

Readings

Space

has
eg
etc

From: "Heart of Flesh" by Joan Chittester

What the world needs are more circles and fewer pyramids. Circles are strange and wonderful things. No one knows where a circle either begins or ends. No one can tell what is its most accomplished part. There is no up to go to in a circle, no steps to climb to arrive there, no top to get to, no crowning point upon which to plant a flag or stake a claim or build a throne. In a circle there is only eye-to-eye conversation, only shoulder-to-shoulder contact, only community to aspire to rather than hierarchy.

Ladders and pyramids assume a society of serfs, of peasants, of lackeys and underlings, of in-groups and out-groups, of higher and lower classes. Circles, on the other hand, assume a society of equals. It isn't that circles are disorderly or chaotic; it's just that they depend more on consensus than they do on control. It isn't that circles have no room for leaders, it's just that they have no respect for despots, no matter how benign. It isn't that circles lack power; it's simply that circles distribute power and pyramids amass it at the top.

MAGNIFICATS

My soul weeps
and my spirit lies battered within me
for the world belongs to the heartless imagination of the wealthy
and greed for profit and fear of war rule the earth;
the powerless go unheard and the hungry are not fed
the poor and the weak are oppressed
and great things are done in the name of this generation.
Arrogant men and submissive women
squander the inheritance of our faith
and seeds of hope are left to die in the dust.
Who will save our children for the promise of your mercy?
Who will scatter the darkness of our disobedience to the calls for justice?
You who have looked with favour on your lowly servant Mary
will redeem your people in every generation.

Glory to the one who created us and who re-creates us,
glory to the one who redeemed us and who goes on redeeming us
Glory to the one who sanctifies and sustains us, now and for ever.
Amen (Terry Garley In MOW newsletter, Oct 84)

Part of Magnificat of Acceptance (from "Miryam of Nazareth-£5 p & p inc)

Yes, forever in the life of humankind
people will sing of this loving encounter;
through remembering this moment, the faithful
will know all things are possible in God
Holy is the place within me where God lives.
God's tender fingers reach out from age to age

I have experienced the creative power of God's embracing arms
and I know the cleansing fire of unconditional love.
I am freed from all earthly authority
and know my bonding to the Author of all earthly things.

I am filled with the news of good things;
my favour with God,
faithful trust in the gentle shadow of the Most High,
the mystery of my son, Jesus,
the gift of companionship with my beloved kinswoman,
Elizabeth, who believes as I believe.....

Magnificat used in "Widening the Web" celebrated at Embracing the Base, Dec 85, adapted from Phoebe Willett's version.

My heart is bubbling over with joy
with God it is good to be a woman
from now on tell all peoples, proclaim
it is a wonderful gift to be.
The One in whom power truly rests
has lifted us up to praise,
God's goodness shall fall like a shower
on the trusting of every age.
The disregarded have been raised up
the pompous and powerful shall fall ...
God has made good the word
given at the dawn of time

Rosemary Radford Ruether, a well known American liberation theologian, writing from a heterosexual point of view, in her article "homophobia, heterosexism and pastoral practice", points out that the christian tradition that sees same sex sexuality as a sin rests on the view of sexuality as legitimate only with a monogamous marriage, with reproduction as its primary purpose" As developed by St Augustine this view "disregards the relational purpose of sexuality as an expression and means of creating love. Even marriage was seen as of lower value than celibacy: all sexuality was regarded negatively, original sin came through the sex act. Any pleasure in it was regarded with horror in the early centuries of the church and something of this negativity lingers today.

I would have thought that any teaching of the magisterium that reflects these attitudes is flawed. We know its teaching changes over the ages, for instance on usury and slavery. In my grandmother's day the official church was still teaching that slavery was moral! How much credence can we put into its attitude to homosexuality today? Jesus did not mention it, St Paul did, but then he only knew of the promiscuous bath house or pagan temple type of same sex acts. Promiscuity is a distortion in either homosexuality or heterosexuality. I wonder if Christ would not prefer a love filled long term gay or lesbian relationship to a hate filled heterosexual one?

As for the argument that it is against nature if it occurs around the world (often hidden because of oppression) at around 10%, and is found in birds and animals, why should this be called unnatural? - It mainly seems to rest on the assumption that the only purpose of the sex act is reproduction. Is this part of revelation? Now that for some decades the authorities' past major emphasis on procreation has been lessened with the acceptance of the value of relationship bonding through sexual activity should lead to an understanding of gay and lesbian sexual acts as deepening relationship and this deepening having a spiritual aspect.

The present Pope once sat in plane next to Sr Jeanne Grammick, who has been censured for her pastoral work among gays and lesbians, and who had to change her religious order to avoid threats to her original international order. Ratzinger said to her he had never met a homosexual! - plenty of covert ones in the Vatican I would have thought - and how does this stand up with our call to truth and honesty that so many people have to hide their natures for fear of repercussions.

There has been concern shown by the bishops in (England, Wales and Scotland (I do not know the situation in Northern Ireland) with the pastoral care of those with same sex orientation, and condemning discrimination and

injustice in society's treatment of them, but this has not gone very far. Currently they object to civil partnerships feeling it would undermine marriage (one weird reason insinuates is that it would lead to the everyone becoming gay and the human race would die out!) They cannot see that opposing such partnerships leads to the greater susceptibility to promiscuous sex for same sex orientated people who have no partners. I have been to two religious civil partnership liturgies, one gay, the other lesbian which were deeply spiritual and to be envied for their creativity in use of prayer, symbol, music, movement and silence which one does not find in standard christian marriage liturgies.

There is one advance our bishops should be commended for and that is what are called the Soho masses. The community is not just of lesbians, gays, bisexual and transgendered catholics but also their relations and friends and there is a very welcoming atmosphere both at the mass and at the gathering afterwards. These take place fortnightly, originally in St Anne's Anglican church in Soho but the bishops wanted it to be under Catholic auspices and it is now held in the Church of Our Lady of the Assumption in Warwick st, behind Regent St. The mass itself is not anything out of the ordinary, there is a splendid choir singing classical church music at some of the masses and the standard of preaching is very high for leading Dominicans, Jesuits and others showing their solidarity by preaching the word in this community.

These masses of course send the trades into a frenzy – on one occasion a group burst in and throughout the mass stood by the pulpit chanting the rosary at the top of their voices. By now they keep their protests to outside the church, apart from delating the whole proceedings to Rome on a regular basis. All honour to our hierarchy that they stand firm in their support. (2)

Before we move on to other largely excluded groups could you buzz to your neighbour about your reactions to what I have said for 5 minutes.

Another major cause of exclusion from the eucharist are those whose marriage has broken down and then remarried (discovery itself is no bar, though this is not always realised)

Section 3

Since Vatican II there has been a development of greater ecumenical praying and working together, and for studying different view points, and the ARCIC considerations have made considerable advances, but only minor progress has been made where eucharistic sharing is concerned. Despite the many different aspects of the eucharist The Vatican's centralist focus emphasises the eucharist as expressing the unity of the whole church with the Pope as its head as the central feature which debars christians who are not RCs from table sharing. It almost comes across as if this and not the real presence is the crux of the matter. The people of God experience a real meeting with Christ in this sacrament: it is unlikely however that many would have the Pope and wider community in mind at this point.

Where the traditional explanations of what happens at the consecration, being essentially bound up in Aristotelian philosophy of substance and accident have widely been found inadequate, despite much theological explorations the debate still continues although there is a greater convergence of views between the churches. Should doctrine keep us apart? Is it not enough to accept the reality of Christ's presence without quibbling on the how?

Rome began to move on this question of inter communion in the later years of JPII and In 1998 The RC bishops of Great Britain brought out a significant "teaching document" on the Eucharist, "One Bread One Body", which specifically dealt with the eucharistic hospitality. This opens the door to limited sharing particularly in the case of interchurch marriages, which have suffered so much pain on being separated at this point. The National Board of Catholic Women did a real service to the christian community by bringing out a pamphlet entitled "May my Husband/ wife/parent/child (a Christian from another church) ever receive Holy Communion with me – and how?"

This quotes John Paul II in "Ut Unum Sint" (para 46, 1995) "It is a source of joy that Catholic ministers are able, in certain particular cases, to administer the sacraments of Eucharist, Penance and Anointing of the Sick to Christians who are not in full communion with the Catholic Church but who greatly desire to receive these sacraments, freely request them and manifest the faith which the Catholic Church professes with regard to these sacraments".

It outlines the norms: grave and pressing need: an unique occasion such as marriage, first communion or death: request by the member of another church to communicate, no access to a minister of his/her own church, a faith in the sacrament in harmony with that of the RC Church. Interpretation of these

Reading from "truthfulness" Hans Kung

The Church, consisting of human beings, must constantly be journeying through the desert, through the darkness of untruth and untruthfulness. Constantly she must seek afresh the new way into an unknown future. But, no matter how great the darkness may be, the Church always has a final guiding star, as the ancient people of God long ago had a guiding star through the desert; God's word that constantly brings us afresh into the truth. In these last times God's definitive word has become manifest in Jesus, the Christ.

NEW LIFE RESOLUTIONS (enough grapes for the participants and 2 bowls full of earth are needed)

We have called this section "New Life" Resolutions. We would like to use the secular idea of New Year's resolutions as it has something very positive to say to us as Christians. It is about New beginning, making a fresh start. We are going to use grapes - these will be passed round, take one and hold it for the moment.

We will then eat the grapes, and reject the pip which each in turn will bury in the earth of the bowls coming round)

In order to be healed, to grow towards wholeness we need to rid ourselves of the bitterness in our lives. That bitterness may be due to our own inadequacies, our own shortcomings, our own misguided desires, our own sinful wishes or it may be due to the inadequacies or desires of others.

Whatever the cause of the bitterness or pain we need to be able to let go of it and to start anew. (the grapes are eaten and the bowls of earth passed round) As we eat the grape let us savour the richness of the flesh and the richness and sweetness in our lives. As we feel the hardness of the pips, let us recognise the bitterness in our lives. Let us leave it behind us now. To show that we have left it behind let us bury our bitterness. (pass round the bowls)

(Litany and New Life Resolutions from the Epiphany Liturgy, Pratt and Seddon in "Women Created Liturgies")

Song My Year (Reflecting Praise 67

I'll weep no more
for what's left behind,
no more ties to bind
Or chains to hold me down
This is my year to love.....

Reading: Luke 2 22-40 (from the Inclusive Language Lectionary)

Poem A Song for Simeon TS Eliot

Song Simeon's Song : All join in tape from Iona "Innkeepers and Light Sleepers", song in the book of that name.

Take Lord and fold my life away;
its purpose is fulfilled...

May we, like Simeon, receive
This new reality.....

If I Had My Life to Live Over

Nadine Stair



I'd dare to make more mistakes next time. I'd relax, I would limber up. I would be sillier than I have been this trip. I would take fewer things seriously. I would take more chances. I would climb more mountains and swim more rivers. I would eat more ice cream and less beans. I would perhaps have more actual troubles, but I'd have fewer imaginary ones.

You see, I'm one of those people who live sensibly and sanely hour after hour, day after day. Oh, I've had my moments, and if I had it to do over again, I'd have more of them. In fact, I'd try to have nothing else. Just moments, one after another, instead of living so many years ahead of each day. I've been one of those persons who never goes anywhere without a thermometer, a hot water bottle, a raincoat and a parachute. If I had to do it again, I would travel lighter than I have.

If I had my life to live over, I would start barefoot earlier in the spring and stay that way later in the fall. I would go to more dances. I would ride more merry-go-rounds. I would pick more daisies.

Reader 1.

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Each one takes a stone as a symbol of power and builds a pyramid over a plant

All

The active love of God

We are asking, by the active love of God in us, to be delivered from all evil. For that to happen we must play our part: by resisting temptation; by forgiving the faults of others; by sharing our bread. These are the conditions to be fulfilled, the tasks to be carried out in the world, if the practice of God's will is to be achieved on earth as it is in heaven. Only then will God's Kingdom become a reality. Only then will God's name be kept holy in the practice of our lives. Only then will we be true sisters and brothers in our Creator.

Ed O'Connell

Reader 2.

Women, never part of the power structure, never confronted with Ladders to climb, have always functioned extremely well in circles. They gathered in prayer circles and sewing circles and the circle of the family. They functioned without pyramids, without power, without status, without expectation of positions of honor or institutional domination. They learned to function as one human being among many and became totally human because of it. Humanity was, of course, precisely their weakness in a patriarchal society that defined persons by biology rather than soul. Yet, because of women, the entire human race had the chance to be a touch more human as well.

Each one takes a stone as a symbol of power and makes a circle round a plant

1 MY MOTHER LAND

by Hamid

When my home
was violently separated from me
I thought death had come;
separation from my mother land
is the separation of my life.
I would die.
Born from mother land
into the wide world
alone, cold, hungry and naked,
it's a cost we pay
for birth,
the cost of discovering
a new world,
the cost of seeing
all the world,
the purchase
to be a refugee.

2 Poem By Ruvimbo Bunwe

age 14

So I have a new name - refugee.
Strange that a name should take from me
My past, my peronality and hope.
Strange refuge this.
So many seem to share this name, refugee,
Yet we share so many differences.

I find no comfort in my new name.
I long to share my past, restore my pride,
To show I too, in time, will offer more
Than I have borrowed.
For now the comfort that I seek
Resides in the old yet new name
I would choose.
Friend.

3 ALONE

The swallow, the sky's bird.
The swallow, the real black pearl of earth.

The swallow hasn't anyone
but everyone is its relative.

The swallow hasn't any nest
but everywhere is its nest.

The swallow is free from everything.
The swallow is a stranger everywhere.

The birds are thinking it is vagrant
and that this wonderful bird is coming to take their nests.

They don't know that no-one's nest
can conquer its heart.

They don't know the sky is its ceiling.
they don't know, the earth is its nest.

They've never seen the sun's light in the sky,
they've never heard the song of the plains.

With all of its character, the swallow is always alone
and it is looking to find other emigrant birds.

The swallow is looking for love and peace in the world
that can graft it to the sky and the Earth.

Because travel teaches it
the sky and the earth are separate.

Only love and peace can graft it to both of them.
And only love and peace can teach it their meaning.

4 WITHOUT YOU AND WITH YOU

I was looking for you at sunset.
I was sure you would come to my sky.

Some years ago a traveller said to me,
"Wait until one unique star conquers your sky."

Without you, my song wasn't any river.
Without you, my lips weren't any flower.

Without you, I was a stranger at my home.
Without you, I was a small blade of grass which has grown with wind.

Without you, life's voice wasn't bright.
Without you, any poet wasn't a discoverer.

Without you, the taste of to be wasn't sweet.
Without you, the meaning of flowers wasn't perfect.

Until I saw your eyes in Dave's dream,
I understood, you are my unique star.

I take you to a pool full of colours
in a garden of songs.

I can wear your discouragement,
I can make myself disappear with your existence.

I will make one shelter from your bosom
I will be a waterfall on your shoulder.

I will taste one hundred baskets of strawberries from your lips
I will blow the colour of seasons into your eyes.

I will be with you at the overflowing of rivers.
I will be with you during the flood of songs.

I will be with you under the cluster of the sun.
I will be with you on green sands of sleep.

I will grow old with you like old wine.
I will be with you at the lake of rainbow.

I will live with you, my real life's dream.
I will die with your love like one sweet sleep.

5 WHAT IS A REFUGEE? from: AS, Algeria

A refugee is like
a spirited horse
trapped in the same circuit
condemned
to spend
its life turning
the same wheel forever.
You are always looking forward
but you will never get anywhere.
There are many questions
about many obstacles
about culture
language, human solidarity
and how to build
a new life
in a new country.
This horse is still hungry and thirsty,
thirsty for liberty,
self esteem
confidence
and security.
He is hungry for
protection, family, career.
Is there a choice open to him?
Because he needs everything
but doesn't know where to look
or what to choose.
The result is that he is disappointed
and likely to die
hungry or thirsty
between choices.

6 Poem by Hafez Sohrab Soperhli from Sairafi, Iran

How difficult is the road:
Sometimes an abrupt rise,
other times, a slope in town;
as far as there is hope
you can climb the mountainous road
woe, if you run out of hope
then, missing everything
do stop getting bored
again, get on the road.
How difficult is the road.

Give me a candle of the Spirit, O God, as I go down into the
depths of my being. Show me the hidden things, the creatures of
my dreams, the storehouse of forgotten memories and hurts.
Take me down to the spring of my life, and tell me my nature
and my name. Give me freedom to grow, so that I may become
that self, the seed of which you planted in me at my making.
Out of the depths I cry to you, O God. [5]

The frontiers of the familiar are closed to you: you have no resting
place there... [6]

You *have* to be a pioneer, journeying to places which the rest of the
world ignores, humbly and courageously opening yourself to what
others do not wish to see, both good and evil...

It is a wilderness: but take it to your heart and bless it... [7]

From Prayer at Night - Cairns for a Journey - Jim Cotter

If we have practised seeing the presence of God
in everyone we meet, and particularly in those we
might expect to find difficult, we will be delivered
from stereotyping them. They are not just a punk
or a City gent: they are God's loved ones...

It is that discovery which is the essence of God's
call forward on the inner journey. For God's love
for his people is not a static love. He loves us where
we are, as we are, in order to help us move on to
where he would have us be. God calls us forward.
That is true in at least three senses:

He calls us into a deeper knowledge and love of
himself.

He calls us into a truer knowledge of ourselves.

He calls us into a more perfect service of those
around us.

We would much rather not hear any of these calls.
Each is full of danger, of the unknown, of the
frightening. We long to stay settled where we are -

physically, spiritually, emotionally - for fear of what
may befall us if we move.

If we find ourselves resistant to these calls, two
things may be happening. It may be that there is
something still unresolved in our inner life: a past
grief or hurt unhealed, an injury unforgiven. That
unresolved trauma makes it impossible for us to hear
clearly: it acts as static on the line. (And if that
seems too mechanistic a metaphor, it does indeed
constantly interfere with our inner processes as we
go over and over what we would like to say to the
man who betrayed us, or how much we miss a close
friend who has died.) We have to be helped to be
free of that trauma before we can hear clearly.

Or it may be that, despite periods of prayer and
reflection, Bible study and public worship, our lives
are too cluttered, too busy, too full of 'white noise'
to allow us to hear anything - our deepest selves, our
families, or God. Perhaps, oddly, this is a particular
affliction of 'religious' people, who proclaim justifi-
cation by faith but live justification by works.

From Towards Wholeness - a Journey. Charles & Hilary Elliott
Discussion pointers

1. What is your reaction to the readings?
2. Why are we going on a journey? (Lk 10:1-9, 33-7, Acts 1.8)
Where are we going? (Lk 24:46-8, Jn 14 1-6)
What does it mean to be a pilgrim? (Jn 13: 36-8, Mt 26: 38-43,
2 Tim 2 1-13).
3. The institutional church is also called to journey if it is to be
truly a pilgrim people. What needs to be done to make it an effective
sign?
4. What place has hope and prophecy in the journey?

JOURNEY - Further readings

The best is yet to come. The Christian pilgrim cannot stand still for very long because he believes that, although the world through which he is travelling is heavy with promises, they are promises which cannot be fulfilled in the world. All our experiences at the deepest level point beyond themselves and are incapable of fulfilling their own promises, unless like a traveller we go ever forward to the land of promise. So life has become for us what C. S. Lewis describes so aptly as: 'The echo of a tune we have not yet heard, news from a country we have not yet visited, the scent of a flower we have not yet picked.' So if we are not to get stuck we must travel to the country we have not yet visited, we must go out and find the flower that we have not yet plucked, and we must go on to find the music and its

source, ruthlessly refusing to stand still and settle down. The only difference between a rut and a grave is that one is a little deeper than the other. For if we get stuck, however far we are along the road, we shall die. The achievement of today's journey rightly brings me to a point of rest, and I am banging in the tent pegs to settle down for the night. But the dawn and the light promise new territory for conquering, and yesterday's achievements will be tomorrow's defeats unless we pull up the tent pegs and journey on.

(Marshall, Pilgrimage & Praise)

That is what resurrection LIFE is about: not being in pain, pain, injustice, betrayals, helplessness, but not letting them dominate. Joy and celebration are as integral to human life as suffering and dying, and if we need only one good reason to embark on the journey of prayer, it is to enable God to teach us the way to be authentically happy.

I am no longer trying for perfection by my own efforts . . . I want only the perfection that comes through faith in Christ and is from God and based on faith . . . All I can say is that I forget the past and I strain ahead for what is still to come; I am racing for the finish for the prize to which God calls us onwards to receive in Christ Jesus . . . If there is any point on which you see things differently, God . . .

make it clear to you; meanwhile let us go forward on the road that has brought us to where we are.

PHILIPPIANS 3: 9, 13-15, 17

God has created me.
God is my Lord,
having dominion over me.

God is also my strength,
for I can wish to do nothing
good without God.

Through God I have living spirit.
Through God I have life and movement.
Through God I learn, I find my path.

If I call in truth, this God and
Lord directs my steps;
setting my feet to the rhythm of
his precepts.

I run like a deer that seeks its
spring.

(Hildegard of Bingen)

(Delia Smith,
Journey into God)

18. We speak also of the Church as a pilgrim people. As the people of Israel were led by God through the desert on a pilgrimage of faith and trust towards the land he had sworn to give them, so the Church, in continuing, living and

rising again, follows its crucified and risen Lord on pilgrimage through history towards the heavenly Jerusalem. We are not alone on our pilgrimage of faith. We discern fellow-Christians of other Churches moving in the same direction as ourselves and in the same Spirit as ourselves

The Easter Pilgrimage

P.T.O.

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The Easter People

P.T.O.

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deeps of my being. Show me the hidden things, the creatures of
my dreams, the storehouse of forgotten memories and hurts.
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physically, spiritually, emotionally - for fear of what
may befall us if we move.

If we find ourselves resistant to these calls, two
things may be happening. It may be that there is
something still unresolved in our inner life: a past
grief or hurt unhealed, an injury unforgiven. That
unresolved trauma makes it impossible for us to hear
clearly: it acts as static on the line. (And if that
seems too mechanistic a metaphor, it does indeed
constantly interfere with our inner processes as we
go over and over what we would like to say to the
man who betrayed us, or how much we miss a close
friend who has died.) We have to be helped to be
free of that trauma before we can hear clearly.

Or it may be that, despite periods of prayer and
reflection, Bible study and public worship, our lives
are too cluttered, too busy, too full of 'white noise'
to allow us to hear anything - our deepest selves, our
families, or God. Perhaps, oddly, this is a particular
affliction of 'religious' people, who proclaim justifi-
cation by faith but live justification by works.

From Towards Wholeness - a Journey. Charles & Hilary Elliott
Discussion pointers

1. What is your reaction to the readings?
2. Why are we going on a journey? (Lk 10:1-9, 33-7, Acts 1.8)
Where are we going? (Lk 24:46-8, Jn 14.1-6)
What does it mean to be a pilgrim? (Jn 13: 36-8; Mt 26: 38-43,
2 Tim 2.1-13).
3. The institutional church is also called to journey if it is to be
truly a pilgrim people. What needs to be done to make it an effective
sign?
4. What place has hope and prophecy in the journey?

Ready's for a Journey on Journey

God has created me.
God is my Lord,
having dominion over me.

God is also my strength,
for I can wish to do nothing
good without God.

Through God I have living spirit.
Through God I have life and movement.
Through God I learn, I find my path.

If I call in truth, this God and
Lord directs my steps;
setting my feet to the rhythm of
his precepts.

I run like a deer that seeks its
spring.

(Hildegard of Bingen)

-
18. We speak also of the Church as a pilgrim people. As the people of Israel were led by God through the desert on a pilgrimage of faith and trust towards the land he had sworn to give them, so the Church, in continually dying and
-

rising again, follows its crucified and risen Lord on pilgrimage through history towards the heavenly Jerusalem. We are not alone on our pilgrimage of faith. We discern fellow-Christians of other Churches moving in the same direction as ourselves and in the same Spirit as ourselves

The Easter People

If we have practised seeing the presence of God in everyone we meet, and particularly in those we might expect to find difficult, we will be delivered from stereotyping them. They are not just a punk or a City gent: they are God's loved ones. . . .

It is that discovery which is the essence of God's call forward on the inner journey. For God's love for his people is not a static love. He loves us where we are, as we are, in order to help us move on to where he would have us be. God calls us forward. That is true in at least three senses:

He calls us into a deeper knowledge and love of himself.

He calls us into a truer knowledge of ourselves.

He calls us into a more perfect service of those around us.

We would much rather not hear any of these calls. Each is full of danger, of the unknown, of the frightening. We long to stay settled where we are -

physically, spiritually, emotionally - for fear of what may befall us if we move.

From Towards

Wholeness: a
"journey"

C S H ELLIOT

SECTION 4: READINGS/POEMS

A.

I, the fiery life of divine wisdom,
I ignite the beauty of the plains,
I sparkle in the waters,
I burn in the sun,
 and the moon,
 and the stars.

With wisdom I order ALL rightly
Above ALL I determine truth.

I am the one whose praise echoes on high.
I adorn all the earth.
I am the breeze that nurtures all things green.
I encourage blossoms to flourish with ripening fruits.
I am led by the spirit to feed the purest streams.
I am the rain coming from the dew that causes the grasses
to laugh with the joy of life.
I call forth tears, the aroma of holy work.
I am the yearning for good.

Invisible life that sustains ALL,
I awaken to life everything in every waft of air.
The air is life, greening and blossoming.
The waters flow with life.
The sun is lit with life.
The moon, when waning, is again rekindled by the sun,
waxing with life once more.
The stars shine,
radiating with life-light.
All creation is gifted with the ecstasy of God's light.

I govern the light of the skies,
I govern the trees, grasses, and all other earthly greenings.
I order the wild creatures,
I order all creeping and crawling things over and under
the earth.
Who would dare find fault with my methods?
In doing good, the illumination of a good conscience
is like the light of the earthly sun.
If they do not see me in that light,
how can they see me in the dark of their hearts?

* * *

Glance at the sun.
See the moon and the stars.
Gaze at the beauty of earth's greenings.

Now think

What delight God gives to humankind with all these things.
Who gives all these shining, wonderful gifts, if not God?

* * *

The earth is at the same time mother,
she is mother of all that is natural,

PRAYERS &
LITURGIES

mother of all that is human.
She is mother of all,
for contained in her are the seeds of all.
The earth of humankind contains all moistness, all verdancy,
all germinating power.
It is in so many ways fruitful.
All creation comes from it
Yet it forms not only the basic raw material for humankind,
but also the substance of the incarnation of God's son.

* * *

Like billowing clouds, like the incessant gurgle of the brook,
the longing of the soul can never be stilled.
It is this longing with which holy persons seek their work
from God.

All nature is at the disposal of humankind.
We are to work with it.
Without it we cannot survive.
(From: *Meditations with Hildegard of Bingen*)

B.
I saw that God is everything that is good
and energising.

God is our clothing
that wraps, clasps and encloses us
so as never to leave us.

God showed me in my palm
a little thing round as a ball
about the size of a hazelnut.
I looked at it with the eye of my
understanding and asked myself:
"What is this thing?"

And I was answered: "It is everything that
is created."

I wondered how it could survive since
it seemed so little it could suddenly
disintegrate into nothing.

The answer came: "It endures and ever will
endure, because God loves it."

And so everything has being
because of God's love.

* * *

"See!
I am God.
See!
I am in everything.

See!
I do everything.
See!
I never lift my hands off my works,
nor will I ever.
See!
I lead everything
toward the purpose I ordained it to
from without beginning,
By the same Power, Wisdom and Love
by which I created it.
How could anything be amiss?"

* * *

There is a treasure in the earth
that is a food tasty and pleasing
to the Lord.
Be a gardener.
Dig and ditch,
soil and sweat,
and turn the earth upside down
and seek the deepness
and water the plants in time.
Continue this labour
and make sweet floods to run
and noble and abundant fruits
to spring.
Take this food and drink
and carry it to God
as your true worship.

(From: *Meditations with Julian of Norwich*)

Reading: (Adapted from Matthew 5)

- 1 Blessed are you who are the lowly, the grass-roots, powerless yet filled with a passion to grow and make good. You understand God's purpose.
- 2 Blessed are you many, now, who have found such depth of expression in your grief. You shall find comfort in what you have caused to change.
- 3 Blessed are you who understand that justice must be made present always. You shall see it happen in time.
- 4 Blessed are you who show compassion to those who revulse you. You shall experience compassion yourself.
- 5 Blessed are you who do not judge but see everyone with clear, clear eyes. You see God in all creation.
- 6 Blessed are you who are peace makers. You, you are my own.
- 7 Blessed are you who are excluded suffering abuse, ridicule and scorn for what you are doing for me. To you I give my deep unstinting love.
- 8 Be happy my prophets, you are not the first, and most likely will not be the last, but I love you for what you are doing.
- 9 You are the salt of the Earth, bringing integrity to my world.
- 10 You shine as a light on the World, oh my People, illuminating cities, lands and continents exposing injustice.
- 11 Shine your light for all to see and understand who I am and what I ask of you, this day.

L.W.

All.

O God, the power of the powerless,
you have chosen as your witnesses
those whose voice is not heard.
Grant that, as women first announced the resurrection
though they were not believed,
we too may have courage
to persist in proclaiming your word,
in the power of Jesus Christ. Amen.

J.M.

IMAGES OF GOD

They have gone that far,
Not even left her a broken body to love
Vaking them up, he is not there, running again,
Not breathless, but not wanting to breathe any more,
It is true. he is not there. Sitting on a bank,
Panting, crystals in the grey morning light, pale sun
Creating jewels on the grass for the dead man's cloak,
Tears falling, oceans in a stream, he is not there.
How can you be still when the world is falling down
Around you, and your dreams are being broken apart,
Snails on a stone? She goes again, voices ask.
A voice asks; do they not know why she is crying?
And why have they taken the body? Then her name
And it is over, laughter, crying, clinging tight,
Love is born again, fast forward on the rewind,
Running, singing, death is no more, and he is there.

Everyone offers their own image of God and all respond

R. Your Spirit lives in our hearts.

Mary Ward wrote: O Parent of parents and Friend of all friends, without
entreaty thou tookest me and led me from all else that at length I might
see and settle my love in thee.

LISTEN to our voices, Creator God, calling to you with our images and
visions.

BLESS our efforts to recreate these images, console us in our trials and
strengthen our resolution. Keep us in your loving care.

R. Hear and answer us O God

All offer their petitions followed by the response

BEWARE!

***Here we practise the inclusive Gospel of
Jesus Christ.***

***This means you may be mixing with
tax-collectors, sinners, adulterers,
hypocrites, Greeks, Jews,
women as well as men, homosexuals,
lesbians, the disabled, dying thieves
and other sinners;
even black people, Asians and
other ethnic minorities,
Muslims, Bishops, bigots,
peoples of other faiths,
strangers from Rome and Nigeria ,
heretics, etc, etc –
even you, dear guest are most welcome***

***in fact anyone like those who Jesus mixed
with***

So beware, this is not a private club.

WELCOME TO ALL!

*Paul Jenkin
St Columba's House, Woking*

Sensing God in Creation: poems and prayers

Aware *Denise Levertov*

When I found the door
I found the vine leaves
speaking among themselves in abundant
whispers.
My presence made them
hush their green breath,
embarrassed, the way
humans stand up, buttoning their jackets,
acting as if they were leaving anyway, as if
the conversation had ended
just before you arrived.
I liked
the glimpse I had, though,
of their obscure
gestures. I liked the sound
of such private voices. Next time
I'll move like cautious sunlight, open
the door by fractions, eavesdrop
peacefully.

O Taste and See *Denise Levertov*

The world is
not with us enough
O taste and see

the subway Bible poster said,
meaning The Lord, meaning
if anything all that lives
to the imagination's tongue,

grief, mercy, language,
tangerine, weather, to
breathe them, bite,
savor, chew, swallow, transform

into our flesh our
deaths, crossing the street, plum, quince,
living in the orchard and being
hungry, and plucking

Sensing God in Creation: poems and prayers

the fruit.

On a Theme by Thomas Merton *Denise Levertov*

"Adam, where are you?"

God's hands
palpate darkness, the void
that is Adam's inattention,
his confused attention to everything,
impassioned by multiplicity, his despair.

Multiplicity, his despair;

God's hands
enacting blindness. Like a child
at a barbaric fairgrounds --
noise, lights, the violent odors --
Adam fragments himself. The whirling rides!

Fragmented Adam stares.

God's hands
unseen, the whirling rides
dazzle, the lights blind him. Fragmented,
he is not present to himself. God
suffers the void that is his absence.

As Kingfishers catch fire *Gerald Manley Hopkins*

As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;
As tumbled over rim in roundy wells
Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each hung bell's
Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;
Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
Selves—goes itself; myself it speaks and spells,
Crying *Whát* I do is me: for that I came.

Í say móre: the just man justices;
Kéepts gráce: thát keeps all his goings graces;
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is—
Chríst—for Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men's faces.

Sensing God in Creation: poems and prayers

God's Grandeur *Gerard Manley Hopkins*

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 reckon 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.

Spring *Gerald Manley Hopkins*

Nothing is so beautiful as Spring –
When weeds, in wheels, shoot long and lovely and lush;
Thrush's eggs look little low heavens, and thrush
Through the echoing timber does so rinse and wring
The ear, it strikes like lightnings to hear him sing;
The glassy peartree leaves and blooms, they brush
The descending blue; that blue is all in a rush
With richness; the racing lambs too have fair their fling.

What is all this juice and all this joy?
A strain of the earth's sweet being in the beginning
In Eden garden. – Have, get, before it cloy,
Before it cloud, Christ, lord, and sour with sinning,
Innocent mind and Mayday in girl and boy,
Most, O maid's child, thy choice and worthy the winning.

Sensing God in Creation: poems and prayers

Inversnaid *Gerald Manley Hopkins*

This darksome burn, horseback brown,
His rollrock highroad roaring down,
In coop and in comb the fleece of his foam
Flutes and low to the lake falls home.

A windpuff-bonnet of fawn-froth
Turns and twindles over the broth
Of a pool so pitchblack, fell-frowning,
It rounds and rounds Despair to drowning.

Degged with dew, dappled with dew
Are the groins of the braes that the brook treads through,
Degged with dew, dappled with dew
Are the groins of the braes that the brook treads through,
Wiry heathpacks, flitches of fern,
And the beadbonny ash that sits over the burn.

What would the world be, once bereft
Of wet and of wildness? Let them be left;
O let them be left, wildness and wet;
Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet.

What would the world be, once bereft
Of wet and of wildness? Let them be left,
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Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet.

Pied Beauty *Gerard Manley Hopkins*

GLORY be to God for dappled things—
For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;
Landscape plotted and pieced—fold, fallow, and plough;
And áll trádes, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;

Sensing God in Creation: poems and prayers

He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
Praise him.

i thank you God for most this amazing *E. E. Cummings*

i thank You God for most this amazing
day: for the leaping greenly spirits of trees
and a blue true dream of sky; and for everything
which is natural which is infinite which is yes

(i who have died am alive again today,
and this is the sun's birthday; this is the birth
day of life and love and wings: and of the gay
great happening illimitably earth)

how should tasting touching hearing seeing
breathing any-lifted from the no
of all nothing-human merely being
doubt unimaginable You?

(now the ears of my ears awake and
now the eyes of my eyes are opened)

In a Garden *Elizabeth Jennings*

When the gardener has gone this garden
Looks wistful and seems waiting an event.
It is so spruce, a metaphor of Eden
And even more so since the gardener went,

Quietly godlike, but of course, he had
Not made me promise anything and I
Had no one tempting me to make the bad
Choice. Yet I still felt lost and wonder why.

Even the beech tree from next door which shares
Its shadow with me, seemed a kind of threat.
Everything was too neat, and someone cares

In the wrong way. I need not have stood long
Mocked by the smell of a mown lawn, and yet

Sensing God in Creation: poems and prayers

I did. Sickness for Eden was so strong.

Harvest and Consecration *Elizabeth Jennings*

After the heaped piles and the cornsheaves waiting
To be collected, gathered into barns,
After all fruits have burst their skins, the sating
 Season cools and turns,
And then I think of something that you said
Of when you held the chalice and the bread.

I spoke of Mass and thought of it as close
To how a season feels which stirs and brings
Fire to the hearth, food to the hungry house
 And strange, uncovered things --
God in a garden then in sheaves of corn
And the white bread a way to be reborn.

I thought of priest as midwife and as mother
Feeling the pain, feeling the pleasure too,
 All opposites together,
Until you said no one could feel such passion
And still preserve the power of consecration.

And it is true. How cool the gold sheaves lie,
Rich without need to ask for more
Richness. The seed, the simple thing must die
 If only to restore
Our faith in fruitful, hidden things. I see
The wine and bread protect our ecstasy.

The Garden *Jones Very*

I saw the spot where our first parents dwelt;
And yet it wore to me no face of change,
For while amid its fields and groves, I felt
As if I had not sinned, nor thought it strange;
My eye seemed but a part of every sight,
My ear heard music in each sound that rose;
Each sense forever found a new delight,
Such as the spirit's vision only knows;
Each act some new and ever-varying joy
Did my Father's love for me prepare;
To dress the spot my ever fresh employ,

Sensing God in Creation: poems and prayers

And in the glorious whole with Him to share;
No more without the flaming gate to stray,
No more for sin's dark stain the debt of death to pay.

A Little madness in the Spring *Emily Dickinson*

A little Madness in the Spring
Is wholesome even for the King,
But God be with the Clown –
Who ponders this tremendous scene –
This whole Experiment of Green –
As if it were his own!

Gift *Czeslaw Milosz*

A day so happy.
Fog lifted early. I worked in the garden.
Hummingbirds were stopping over the honeysuckle flowers.
There was no thing on earth I wanted to possess.
I knew no one worth my envying him.
Whatever evil I had suffered, I forgot.
To think that once I was the same man did not embarrass me.
In my body I felt no pain.
When straightening up, I saw blue sea and sails.

When I Consider How My Light Is Spent *John Milton*

When I consider how my light is spent,
Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest He returning chide;
"Doth God exact day-labor, light denied?"
I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, "God doth not need
Either man's work or His own gifts. Who best
Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best. His state
Is kingly: thousands at His bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait."

Listen

'Listen to the voice of the Lord and enter into His peace'

Listen, to the gentle lapping of the waves
It is the breath of God.

Listen, to the roaring of the waves
It is the power of God.

Listen, to the shifting sands
It is the whisper of the Lord.

Listen, to the song of the birds
It is the praise of God.

Listen, to the rustle of the leaves
It is the sigh of God.

Listen, to the thunder and the gale
It is the might of the Lord.

Listen, to the music and the song
They are the joy of God.

Listen, to the rain and the mist
They are the tears of God.

Listen, to the sound of the snow
It is the sympathy of the Lord.

Listen, to a baby's cry,
a mother's sigh,
an old man's groan,
It is the Lord who speaks.

Listen, to those who cry for justice,
to those who plead for peace,
It is the Lord who speaks.

Listen, to the restlessness of your heart,
the depth of your feelings,
the ideas of your mind,
It is the Lord who speaks.

Listen, to the silence,
to the noise,
It is the Lord who speaks.

Answer him.

Anne Doyle 1996

JOURNEY - Further readings

The best is yet to come. The Christian pilgrim cannot stand still for very long because he believes that, although the world through which he is travelling is heavy with promises, they are promises which cannot be fulfilled in the world. All our experiences at the deepest level point beyond themselves and are incapable of fulfilling their own promises, unless like a traveller we go ever forward to the land of promise. So life has become for us what C. S. Lewis describes so aptly as: 'The echo of a tune we have not yet heard, news from a country we have not yet visited, the scent of a flower we have not yet picked.' So if we are not to get stuck we must travel to the country we have not yet visited, we must go out and find the flower that we have not yet plucked, and we must go on to find the music and its

source, ruthlessly refusing to stand still and settle down. The only difference between a rat and a grave is that one is a little deeper than the other. For if we get stuck, however far we are along the road, we shall die. The achievement of today's journey rightly brings me to a point of rest, and I am banging in the tent pegs to settle down for the night. But the dawn and the light promise new territory for conquering, and yesterday's achievements will be tomorrow's defeats unless we pull up the tent pegs and journey on.

(Marshall, Pilgrimage & Praise)

God has created me.
God is my Lord,
having dominion over me.

God is also my strength,
for I can wish to do nothing
good without God.

Through God I have living spirit.
Through God I have life and movement.
Through God I learn, I find my path.

If I call in truth, this God and
Lord directs my steps;
setting my feet to the rhythm of
his precepts.

I run like a deer that seeks its
spring.

(Hildegard of Bingen)

That is what resurrection LIFE is about: not being immune to pain, injustice, betrayals, helplessness, but not letting them dominate. Joy and celebration are as integral to human life as suffering and dying, and if we need only one good reason to embark on the journey of prayer, it is to enable God to teach us the way to be authentically happy.

I am no longer trying for perfection by my own efforts . . . I want only the perfection that comes through faith in Christ and is from God and based on faith . . . All I can say is that I forget the past and I strain ahead for what is still to come; I am racing for the finish for the prize to which God calls us upwards to receive in Christ Jesus . . . If there is some point on which you see things differently, God will

make it clear to you; meanwhile let us go forward on the road that has brought us to where we are.

PHILIPPIANS 3: 9, 13-15, 16

18. We speak also of the Church as a pilgrim people. As the people of Israel were led by God through the desert on a pilgrimage of faith and trust towards the land he had sworn to give them, so the Church, in continually dying and

rising again, follows its crucified and risen Lord on pilgrimage through history towards the heavenly Jerusalem. We are not alone on our pilgrimage of faith. We discern fellow-Christians of other Churches moving in the same direction as ourselves and in the same Spirit as ourselves

The Easter People

P.T.O.

Give me a candle of the Spirit, O God, as I go down into the
deeps of my being. Show me the hidden things, the creatures of
my dreams, the storehouse of forgotten memories and hurts.
Take me down to the spring of my life, and tell me my nature
and my name. Give me freedom to grow, so that I may become
that self, the seed of which you planted in me at my making.
Out of the deeps I cry to you, O God. [5]

The frontiers of the familiar are closed to you: you have no resting
place there... [6]

You *have* to be a pioneer, journeying to places which the rest of the
world ignores, humbly and courageously opening yourself to what
others do not wish to see, both good and evil...

It is a wilderness: but take it to your heart and bless it... [7]

From Prayer at Night - Cairns for a Journey - Jim Carter

If we have practised seeing the presence of God
in everyone we meet, and particularly in those we
might expect to find difficult, we will be delivered
from stereotyping them. They are not just a punk
or a City gent: they are God's loved ones...

It is that discovery which is the essence of God's
call forward on the inner journey. For God's love
for his people is not a static love. He loves us where
we are, as we are, in order to help us move on to
where he would have us be. God calls us forward.
That is true in at least three senses:

He calls us into a deeper knowledge and love of
himself.

He calls us into a truer knowledge of ourselves.

He calls us into a more perfect service of those
around us.

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