed are those who for righteousness strive.

How is love stronger than hate?
How does good overcome evil?
How does mercy triumph over judgement?

-for they will be filled.

It's all in the Cross.

The weeds must grow with the wheat.

Look to the Cross.

How does the wheat benefit from the weeds?

See the Cross!

Where absolute evil and the fullness of Grace meet!

There Is A Place Deep In Your Soul

There is a stream
whose rivers give joy
to the city of God.

There may seem
at times no joy;
to be no God

But there is a place
where you can know
and find yourself whole.

There is a place
where you can go
and find Him in your soul.

There is a river
to drink by the wayside
to lift up your head.

There is a Giver
for you to find
whose heart was shed.

There is a land.
not made of soil or sand
where you can stand.

There is a band
that plays on the wing
-sweet Hosannas.

And there is a Hand
to touch your heart to sing
-deep Alleluias.

There is a space
in your heart to go
-to know
Him who makes it all flow...

--together where all is one;
In one stream,

one river,
one Giver,
one land,
one band,
one Hand,
one place,
all in one space.
-deep in your soul.

Can You Drink This Cup?

“...taking this question seriously would radically change our lives.
...to crack open a hardened heart and lay bare the tendons of the
spiritual life.”
- Henri Nouwen

Can you drink this cup?
Can you empty it to the dregs?
Can you taste and savor
all the joys and fully the sorrows?
Can you let go of your legs?
Can you release all your tomorrows?

Can you be bound but truly free
to accept where ever it leads?
Can you be blind and lose your eyes
and yet to really see?
Can you be led where you
really don't want to be ?
Can you lose your flesh that dies?

Yet to keep this calm that really knows
All is well, all is well, indeed all is very well!
Yes, you shall share my joys and sorrows
Very well; you shall drink my cup ...very well.

Can you drink this cup?
The cup of Salvation I will take up.
Welcome indeed to the lot that falls to me
The Lord is my lot and heritage to see.
The Lord is my portion and my cup.
Welcome indeed is the heritage that falls to me.

Why God?

a boy gags and squirms on the gallows
the people in the death camp ask
"Where is God?"

famine, wars, and rumors of war
the singer screams
"God, I can't believe in You!"

the philosopher prophecies,
false or not;

"God is dead!"

but God,

i

i cannot

not believe in You

-gift or curse

so it is

the question "Why"

"If God is..."

How can there be..?

speaks mainly of

what i desire—

what i want You to be

than what You are

Agape is

The only

Answer.

when everything falls apart i ask God; "Where were you?!"

and then He asks me; "Where were you when I put everything together?"

that's Job's real dilemma.

**Three Crosses:
A Communion Life**

I do remember one sad Calvary day
My Jesus Savior died:
Upon Him their crosses lay.

Three crosses: Justice, wrath and mercy.

I do remember another one fine Calvary day
A cross on my back was laid;
That I with Him too might die.

Three crosses: fear, grief, and desire.

This I do now to remember
The cross of my Salvation
In love I share this communion
-a communion in misfortune.

Three crosses: illusion, God and Reality.

A fellowship of suffering
A passion of sharing
The cross we join in union
Divine compassion bearing.

Three crosses: sacrifice, freedom and faith.

Three crosses by the side of the road
One cried out, "save us!"
Another, "Why? O God of mine am I forsaken?"
The other simply, "Remember me."
In a last breath all is forgiven

Three crosses: darkness, desert flowers and pure prayer.

Why?

The answer is in a nail
Hammered to a wooden beam
Fastened with flesh in between
Pierced and raised up on high
Naked in shame for all to see
Forgive them Father is His cry.
Save us, O God, from this Hell.

Three crosses: silence, solitude and a pure heart.

This only is the place where
Justice and Mercy kiss
The place where nothing is fair
Though satisfied is Righteousness.

Three Crosses: to bear fruit, to bear one another, to bear
salvation

Next to Him one cries out:
"Save us from this Hell!"
The other simply, "Remember me."
He answers, "Today you'll be with me"
"In the place from where we fell."
This is what it is all about.

Three crosses: security, trust and confidence.

"Give us this day..."
This the day of Salvation
Where
Justice and Peace have met
This day of new creation
The day all time is set

Three crosses: the dread of the day
having a plan
the fear of not getting my way.

In three crosses our Peace comes:
-change, courage, and wisdom.

"...and Jesus abandons the weight of his body
to the cross
and dies."
(The Twelfth Station)

Three crosses: acceptance, surrender; serenity.

Give us this day
The day all eternity is set
This day of Salvation
Where Justice and Peace have met.

Three crosses by the side of the way.
Actually there were four hung that day.

Feel The Life (Lean Into It)

"Even when you can't see your hand in front of your face spiritually speaking, this life is always very very happy." - Thomas Merton

Feel the pain
Feel the joy
Cry the tears
Sing the song
Soak in the drenching rain
Blessed are the poor
Feel the time of years;
Soft, easy and hard and long

**"We make the world we live in."
-Lyle Lovett
(or we make the best of it anyway.)**

Give the love you are
Be the Peace so near
Feel the Dove not far
See the release so real.

**"Only that day dawns to which we are awake."
-Walden**

To be alive is to feel
Sorrow, pain, pleasure and glad.
To live; to be real;
Is to weep, and is to laugh,
To feel the fear,
To leap and to fall.

**"To believe in this living
Is just a hard way to go." John Prime**

To be awake
Is to be aware
-not to be fake
to these all.
Then all ends in life giving joy
And a peace without care.

**"without the hurt the heart is hollow
-Ed Ames**

Love will sustain us!

“Blessed the meek.”

“Happy the sorrowing.”

Life is abundant in such

This what we seek

A deep calm abiding.

“The deeper that sorrow carves into your being, the more joy
you can contain. Is not the cup that holds your wine the cup that was
burned in the potter’s oven?”

Khalil Gibran

Happiness happens in the miles

Innocence comes in the years

Through the fears

-and tears;

And all the while

It all ends in a lovely solitude quiet.

“Some kind of solitude is measured out in you.”

-John Lennon

Anti—Poesy

I put words down on paper
and I'm gonna arrogantly call it poetry;
without a rhyme or even a song in my heart.

My words come through like
weeds creeping through pavement
and simply bloom where planted.

Gentle and fragile—
Yet with a force that can crack and move
Hard crusted rock.

My words come through dark places

--silence

--emptiness

--long sleepless nights

--longing; searching for a small glimmer of light of hope.

My poems say

“can anybody understand me?”

My poems are like a turquoise peacock

Lurking about with a thousand eyes;

“...is anyone else like me?”

Alas, finally those eyes

Must turn in on themselves.

What is it that I am really looking for?

What is it I truly need?

What is ego?

What is fantasy?

I once read all romance is really an escape from reality. Perhaps that's true.

True communication of love is a spiritual solidarity.

-Or is that just ego also?

Still real spiritual Communion;

Isn't that something different?

I

