

## Praise for No Ordinary Time

*In No Ordinary Time and its daily readings for one week, Jan Phillips has packed a lifetime of “AHA’s”—thoughts that suddenly give us clarity about ourselves and other selves, the world around us. You will keep sentences in your mind, on your bulletin board, in your pocket and in your heart.*

Gloria Steinem, activist, author of *Revolution from Within*

*Superb book for finding inspiration and guidance for maneuvering through these extraordinary times. Jan Phillips is spot on in knowing what it takes to get us through into the world we all want. Don't hide this book on a shelf but keep it always in sight to go back to again and again.*

Elisabet Sahtouris, PhD  
Evolution biologist and futurist, author of *EarthDance: Living Systems in Evolution*

*The Book of Hours without a Monastery, Psalms without a Psalmody, Prayer without Gregorian Chant! Jan Phillips weaves an intriguing and inspiring tapestry synthesizing the wisdom embodied in an ancient tradition with the spiritual awakening engaging sojourners of the 21st century. This book provides a creative synthesis from monastery to market-place, from psalmody to poetry, from monastic time to the sacredness of every day, and every hour therein. Jan Phillips has provided an inspiring resource for our time.*

Diarmuid O’Murchu, author of *Evolutionary Faith*

*Jan Phillips is that rare blend of deep, creative thinker, passionate heart and true visionary. Her clear and special talent to communicate and to inspire action is needed now more than ever as we all try to navigate these extraordinary times.*

Rev. Wendy Craig-Purcell, Unity Center of San Diego, author of *Ask Yourself This*

*No Ordinary Time is not so much a book to be read as a sacred moment by moment practice to be engaged in. This is in stark contrast to most books whose ideas we read and forget the next day. If you are committed to exploring and living your destiny in service to life, No Ordinary Time is an extraordinarily practical wisdom teaching and gift you can give yourself that can help you embody the Divine in your own unique way.*

Jeff Hutner, editor, *New Paradigm Digest*

*An out-of-the-box Book of Hours that will stir your soul, stretch your mind, and embolden your contributions to mending the planet. Jan Phillips blends creativity, mysticism, and spiritual practice into startling and illuminating new configurations.*

Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, authors of *Spiritual Literacy*



NO ORDINARY TIME  
THE RISE OF SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE  
AND EVOLUTIONARY CREATIVITY



A BOOK OF HOURS FOR A PROPHETIC AGE

JAN PHILLIPS

No Ordinary Time —  
The Rise of Spiritual Intelligence and Evolutionary Creativity

A Book of Hours for a Prophetic Age

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# INTRODUCTION

*Seven times a day do I praise thee. Psalm 119:164*

These are no ordinary times. We are witnessing and participating in an evolutionary leap unlike anything in our history. There is evidence in the human family of an upward shift in consciousness, a maturing spirituality, a connectedness that grows more intimate and global by the day. And that uplift is countered by the dissolution of myths that no longer serve us and the demise of institutions that have underpinned our culture since the beginning of our history. Our planetary worldview is shifting to wide angle as we awaken to the reality of our interdependence.

We are the myth-makers and co-creators of the 21st century, the prophets and writers of new sacred texts. Growing up spiritually is a requirement of us this hour. There is no Geppetto God out there pulling strings. We are the vessels of the Divine, agents of Supreme Intelligence, neural cells of our home planet, and it is our job now to call God home, to tend to the kingdom that is all around us, and to create stories and cultures of hope and compassion.

This book is a call to mindfulness, a reminder that evolutionary action begins with stillness, that visionary ideas arise from spiritual practice. It is a book for people conscious of their power and ready to co-create new sacraments and ceremonies that celebrate the Divine dwelling within us. It is a handbook for people committed to justice, peacemaking and spiritual integrity who are eager to evolve themselves spiritually and creatively.

While its form is taken from the medieval *Book of Hours*, its content stretches into the future—an ancient chalice for tomorrow’s wine. It is a guide to reclaiming your spiritual authority, rethinking your inherited beliefs so you can create a life that is prophetic, ecstatic and true to your soul. It bridges the One and the many, East and West, masculine and feminine, darkness and light through an array of stories, poems, prayers and songs.

The *Book of Hours* originated in the Middle Ages as a way for people to stay spiritually mindful. The Jewish practice of saying prayers during the day was adopted by Christians as the basis for their daily spiritual practice. The Jews of the pre-Christian era had a source of devotional verse in the Book of Psalms, which included 150 prayers, poems and hymns. Christians adopted this book for their own use, and the “Psalter” soon became their main devotional text as well. Monks and nuns recited the Psalms according to guidelines laid out in monastic rules established primarily by St. Benedict.

In order to distinguish the divisions of time between the prescribed prayers, the Catholic Church established the canonical hours, also referred to as the Divine Office. Life in many medieval communities revolved around these hours of the day which were designated as Matins (midnight), Lauds (sunrise), Prime (6:00 a.m.), Terce (9:00 a.m.), Sext (noon), None (3:00 pm), Vespers (sunset), and Compline (9:00 p.m.)

Over the centuries, a number of supplementary texts were added to the Psalter. It became customary, for example, to frame the Psalms with “antiphons”—brief passages that helped to create Christian significance in the old Jewish texts. The antiphons were joined by a variety of prayers, canticles, hymns, readings from the Bible, and dialogues. The book that was developed for lay people who wished to incorporate elements of monasticism into their devotional life was called *The Book of Hours*.

This *Book of Hours* is designed for the same purpose—to give people a way to stay spiritually grounded throughout the day. It is based on the premise that we are in consort with our own Source and Creator, the Invisible One known as God and the visible one known as Earth. I am writing it for the ones who already know there is no distance between the Divine and the mortal, who al-

ready engage in an unmediated love affair with the Creator, and who, in such large numbers, have had to leave the churches that refuse to be relevant in these times of crisis. Many of these words will seem blasphemous to religious adherents who think there is only one way to be faithful, but one of the greatest ways we can serve each other is to challenge each other's thoughts.

When the German philosopher Jean Gebser wrote about his vision of the emergence of human consciousness, he referred to the myth of Athena, the Goddess of Wisdom, who was born from the head of Zeus. In *The Ever-Present Origin* (1949) Gebser uses the ancient myth to capture the epic struggle and effort of human development:

And it would be well for us to be mindful of one actuality: although the wound in the head of Zeus healed, it was once a wound. Every "novel" thought will tear open wounds . . . everyone who is intent upon surviving—not only earth but also life—with worth and dignity, and living rather than passively accepting life, must sooner or later pass through the agonies of emergent consciousness.

If this book does what I hope it does, you may experience some of these agonies as you release the old for what is emerging. I have stretched in my spiritual practice to think and pray not only as a Christian, but as a Jew, a Muslim, a Hindu, a Buddhist, a Native American, an atheist, a post-theist. I try on different hats as I light my candle, and while my thoughts might change or my prayers change, the Presence I am steeped in never alters, the Ground of my Being never moves. No matter what my spiritual stance, awe and adoration are the common ground. As I wrote one day during my morning prayers: "If there is a God, I am in awe. If there is not a God, I am in greater awe."

We are not here to debate what God means. We are here to live out the meaning of God, to BE the God we want to see in the world. This book is a holy book, full of reverence, praise, lamentations, and songs. It is one poet praying, to forces visible and invisible. It is one person sharing her intimacy with the Beloved. It is an adventure in aliveness, a sojourn for the soul. Come along. Let go and lift up.

No Ordinary Time

## CHAPTER ONE MONDAY

*When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child. But when I grew up, I put away childish things. 1 Corinthians 13:11*

# AWAKENING

**A**t an early age, I learned that God was a Being who dwelled in a place far from where I ever stood. I learned to commune with the transcendent God of the Above, not the immanent Divine Within. But over the years, as I let go of childish thinking and took responsibility for my spiritual life, my perception of God changed dramatically. I am guided now not so much by teachings that were handed down to me, but by ideas that have risen up from within—a shift that began thirty years ago when I was a young postulant nun in a religious order taking my first theology class.

The Jesuit priest stood in front of the room and asked us what we believed about God. One postulant raised her hand, stood up and said “God made me to show His goodness and to share his everlasting life with me in heaven.” I nodded my head in agreement, having memorized this years ago just like everyone else in the room.

The priest looked dismayed. “That’s it?” he asked.

“Yes, Father.”

“Sit down,” he barked, looking around for the next hand.

Up it went, and the next brave soul stood up saying, “In God there are three Divine Persons, really distinct, and equal in all things—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.”

I nodded again, and the priest frowned. “Is that the best you can do?”

“Yes, Father.”

“Next,” he yelled, as she took her seat, looking around in wonder.

By now, we’re all confused, but one more raised her hand.

“God can do all things, and nothing is hard or impossible to Him.”

“Sit down,” he said.

He rolled his eyes, crossed his arms and surveyed the whole group of us with a kind of silent disdain. By now, I’m feeling anxious and blood is rushing up my neck. I feel hot and sweaty. My first anxiety attack.

“How could he do this?” It seemed so mean. He asked for our ideas about God and yet, when we said them, it felt like he took a sledge hammer and smashed our beliefs into a thousand pieces. A tear rolled down my cheek.

It was a moment of devastating loss, incomprehensible sadness. I felt as if everything I believed in, everything on which I had based my life, was now being challenged. We sat there, thirty of us, for what seemed an eternity, reckoning with the obliteration of God as we had known Him. What if everything we believed wasn’t true? Did Father Grabys know something we didn’t know?

Finally the priest spoke. “You should be ashamed for having nothing more than catechism answers to this question. Are you just a bunch of parrots, repeating everything you’ve been taught? Hasn’t anyone here gone beyond the Baltimore Catechism in your thinking?”

The air was thick with silence. Hands were folded, eyes cast down. Tears cascaded down my face. I prayed he wouldn’t call on me.

“You must come to know what is true about God from your own experience,” said the priest. “If you are to be a nun worth your salt, you have to arrive at a faith that is deeper than your learning, one that is rooted in your ultimate concerns and rises up from the nature of who you are.”

I looked up at him, wondering how in the world to build a faith from my human nature. Wasn’t faith something I was born into? Something I inherited, from the outside? I was a Catholic by default. They told me everything I was supposed to believe. That was the point, wasn’t it? I was just lucky to be born into the one true faith. I certainly didn’t have anything to say about it. That’s what infallible popes were for.

I raised my hand and asked him how someone could create a faith from the inside out, and why we even needed to since we knew what we needed to know from the catechism.

“What you believe, that is religion,” he said. “Who you are, what you live for—that is faith. And that is what we are here to explore, to create and to de-

clare—our faith and spirituality. You can let go of your beliefs for awhile as you learn how to create a faith that will see you through everything.”

I didn’t want to let go of any beliefs. They were all I had. And they were enough. I didn’t need anything more, or so I thought. As we continued on in the class, the biblical paradox that says we must lose our lives in order to find them suddenly began to make sense. Taking responsibility for our own spirituality was a painstaking process that lasted the entire semester as we worked to find and define our own commitments and ultimate concerns—a task that was supremely challenging for young women who had been taught all their lives *what* to think, but not *how* to think.

We never looked at another catechism, never recited another memorized belief, but step by step, we built a new spirituality for ourselves that was deeply personal and rooted in our ultimate concerns. And every day, during meditation, there was something new and profoundly elegant to contemplate: myself as the creator of my own spiritual path.

The prayers, poems, hymns and reflections that follow are invitations to pause during the day to stay attuned to the Creative Energy coursing through us. They are modern day parables, written for the mystics and prophets of *these* times. They are revelations of a kind, distilled from hours of prayer and silence, and years of noisy living, calling attention to the hungers of the world and our role as co-creators to respond with love.

## MATINS (MIDNIGHT)

*When I open my eyes, there I find you  
When I speak, does your love flow out  
When I touch one in pain, do you heal them  
When I am silent do you bathe me in joy.*

Carl Jung wrote that “One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious.” But what training do we have for this? How do we enter into our own depths and make sense of the dark and penetrating mysteries? How do we awaken to our own knowing? How do we remember what we came here for, so the grand mission of our soul can be the propelling force of our lives?

How has it happened that, after all these years, we are still seeking, still dissatisfied, still comparing ourselves to this one and that, always coming up short? It is because we have listened to the voices outside of us and not to the sound of our own soul. We absorb the absurdities of this culture and shape our thoughts to its contours, rather than thinking originally and creating a jubilantly authentic life. This is a total abdication of our original bliss.

Our soul took on a body to do its work in this earthly milieu, and now most of us have forgotten the mission we came for. How many are trapped in meaningless, maddening jobs just to support a life we never came here to live? And it happens almost by default. Almost overnight. We have a notion, when we’re young, of a life that is fitting, in tune with our spirit. We start in that direction, but the cultural undertow takes us down. Everyone talks about money and new cars and big houses. No one says anything about work that matters. No one mentions the soul, the spirit, the passion and energy that comes from giving ourselves to something we love. Joy gets connected to *having*, and *being* takes the back seat.

Next thing we know, we’re forty, fifty, sixty, and it’s taking all our energy to keep what we have. Who ARE we then? What are we doing and why? Where are our choices coming from? Do we even remember our soul’s purpose, our heart’s desire?

Making the darkness conscious is about removing our blinders, restoring our sight. It is a journey to the deeper voice, past our programming and conditioning, beyond our self-doubts and insecurities. It costs nothing and gives us



everything. But we must be prepared for a shattering of what we once held to be true. We survived the dissolution of Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny and we can survive the dissolution of other myths that keep us childish and no longer serve us.

Anthony de Mello, a Jesuit retreat director and psychologist, often said, “It’s not that we fear the unknown. You cannot fear something you do not know. It’s loss of the known that we fear.” And awakening is just that—it’s giving up old thoughts and habits that no longer serve us. It’s creating our own creeds to live by. It’s remembering that we are born creators and that our ultimate, unique creation is our own life.

It’s a bit embarrassing, when we first wake up, to realize how much of who we think we are and what we think is real depends on what other people have told us. We are full of inherited voices, most of which were handed down by insecure people trying to pass on what someone told them.

When I was young, I’d ask my mother why my father said terrible things about some groups of people. She’d say to me, “Oh, honey, it’s not his fault. It’s just what he learned.” And I’d go away confused every time, wondering if he was a grown-up, why didn’t he think his *own* thoughts? Why did he have to keep thinking what people *told* him to think?

Anyone who has been shaped in any way by religious traditions has been exposed to a tremendous amount of contradictions. Sacred texts have been mistranslated, misinterpreted, and misunderstood for millennia. Depending on our programming, we can find in them anything we need to support our bad behaviors—sexism, racism, homophobia, slavery, violence.

That is why we need to inquire within, dip down into our own well of wisdom and come up with a faith that is true to who we are and what we know. If something you’ve been taught doesn’t ring true, alter it. If it’s too small to contain your magnitude, expand it. If it polarizes people, excludes people, leads to anything other than understanding and openness, broaden it or abandon it. It is up to us to create new canons of compassion and morality. We cannot wait for leaders to rise up from the masses and save us from ourselves—we are the leaders and this is our time.

Great Being of light and darkness,  
I stand with you and in you  
a citizen of earth  
a co-creator of culture.

I am the bulb to your Light  
and your radiance illumines the paths I take.  
Only praises ring out from my lips,  
tears of joy flow like rivers down my cheeks.

**This is the beginning of a new day. Each day you awaken to a canvas of twenty-four hours, ready for what only YOU can create. What will you make of this gift you've been given? What do you need to fulfill your mission?**

### LAUDS (SUNRISE)

*Though they speak of the distance between us  
Though they think you are light-years away  
I've awakened to find you within me  
As I breathe, you walk through my door.*

I light my morning candle  
as a humble hello  
to You, Invisible One.  
It is me here, I say,  
from the land of matter.  
Word made flesh, I announce  
breathing you  
(even when I doubt you)  
in and out,  
in and out.

I am steeped in the mystery  
of holy communion  
of known and unknown  
energy and mass  
heaven and earth

If there is a God, I am in awe.  
If there is not a God,  
I am in greater awe.

I bow like a spelunker  
in the cave of mystery.  
I pray from this cave  
I cut all ties to certainty  
I rejoice in wonder,  
bend my knee to the darkness

Inside me there is a spark  
called my spirit  
I spend my days calling out  
thanks for this  
in every direction,  
to the right and the left,  
the above and below,  
and I will do this faithfully  
till my last breath  
vanishes one day  
into the blue sky of You.

*Your own Self-Realization is the greatest service you can render the world.*

Ramana Maharshi

Self-realization, or spiritual awakening, is the actualization of our own divinity. It is a recognition of ourselves in all things and all things in ourselves, found through the contemplation of things as they are. The opposite of selfishness, it is a manifestation of ourselves as gift and mirror to others. The deeper one's self-awareness, the clearer we can reflect the other.

Self-realization is an exploration into the complexities and contradictions of life, an attempt to plumb the opposites until we arrive finally at the Oneness that contains them. It is a process of observation, an astute probing into reality, past our learned illusions of separateness into the exuberant experience of our connectedness.

When we observe something deeply, we enter into it, become one with it. Something of its essence enters into us, and we are changed in the process.

When we read a novel, see a play, listen to a story, we enter into its world, place ourselves in the scene and experience the drama and conflicts as if they were ours. We often come away from someone else's creation with a deeper understanding of our own story.

In my quest for the Infinite, I have come to believe that God, Truth, Beauty, Love—all those concepts I associate with the Divine—are not things that are “found” at the end of the path, like the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, but are rather what I experience on the journey as I travel through life—or perhaps, more explicitly, they are the journey itself.

God, to me, is the universe unfolding, the power and potential within all our lives, the Oak within our acorn selves. We are not separate at all, but intermingled like salt and the sea. The Divine is ever-present in the faces, the scenes, the feelings that pass through my life day to day.

Whenever I'm tempted to speak of God, the words of Lao Tzu come to mind: “He who knows does not speak. He who speaks does not know.” Or the Zen saying, “Open mouth, already big mistake.” Or St. Augustine, “If you have understood, it is not God.” God, like love, is better defined by what it isn't than by what it is. Meister Eckhart, the Christian mystic, wrote that the ultimate leave-taking is the leaving of God for GOD—the final letting go of the limited concept for an experience of the real thing.

When I was young, I prayed to be a martyr. I wanted to show God and everyone else that I loved Him enough to die for him. I wanted to go into battle for Him, be another Joan of Arc, a hero for God's sake.

Now all that's changed. I wouldn't think of dying for God, but am doing my best to live for God—not God as person, but God as Goodness, Justice, Mercy. There are no more lines of separation, only strands of connectedness. My eyes find holiness everywhere, in every living thing, person, in every act of kindness, act of nature, act of grace. Everywhere I look, there God is, looking back.

*I have felt the swaying of the elephant's shoulders and now you want me to climb on a jackass? Try to be serious.* Mirabai, Hindu mystic poetess and singer (1498-1546)

Dear Invisible One,  
I may be all alone out here  
but it works better  
for me to think not.

Somehow  
it's less lonely,  
more fun to imagine  
an invisible force  
shoring up everything I do  
from the other side.  
Like a wave to my particle self,  
hydrogen to my oxygen,  
a puzzle that needs my piece  
to be complete.

It's moot in the long run—  
*it is what it is*—  
and on this plane  
will only be that  
till I climb the next rung  
of awareness  
where all heaven breaks loose  
Or not.

When it's time to go around the circle and name our commitments, one woman in the group says, "I'm committed to living in bliss twenty-four hours a day." A huge roar of laughter follows.

"You can't really mean it!"

"You know that's not possible, right?"

"Great joke! Now what are you *really* committed to?"

I find myself in one of those pregnant moments. I laugh, at first, but the laugh turns into a wonder...hmmm, I think, why not?

Bliss is just a matter of waking up. It means living in the present moment and

not veering off into the past or future. Bliss is what happens when we stop resisting, stop struggling against the events of our lives and start mining them for the jewels they offer. It is the result of choosing the moment instead of clashing with it. Bliss is what bluebirds have, what howling wolves and singing whales have. By itself, without analysis and additions, life is glorious. Perfect. The only thing that keeps us from bliss is our opinion that we don't have it, can't acquire it or hold on to it. When we start to focus on having it, instead of being in it, we become like fish swimming in circles, searching for water.

When his son was born, my brother gave my mother a license plate holder that read, "Happiness is being Chad's grandmother." It survived many winters in upstate New York, but eventually rusted out from the salt they use to melt the ice on wintery roads. Now only half of it remains, but the message is true. It reads: *Happiness is*. Knowing this is the first step in awakening. When happiness *isn't*, it's simply a warning sign that we have nodded off, forgotten the real and added some illusion or expectation to the situation.

Waking up is not easy, but it is the only way to go if we want to live a life with any passion and punch. It means we have to give up blaming. Give up making others responsible for our happiness. Abandon that habit of judging people, dwelling in the negative. Waking up means being able to observe our life as if it were happening to someone else. It means thinking and speaking consciously, knowing that what we think and say on Tuesday becomes the life we live on Thursday. Waking up means we don't see the other as better or less than ourselves. We see the other *as* our self.

## PRIME (6:00 AM)

*Though others may judge and degrade me,  
cast me out for blaspheming your name  
Still I will say that I hold you  
like a flower in the palm of my heart.*

My chiropractor's office was filled with worker's comp cases today. "I don't understand why they're doing this to themselves," he confided to me. "They're overworking, over-stressing, taxing themselves beyond reason. It's like they're on some treadmill and don't know how to get off. They're waiting for someone

else to say ‘slow down,’ but corporate America is never going to say that to their workers. We have to start saying it to ourselves.”

In *The Revolt of the Masses*, Jose Ortega y Gasset wrote, “Our life is at all times and before anything else the consciousness of what we can do.” Waking up is about clarifying what we can do and what we *cannot* do. If we’re aiming for balance, we cannot be checking email, engaging in a conference call, and sorting through papers on our desk all at the same time. Multi-tasking is something we all *can* do, but the question is *should* we? Are we really more efficient when we do several things at once or does it fragment our thinking, fracture our integrity? What does it feel like to you when you are trying to talk with someone who is typing away on a computer or texting as you talk?

An Algonquin elder, when asked the key to happiness responded: “The key to happiness is giving each task all the time it requires.” Imagine signs posted at the water cooler, above every desk and workbench, in rest rooms and restaurants: GIVE EACH TASK ALL THE TIME IT REQUIRES.

These days, that seems counter-cultural. To give each task all the time it requires frees us to bring our complete beings to the table—not just our time, but the wisdom we have gathered, the imagination we have access to, the resources of our spirit, our joyfulness, our sense of connection to others. That wholeness is what translates into excellence. That whole-brain, whole-body approach is what leads to extraordinary creativity, breakthrough thinking.

If we are trying to do three things at once, each thing gets only a fraction of our mind, a small chunk of our magnitude. Our contribution then is stunted, stymied by the clutter of other objectives in the way. But if we take one thing at a time and give it our full attention, then each thing we handle gets all of us.

And the same is true for our journey into awareness. It will take time and conscious attention to detail. It will call for practice, discipline, and compassion for yourself as you learn to navigate this new terrain. You will stumble over and over, and every time you notice a faltering, that noticing is a success. Every time you become aware of your thinking and reconfigure it, that is a step ahead. Every conscious re-entry into the present after a foray into the past or future, that, too, is a stride forward.

If you pay attention, you cannot fail. “All the way to heaven *is* heaven,” said Catherine of Siena. You have already arrived. The journey is simply to live in that awareness.

**Every encounter we have is colored by our thoughts. If we approach an experience with fear or negativity, the experience will be a receptacle for that. If we enter into it with kindness and a sense of communion, the experience will contain that. Our thoughts precede and create our reality. Begin to observe your thoughts and direct them.**

*Whoever knows the All but fails to know himself lacks everything.*

Gospel according to Thomas

Jesus said, "You are the light of the world." Buddha, on his deathbed, said "Be lamps unto yourselves." The Koran says, "Wheresoever you turn, there is the face of God." Light within, light coming through us, light in the presence of all that is. The Masters have said it, but does it ring true? Do these voices resonate with your own knowing? Is it true for you?

**If you were asked to think of a person who's of the light, who comes to mind? Why? Is it because there's some purity of intention there? Some steadfastness in commitment? Some sense of inner authority, authenticity, joyfulness? How are you being a light to others? How does the light come through you? How do you experience the light coming through others?**

When I think of people I know who are lights in the world, I think of my friends who are fun-loving, imaginative, in love with the lives they are creating day by day. They are the ones who laugh a lot, sing a lot, cry freely, hug tenderly. They talk about themselves, not others. They are spellbound at life's mysteries. They are the ones with more questions than answers. If they are striving for anything, it is to be free of illusion, one with What Is. Their actions are connected to their values. They *are* their thoughts, their words, their feelings. They are the embodiment of the light they believe themselves to be.

**How have you learned to be compassionate with yourself so you can better love others? What new things are you discovering about who you are and why you do things?**

Imagine the Divine as the Source of Light shining through the prism of earth's atmosphere, breaking into billions of tiny, colorful, radiant refractions called human beings. Imagine that you are that same Light, at a different density. It is only our illusions that shroud the light. Any thought that we are separate from



the others, separate from the Source, is all illusion, and any creed that fosters this notion deserves to be forsaken.

**The poet Kabir wrote, "If you have not lived through something, it is not true." Experience is an essential part of knowledge. So the question is, "Do I experience myself as a light in this world? Do I operate from this premise? When I set sail in the morning for a day at sea, is this the wind that propels me?" If it is, then how is it obvious to those around me?**

### TERCE (9:00 A.M.)

*In the silence of dawn do I find you  
In the roar of the crowd you are there  
In the eyes of the foe can I see you  
In my enemy's heart do you dwell.*

When I first began my spiritual practice in 1989, I committed to 20 minutes of silence in the morning before I got up. I sat in my bed with a candle burning in front of me and a cup of coffee in my hands. I imagined myself as a satellite dish, receiving messages from Mind-at-Large. This poem is the first poem that came through, which turned out to be a song. It's called *Rebecca's Song* because when I inquired into the voice and asked if it had a name, it seemed to say Rebecca. I think the angel she is referring to is the Immanent Divine, the Holy One within.

#### *Rebecca's Song*

Now is the time to be mindful of light  
to keep the flame going, to give up the fight  
for life is a pleasure, it's not meant for pain  
let go of the struggle and dance once again

For you all have an angel who sits at your side,  
who waits for your calling, who hears every cry  
she's there at your service, there as your guide,  
so call her, she's waiting with arms open wide.

The God that you're seeking needs not to be sought  
you're already one like the sea and the salt  
the Source is within you, the force is at hand  
it's been in your soul since your life began.

So rejoice, my child, in the gifts that you have  
the light of the world is the torch in your hand  
and when you get beyond your fear and your pain,  
you'll see God in the being who goes by your name.

We can't afford *not* to be thinking now, when it's our very thoughts that are shaping the world. We're facing crises the world has never known, and we're in labor now, trying to birth a new consciousness, evolve a higher form of humanity that comprehends its sacred essence. If we, as a human race, are to make the shift from puberty to full maturity, we must respond to the crisis of our times as every cell in the body responds to a gunshot wound—with unremitting alertness, undivided attention, generous and humble in its service to the whole.

The future ahead of us is the future we create everyday, in our workplaces, our families, our encounters with strangers and friends. Our real work is to imagine the life we want to be living and draw it toward us. It is not to look behind us to see how they did it before, not to rustle through old texts for solutions, but to re-examine everything we've been taught and dismiss whatever divides us from one another.

If you want to wake up, examine the thoughts in your own mind and weigh them against what you know to be true from your own experience. We are the eyes and the ears and the voice of the earth, cells in the body of God collaborating in the continuing creation of our planet. We have one lifetime under this name to speak our truths, to manifest in the world the supreme force of love that cannot be made explicit without our hands, our eyes, our voices and actions.

We are here to make the Invisible visible. No matter what our business cards say, no matter what we are paid to do, no matter how we define ourselves, the essence of our work is spiritual—and it is that element that gives it meaning and magic. When we wake up and take our souls to work, consciously, everything about the workday changes. It becomes a playing field, an opportunity to create what wouldn't exist without us, to see ourselves reflected in others, and

mirror them back to themselves. It is a chance to practice being in the moment, choose what is before us. It is an eight hour class in the possibility of bliss.

**Every day we experience dozens of encounters. We hear people say things. We notice the behaviors of people. We see and hear ourselves talking and acting. We're in the school of life all day long, but what do we make of it? What do we say at the dinner table when they ask, "What did you learn today?"**

I'll tell it to you again  
we are flowers in the same garden  
descendents of one Mother  
you, a rose,  
me, an iris  
she, a gardenia splashing scent with every breeze

I could go on and on about our likeness  
every one of us a leaf on the same tree  
a snowflake in the same blizzard  
bubbles in the same champagne  
can you stop laughing long enough  
to digest this mystery?

If these were the headlines of your daily paper  
would you eyes pop open with joy?

Do you see the wonder here?  
Can you find your adorable face in this house of mirrors?

Do you hear it clearly?  
That what you are enveloped in is the body of God  
what you were born from is the mother of Life  
the air you breathe is their giant exhalation  
their sigh of delight after a long night of love

Do you really want to know you're a child of desire  
born from the embrace of heaven and earth?  
can you bear it? can you be this huge?  
embody this mystery?

In case it comes as a bit of a surprise  
I'll tell it to you again:  
You, my dear, are a beautiful rose  
and I am an iris  
and all those around us:  
flowers in the same garden  
descendents of the same Mother

This is the Eden of your beginning and end  
This is the Heaven you have sought all along.

**Meet this day with clarity and be a light in the darkness. Unfold your arms and let others in. Listen and speak like your life depended on every utterance. Practice truthfulness. Say things about yourself and others in a kindly way. Direct conversations in an upward spiral. Do not collude in negativity. Finding calm in this storm is a matter of mindfulness. We can be at peace every moment if we meet it with awareness and remember our source. The moment we choose peace, it is ours.**

## SEXT (NOON)

*Though the newspapers dwell on disaster  
Though the media spreads only fear  
I am a beacon of hopefulness  
Only light shall I cast on the world.*

It is so easy for us to get tangled up in others, to forget what we once knew. How do we keep our knowing fresh if no one ever asks us about it? And why would anyone ask us if we never ask anyone else what they know or really care about? If someone doesn't go first, how do authentic conversations ever get started?

I learned a lesson about going first on a cross country trip a few years ago. My plan was to interview people in small towns about their values, getting the latest scoop on Americans' changing attitudes and spiritual outlook. I'd driven through six states before finally stopping at a restaurant in rural Virginia where I found a young man willing to talk with me.

"I'm trying to get a sense of changing values in this country," I blathered as I rifled through my bag looking for my pad of questions. Finding it, I launched quickly into the first question. "Where did you get your values from?"

"W-H-U-T??" he asked, his brow scrunched up like a furrowed field. I could see he had no idea what I was talking about. Then I heard a little voice in my head. "Go first," it said.

"Oh yeah," I started, "like with me, how I got one of my values was from my Mom who always said, 'If you pass by someone on the street, be sure to look them in the eye and give them a big smile, because they might be having a real bad day and your smile can make all the difference in the world.'" I told him I never particularly liked that assignment, but I took it on, trusting in my mom's wisdom, and now I can't help but do it. "I've been smiling at people on the street for the last forty years," I told him. "That's a value I got from my Mom."

He sat there silent, his arms folded tight across his chest. Squinting at me, he nodded his head without saying a word. His toothpick shifted from one corner of his mouth to the other while his mind worked the idea like a plow in a pasture.

Finally, the pieces came together. "Ya' mean like when my daddy used to get into his whiskey and whup my butt-and I'd go out on the back porch where my grand-daddy would be rockin' in his chair. He'd see me there, trying not to cry, then he'd say to me, 'Son, I see ya' got some big feelings there. Why don't ya' sit on down under that oak tree and write yourself a poem? That'll help you get them feelings out.' And now I do that, I write poems."

"My grand-daddy always said 'If God has given you a gift that you can give back to people, don't you ever turn your back on it. Whenever you feel a poem coming on, you sit down and write it. And after you write it, find some way to share it, because that's what God gave it to you for.' I guess that's a value I got from my granddaddy. Wanna hear one of my poems?"

I was stunned by this time—stunned that he was sharing this story, stunned that he wrote poems and wanted to recite one to me, stunned that this interview thing seemed to be working. He went on to recite his latest and a few others.

Then we went on to tell the stories of our childhood, our favorite memories, things people had told us to keep us in our place, ways we'd come into our own knowing and what we were doing with what we knew. Two hours passed

and we were still there, drinking coffee, losing and finding ourselves in each others' stories.

What I learned that day about going first has changed everything. Now I know that the kind of conversations I crave don't happen by default. They happen when I take a risk and go first. Many of us hunger for a conversation that matters, but we wait for someone else to start it. It's scary to take that risk, so we pretend that communion doesn't matter, that we aren't interested in another's experience.

If that's the case, why do we enjoy overhearing conversations? Why are millions of viewers hooked on reality TV? How have some soap operas stayed on the air for fifty years? We love watching the human drama unfold. We're looking for reminders of what we once knew. Like sea turtles returning to the place of their birth, or penguins listening for the call of their mate. We're longing for connection, a sign that we matter, a story that reminds us it's the same way there.

*Song: The Conversation (this is a conversation between my Muse and me)*

You are my spirit and I call on you  
to help me remember what I know  
you are the flame that lights the path I walk  
when my memory of our oneness starts to go  
you are the force that keeps me moving on,  
the guide whose hand I need to lead me home  
take me in your arms and lead me through the dark  
to the spring from which all healing waters flow

*I am the one whose hand is in your hand  
I will lead you down whatever path you choose  
I am your guardian, I'm your dearest friend  
I'm your deepest intuition, I'm your Muse  
I am the voice that calls you to the Light,  
the truest of the voices that you hear  
and every time you call on me I'm there for you  
I'm always at your side, I'm always near.*

Then do you have the answers I am looking for?  
*All the answers that you seek, you have inside*

How am I to know if what I choose is right?  
*If you've chosen out of love, love will abide*  
and when I feel the darkness of the world in me,  
what am I to do with all my grief?  
*My child, your world is only what you say it is*  
*If you call it dark then dark is what will be*

How am I to know what I am here to do?  
*Just be who you are, the doing will get done*  
How can I get past the fear of what's to come?  
*All that fear will disappear once you've begun*  
How can I remember I am of the light  
when there's hunger and hardship all around?  
*Take the hand of everyone you're walking with*  
*and the love you feel will spread that light around.*

Intimate conversations are masterful collaborations of two creators, each aware that giving is receiving and listening is an active verb. They can happen in a corporate cafeteria, on a train, in a living room, board room, or rest room. The Essene Gospel of Peace reminds us that "Only through the communions... will we learn to see the unseen, to hear that which can't be heard, and to speak the unspoken word." Our communions are the bridge from soul to soul, heaven to earth, dark to light. They are the way in and the way through, and all we need to do is go first.

## NONE (3:00 PM)

*Wake me from my sleep and rouse me  
break through my dreams like a bird  
Be the voice that guides me  
Let your kindness flow through me day and night.*

To become our own spiritual authority, we have to move and think and speak from our own personal knowing. Our power comes from our ability to transform what we have experienced into what we know. It's an alchemy of sorts, where we transmute the lead of our experience into the gold of our wisdom. Making a life is the process of converting our wisdom into action. Each of us knows what no one else knows because no one else has lived our lives, seen what we've seen, felt what we've felt. The great Persian poet Rumi writes, "The throbbing vein will take you further than any thinking." This is a great clue.

When you think of the people who have inspired you, changed your thinking, altered the course of your life, are they not the ones who spoke and lived from the heart? Are they not the ones who stand before you with the courage to be simply who they are, to share their visions, their struggles, their fears? This is the stuff of spiritual authority—this transparency, this risking, this willingness to say "It's a new frontier here, and not one of us has a map, but with what we know together, we can surely make it."

*As we proceed along the path of inner self-management, structural changes occur within us that allow a significant increase in the level of indwelling spirit and this, in turn, appears as a significant increase in one's level of consciousness. William Tiller, physicist*



## VESPERS (SUNSET)

*With tears in my eyes I behold you  
Every place that I turn, you are there  
In the wars, in the floods, in the earthquakes  
Through our hands do we bring you to life.*

Theism is the belief that one God, personal and omnipotent, created and rules the world and humans. The term derives from the Greek *theos* meaning God. It was first used by Ralph Cudworth in the 1600s. It is conjectured that theism emerged to help our ancestors survive the trauma of self-consciousness and the shock of non-being. They came up with the concept of God to help them deal with their awe, their powerlessness over death, their wonder at the beauty and vastness of the universe. All that they could not perceive as belonging to themselves they projected outward onto the Supreme Being they called God. God was the Creator of all things, the controller of all things, the force behind all great powers. God, understood theistically, is a human construct.

*The courage to take meaninglessness into itself presupposes a relation to the ground of being which we have called "absolute faith." It is without a special content, yet it is not without content. The content of absolute faith is the "god above God." Absolute faith and its consequence, the courage that takes the radical doubt, the doubt about God, into itself, transcends the theistic idea of God. Paul Tillich, theologian*

Waking up is a process of finding ourselves, listening to ourselves, our thoughts, our bodies. This the work of the soul—to discover what is true and align ourselves with that. To experience every tragic and terrible thing knowing that it holds a lesson for us. To know that what we think has an effect on how we feel, that what we feel has an effect on what is, that our thoughts and words are the tools with which we forge our lives.

Many of us don't even know how we feel about something until long after it has happened. We've been so conditioned to how we "should" feel and act,

that it's hard to separate what we "should" be feeling from what we actually *do* feel. Waking up is the first step in turning that around. It's taking time to breathe before we speak. It's sitting down every once in a while and locating our feelings, noticing which way they're pulling us, giving them our love and attention.

Waking up is also knowing we are *not* our feelings. We are the one observing them, tending to them, finding ways to release them and keep our energy flowing. They are not us. They are transient, passing through. We don't become them any more than the mirror becomes what it reflects. We can throw black paint at the sky all we want, but the sky will not change colors. To be awake is to have a mind like sky, untainted by the particularities of any event.

William James wrote that "the greatest revolution in our generation is that human beings, by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives." If we feel like we're in the middle of a nightmare, we don't have to stay there. We can wake ourselves up, get to the bottom of what's scaring us, see what illusion or expectation we've brought to the table. We can check to see if we ventured off into the past or the future, then get back to being in the present moment.

To be awake is to be constantly rearranging our inner attitudes, shape-shifting our thoughts as we become mindful of their power. The contours of our lives are shaped by our thoughts, molded by our speaking. We are the inventors of our own reality, and every relationship, every meeting, encounter, email and text message is a canvas, a stage upon which we create and express ourselves.

How many of us experience work as something we have to do in order to buy ourselves time on the weekends for our real lives? How many of us put in our time, but hold ourselves back, as if to be fully alive, fully joyful and intimate and creative in the workplace would diminish our supply for later? The other day, a woman in the armed services was interviewed on National Public Radio about preparing for war with her fellow soldiers, "Finally our lives have meaning now—they don't just revolve around what we do all day." If it takes a national disaster or a war for us to feel that our lives are meaningful, something is terribly wrong.

Disaster originally meant *out of touch with the stars*—but look at us now. We are out of touch with ourselves, out of touch with our neighbors, out of touch with the meaning of our connection to others around the globe. Out of touch with the potential we have to be inspired artists creating from our own personal and deep wisdom. Studies reveal that most peoples' worst dread is the thought

of having lived a meaningless life, but what is it that gives our life meaning? It's connection, community, a sense that the part we play matters to the whole.

In the course of a day, there are many opportunities to feel powerless, many occasions in which we feel less the actor and more the acted upon. In the workaday world, there is often pressure to produce, a false sense of urgency, a mentality of scarcity, a tendency to overcomplicate things and make unreasonable demands on people. It is our job to stay balanced in the face of this.

### COMPLINE (9:00 P.M.)

*Into your arms I commend my spirit  
though I sleep you continue to breathe  
I give thanks for this day and this lifetime  
I give thanks that you hold me this night.*

*Recognize what is before your eyes and the mysteries will be revealed to you. For there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed.* Gospel of Thomas

I gave a talk at a hospital the other night, introducing an exhibition of photographs done by a group of doctors. A couple of them were in a snit, wondering why I'd been invited as the speaker. For some reason, they were uneasy with the fact that I'd written a book called *God Is at Eye Level—Photography as a Healing Art*. They grumbled about this to the woman who invited me to talk, and she called me saying, "You might want to soft-pedal the God part and the healing part. These guys are just hobbyists. They say their photographs don't have anything to do with healing."

I arrived early enough to view all their photographs and was deeply moved by their images of the Himalayas, Canyon de Chelly, a barrio in San Diego, close-ups of flowers and children and animals, black and white studies in shadow and depth. They were incredible images and had a powerful impact, especially since many brought back memories of some of my favorite places.

When I started my talk, I was careful to speak only for myself, sharing with the audience how photography is a healing experience for me, how it calms my soul, keeps me in the present moment, gives me a sense of being one with

the Divine. I speak freely about spiritual matters all the time, and never edit my words or feelings about the sacredness of life. So when I commented on their images, referring to each doctor's work and how it specifically affected me, altered my awareness, conjured up memories and meaning, I wove in words like holy, healing, the Divine, oneness, commonness—and I saw some of those doctors move to the edge of their seats with tears in their eyes.

No one had ever spoken about their work before. No one ever said concretely, this is how it mattered to me, this is where it took me, this is how it made me feel and what it made me think of. This is why I think it's holy, healing work.

At the end of the talk, every one of those doctors came up to me privately and acknowledged how proud they felt to have their work referred to as spiritual. One after the other, they said things like, "You know, you can't use the G word in the office, but I think you're absolutely right...I'm glad you said that. I believe it, but you can't let people know that...Thanks for talking about my work like you did. I could never say those things. You have to watch what you say, you know."

I felt a little sadness driving home. That men like that—educated, talented, in the helping professions, and several of them close to retirement—had caved in to the notion that it's not OK to reveal your inner self. Not one of them would dare to speak of the holy in the workplace, but they loved when someone else did. My going first, it opened up something for them. I'll never know what or how it matters, but I know it did some good that night.

*The ultimate and highest leave-taking is leaving God for GOD, leaving your notion of God for an experience of that which transcends all notions.*

Meister Eckhart

I don't need a personal God  
to be grateful for my life  
and all that's in it.

I don't need to feel that Some One  
fashioned me with His Own Hands,  
knows all the hairs on my head  
jerks His knee in response to  
my every prayer.

I don't need pearly gates,  
fires of Hell, vestal virgins  
to live right, to give this opportunity  
of a *lifetime* my whole devotion.

I am not in training  
for some other time  
to satisfy some Other Being.  
I am here to make lighter  
the burdens of everyone  
I stumble upon  
and to those across the seas  
to whom I'm connected  
like hand to mouth.

Then why, I wonder,  
do I call out so often,  
O God this, O God that,  
like God is on the other end of the line  
waiting for me alone?

My brain and my heart  
are two rivers  
running their own course  
on the way to the Sea of Everything.

One knows, one feels,  
One is the elder, one the child.  
It's only when they fuse  
that the God of the Heavens  
explodes into light and becomes my way.

After reading the first chapter of this book, my Mom asked, "Do you really think there's something to this evolutionary stuff?"

I said, "Mom, in 1976 when I came out to you, you told me never to tell Dad or I'd be responsible for him dying of a heart attack. Would you say that if I came out to you now?"

"No."

"And in 1980 when I was in my militant-angry feminist phase and stopped

shaving my legs, you wrote me a letter saying how selfish I was. Didn't I know I was an embarrassment to my brother and sister when their friends saw my hairy legs? Would you say that to me now?"

"No, of course not."

"And in 1981, when Dad disowned me for living in the same house with a man, you went along with him and refused to let me come home. Would you do that now?"

"No, I'd stand up to him. He was wrong to do that."

"That's what I mean by evolutionary. You have advanced your consciousness over the years. You have grown yourself up spiritually. You've taken responsibility for your own thoughts and decisions. You're your own authority now."

"Oh, I get it," she says. "OK, hurry up and finish it. I can't wait to read the next chapter."

## CHAPTER TWO TUESDAY

*True spiritual practice springs from, not toward, enlightenment. Our practice does not lead to unity consciousness—it is unity consciousness.*

Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895-1986)

# DISCIPLINE

**T**here are different ways of looking at the word “discipline.” One brings to mind spankings, standing in the corner, boot camp. Another, more tender reading brings to mind the word “disciple,” one who passes along spiritual wisdom. That is the one we are talking about here. We are training ourselves to be evolutionary, ecumenical carriers of wisdom. Training ourselves to BE the light we want to see in the world. And in order to turn on our light and shine, we have to know two things: where the switch is and how to increase the wattage. All that is part of our spiritual practice, which is the foundation for evolutionary creativity.

Our spiritual practice tones our mindfulness muscles, just as a physical discipline might tone your abs. The results of mindfulness are tranquility, compassion, spiritual and social awareness, balance, bliss. I could go on. All this is guaranteed, but there is a minimal requirement. Daily practice. Hence, the word discipline.

I don’t know why human beings are reluctant to commit to this, especially when the rewards are so satisfying, but I do know we are. I myself reluctantly started a spiritual practice in 1990 when my good friend reminded me that unless I committed to that, things would never work out as I wanted them to.

I was in graduate school at Syracuse University, on the verge of quitting, when I called her for a consult. I told her how out of place I felt, how I was old enough to be everyone’s mother, how the students cared more about spring breaks and Cancun than anything we were there to learn. I felt like an outcast.

She asked me three questions, and those three questions changed the course of my life. “Are you eating and drinking moderately?” No, I confessed, admitting to drinking lots of Chardonnay and having a stash of Almond Joy miniatures in all my pockets.

“What are you doing for your body—are you working out?”

“No. Nothing.”

“What about a spiritual practice. Do you have a spiritual practice?”

“No.”

“Jan, don’t make any decisions about quitting school right now. Your life cannot work right if you don’t have those three things taken care of. Take two weeks to get it together, then call me back.”

I went out and bought a bicycle and started biking to school. I limited my wine to the weekends and threw out all my little Almond Joys. Then I thought about a spiritual practice. I wasn’t going to do anything uncomfortable, I knew that. What I decided on was twenty minutes of silence before a lighted candle every morning. No phones, no magazines, no newspapers. Just the fire, me, and my cup of coffee.

I was a little edgy at the beginning, but settled into the practice within a few days. By week two, I extended the time to thirty minutes. I wasn’t trying to control my thoughts or get from one place to another. I was simply opening my mind like a satellite dish to Intelligence-at-Large, and the signals came in loud and clear. If I got distracted, I simply focused on my breathing to get back on center and the whole process was quite exhilarating. I felt inspired, balanced, and more myself somehow.

When two weeks was up and I called Paula back, I was like a new person.

“Paula, you’re not going to believe it, everyone on campus has changed dramatically!”

She laughed, knowing that no one had changed but me, and that change made all the difference. I stayed on to finish graduate school and have maintained my spiritual practice for 20 years, knowing it’s what keeps me rooted and immune from stress. I have aged in the process like a fine wine, and now devote much more time to my practice of silence.

Research studies show that more of our brain lights up when we attach ourselves to the Infinite, so it’s no surprise that a spiritual practice leads to higher levels of creativity, intuition and productivity. When we limit our reception of



noisy information and open ourselves to the silence of Intelligence-at-Large, we stop feeling overwhelmed by petty facts and experience the birth of immense possibilities. Being connected with Supreme Intelligence means continuing renewal, constant upgrading of our creative consciousness.

We have disciplined ourselves to fasten our seatbelts, to put children in car carriers, to stop smoking, for the most part, and these external disciplines promote our well-being. This discipline of interior practice promotes the well-being of our spirit and bodymind. And since we are to love others as we love ourselves, this is one way of fully loving ourselves. Attaining permanent enlightenment is beyond our reach, but to practice and express our awakening—this is being a light in the world.

*You are saturated with innate natural perfection.* Buddha

## MATINS (MIDNIGHT)

*I awaken and light the candle  
I ready myself for your love  
Toward bliss do I move as you breathe me  
Hymns of praise do I sing all day long.*

*Adoration is the essential preparation for right action.* Evelyn Underhill

We heal ourselves in the state of mindfulness by being present to the moment at hand. When we stand in the midst of what is, we are released from the yoke of what has been, detached from the fear of what might be. There is only the moment, our awareness, the Light of Life flowing through us as we breathe. All is peace in the eternal Now.

We are vulnerable to fear only when we leave the present. If I drift into the past, my regrets surge up, my memories of failing and forsaking. If I shift into the future, I meet with doubt and discouragement, anxiety about what's to come, what I'm not capable of controlling. It's in the present moment that I belong. Only there do I feel my balance.

We are yanked backward and forward by our earthly concerns, torn away from our center, from the calm of the moment. Whether dwelling on old pain, or fearing the unknown, we detach from our power source and lose our steam. Only through awareness do we can escape this vortex; only through vigilance do we keep ourselves present and resist the seduction of past and future.

*People who learn to control their inner experience will be able to determine the quality of their lives, which is as close as any of us come to being happy.*

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

*There never was a more holy age than ours, and never a less...there is no less holiness at this time than there was the day the Red Sea parted.* Annie Dillard

Dear Maker of Light,  
Thank you for your presence in my life.  
You are the constant  
the one great mystery  
the One to whom I could be no nearer.

What I breathe, that is you  
What I hope for, that is you  
What I create and call forth and celebrate,  
you, you, you.  
In that space between my candle and me,  
fully invisible  
there you are.

In the breeze that rattles my bedroom blinds,  
in the sparrow's song,  
the red of the rose, the blue of my eye  
there you are, again and again.

How does it happen people think you are distant?

In the marrow of my bones,  
in the throb of my heart,  
the wet of my tear, the burst of my laughter,  
Only you. Only you.  
Only you.

*An older monk tells a younger one: "I have finally learned to accept people as they are. Whatever they are in the world, a prostitute, a prime minister, it is all the same to me. But sometimes I see a stranger coming up the road and I say, 'Oh, Jesus Christ, is it you again?'"*

**We attract experiences supporting our deepest beliefs. What are yours? What beliefs are you ready to discard? Think of a recent event and see if you can connect it to a belief that you hold.**

God is the Universe  
and is ever expanding  
soon, scientists of the future  
will not be able to detect the start of it all—  
the Big Bang—  
because we will have expanded too far ahead  
to track back to the beginning.

The explosion of intelligence in the cosmos—  
that happening we call God—  
is happening day and night,  
moment by moment,  
as stardust forms itself into planets,  
stars burst into supernovas,  
galaxies self-organize  
and humans create the story of  
what in the world is going on.

Intelligence—God's DNA—filters down  
from its original light  
and is transformed into food  
for all plants and animals.  
We eat God at every meal.  
We metabolize God  
in the living of our lives-  
our choices, our risks, our sufferings-  
all part of the universe  
expanding through us.

Are you embarrassed  
by the pettiness of your concerns yet?

Each of us is contributing daily to the creation of our common future, for better or worse, through our images, words, actions, and works. The more awareness we bring to the task, the more useful, the more compelling are our creations. The capacity to reach the highest states of awareness through contemplation, compassion, and grace is not limited to clerics, sages, saints. Any one of us can embark on that journey, find divinity in every detail, commit to dissolving dualities and experiencing oneness in our own minds and lives.

**If we want to live in beauty, we must drop what is not beautiful from our minds. When you close your eyes to focus on something beautiful, where do you go? What image do you see? What is it about that place that brings you joy?**

How do we open ourselves to insight into the deepest levels of reality? By dropping the limitations of ordinary thinking and feeling in our bodies our connectedness to all life. If we want to live in truth, we must question every belief we cling to and let go of whatever insults our souls. If we want to know and experience oneness with the Divine, with others, in ourselves, we must give up our dualities, our fragmented thinking and dare to endanger our prior assumptions. There is *not* the sacred and the profane, the earthly and the heavenly, the sinners and the saved. There is only The One Thing, infusing and infused into everything. The mystics in every tradition have been guiding us toward this awareness for centuries.

*My eyes are the eyes through which God sees. They are the eyes through which God sees his own body.* Vilyat Inayat Khan.

*What we are looking for is Who is looking.* St. Francis of Assisi

*He is at the same time the One who reveals Himself and that through which He manifests himself.* Sufi master Ibn al Arabi

As we go about creating our lives, our words and actions transform into the world we belong to, the world we are shaping. As the food we eat becomes our bodies, so do our expressions become the world. We are living in a country that was once just a thought in the imaginations of a few men. We go to work

in buildings that were conceived in thought; we listen to music, watch movies, read books that are concrete manifestations of someone's feelings and passions. And these creations touch our hearts, change our minds, move us to action. Energy becomes matter, matter becomes energy, and our hearts are the crucible where the transformation occurs. It is where the creator and created give rise to each other.

*Prayer is not a stratagem for occasional use, a refuge to resort to now and then. It is rather like an established residence for the innermost self. All things have a home: the bird has a nest, the fox has a hole, the bee has a hive. A soul without prayer is a soul without a home. Abraham Joshua Heschel*

## LAUDS (SUNRISE)

*They claim that you live in the heavens  
though I feel you inside like a sun  
burning away my falsehoods  
till all that I am is your truth.*

Two children found a bag containing twelve marbles. They argued over how to divide the toys and finally went to see the Mulla. When asked to settle their disagreement, the Mulla asked whether the children wanted him to divide the marbles as a human would or as Allah would.

The children replied, "We want it to be fair. Divide the marbles as Allah would."

So, the Mulla counted out the marbles and gave three to one child and nine to the other.

### **Meditation:**

This can be practiced in just a few minutes, so try to incorporate it as a part of your daily life. Come into a comfortable seated position on the floor or in a chair. Sit with the back flat, crown of the head lifted, shoulders relaxed, and chest open. Rest your hands in the lap or on the knees. Close your eyes, deepen the breath and release any thoughts from the mind. Gently repeat the following softly out loud or in your mind:

May I be safe from all danger  
May I be held in the arms of God  
May I be strong in spirit and body  
May I be true to my heart and soul.

Repeat the phrases again, changing “May I” to “May you” while you think of a specific person, or of a group of people, or of the whole planet.

Finish with a few slow, deep breaths, feeling compassion, love, and kindness flowing through your body. Take a moment or two before moving on with the rest of your day.

Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation) there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no one could have dreamed would have come their way.

I have learned a deep respect for Goethe's couplets:

*“Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it.  
Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it.”*

W. H. Murray, *The Scottish Himalayan Expedition*

PRIME (6:00 A.M.)

*I call out your name night and day  
like a young bride I stand at the gate  
in the garden your scent surrounds me  
at the well do I draw you up.*

Child psychologist Chilton Pearce says that our feelings of limitation are shaped by the trinity of culture, myth, and religion. He writes: “We actually contain a built-in ability to rise above restriction, incapacity, or limitation, and as a result of this ability, possess a vital adaptive spirit that we have not yet fully accessed. While this ability can lead us to transcendence, paradoxically it can lead also to violence; our longing for transcendence arises from our intuitive sensing of this adaptive potential and our violence arises from our failure to develop it.” This thought is consistent with the words of Jesus spoken in the Gospel of Thomas, “If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you.” Our religions and culture have conditioned us toward a deadly passivity that has kept us from bringing forth what is within us, from accessing and expressing that vital spirit within. We have created a life system that has not only outgrown its usefulness, but is actually keeping us from evolving into our next phase of consciousness—the recognition of our own divinity. The violence that is erupting all over this planet is arising out of our failure to create, to shape our lives and our culture with the tools of illumined imagination.

In the Islamic tradition, people are encouraged to let their words pass through “the three gates” before speaking. *Is it true? Is it kind? Is it necessary?* If it doesn’t pass this test, it ought not be spoken.

**Spend a day paying close attention to everything that comes out of your mouth. Listen carefully to your words and notice if you are saying things you would not want to come true. Practice speaking as if your life was a materialization of your words. Do this until you become aware of every word that you speak.**



Morning Psalm 101

Yea, though I look out at cedars and oak  
see your face in their branches and leaves  
though I walk by day through forests of spruce  
by night do I long for the touch of your hand.

I run to the water through mists of dawn  
howling like a wolf as she calls her mate  
leaping like a fawn on wobbly legs  
in the woods of my heart do I seek you.

What is this game I play all day?  
This hide and seek from dawn till dusk?  
I see your breath in the winter air,  
hear your voice in the running stream  
I am not looking for what is not there  
I am in union with that which I seek.

I walked into the classroom to facilitate the first session of a six-week series on Evolutionary Creativity. Instead of giving them my definition of the concept, I had them split into four groups and each come up with their own definition of what would define evolutionary creativity.

After fifteen minutes of sharing, we surfaced their ideas. The first group said that a defining characteristic of evolutionary creativity would be that it was connected to the Infinite, rooted in the sacred, or in harmony with the person's deepest commitments.

The second group said it was a creative energy that could dance with chaos, tangle with turbulence. That to be evolutionary, we must be able to deal with the troublesome aspects of being pushed to our edges and nudged toward the new.

The third group said to be evolutionary, a creative work must take the whole into account, be a force for good, a gift and a contribution to humanity itself.

And the last group said it would inspire action. The creation itself would be an energizing force that would cause the beholder to act in response.

As we discussed the idea further, we realized that it is hard to define it, but you'd know it when you saw it because you'd feel it deep inside you and you'd never be the same. The question came up whether Georgia O'Keefe was an evolutionary creator. Some thought yes. Some thought no. And the upshot was that we can never know the impact of someone's creative work as each of us responds uniquely to the creations of others.

We can say of ourselves we are evolutionary creators if our creations meet the requirements of the time: to be steeped in commitment to a greater good and to inspire others to find their voice and release their power.

All parts seek the whole  
And I am no different  
You O Source and Morning Light  
You O Thundering Rainmaker  
You O Invisible Plenitude  
My thoughts are the sign of you,  
even as they doubt  
or occasionally deny you.

O Great Mystery, Vast Wonder  
It is you in me that renders  
this freedom to think beyond you

Thank you for the chance  
to give life a whirl, knowing  
when it's over I'll fold back in  
to Thought itself  
drift back home to Mind-at-Large.

## TERCE (9:00 A.M.)

*My head is bowed in reverence  
My knees are bent in prayer  
everywhere, every minute I feel you  
there is nowhere that you are not.*

*Just as in earthly life lovers long for the moment when they are able to breathe forth their love for each other, to let their souls blend in a soft whisper, so the mystic longs for the moment when in prayer he can, as it were, creep into God. Søren Kierkegaard*

The other day, I was photographing tide pools at the ocean's edge. The waves crashed onto the shore, ruffled their way across the rocks, and swirled and bubbled into the shallow, sandstone pools beneath my feet. I hovered over a patch of moss-covered rock and photographed a piece of the action. When the photos were developed, I could hardly believe my eyes. Every single tiny bubble I caught in my lens reflected back an image of myself. Everything I looked at looked back at me and contained me.

All life is a mirror to us, reflecting who we are back to ourselves. If we look deeply enough into a redwood or mountain stream, into a person's face, the petal of an iris, the eyes of a kitten, we will find ourselves there. We will recognize our oneness, our common ground—the life force that holds us all together on this plane. And it is the *seeing* that is Divine—the looking, the recognizing, the awareness of oneness that *is* the One.

**Stop what you're doing and take ten deep breaths. Breathe deeply enough so you feel your stomach inflating like a balloon on the in breath. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth, letting your breath be the singular thing you focus on.**

**Try breathing in to a count of four, holding your breath to a count of two, and exhaling slowly to a count of six. Do this during the day if you feel stressed.**

*When you pray, go into your room and shut the door. Matthew 6:6*

*Prayer is the contemplation of the facts of life from the highest point of view.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

We are intricately entwined with the Divine in ways that cannot be spoken of, but the reality is not to be denied. We do not have to seek after God. There is no journey to take, no texts to pore over, nothing to learn in the matter. As the Lankavatara Sutra reminds us, “These teachings are only a finger pointing to the Noble wisdom ... they are intended for the consideration and guidance of the discriminating minds of all people, but they are not Truth itself, which can only be self-realized within one’s own deepest consciousness.”

It is through us, through our consciousness, that the divinization of humanity and all the earth is occurring. By learning to see, by becoming alert and awake, we feel the call and presence of the Unmanifest guiding us into the creative action that gives birth to this process. Everything takes form according to the consciousness that shapes it. Since we create in our own image, in order for our creations to be light-filled and inspired, so must our self-image be. What comes out of us is only as brilliant, as loving as our images of ourselves. To give gold, we must mine the gold within.

The treasure is in us, of us. And if we think not, then our thoughts deceive us. It is like trying to solve a problem with a mindset that is the problem. We cannot be healed until we accept that we are healed. We cannot sense the Divine until we feel its presence in our own cells and devote our deepest love to the Life Within.

How we see ourselves has everything to do with how we see others and how we see God. As Anthony de Mello said, “If you have to have an image of God, make sure it’s an image of the kindest, most loving person you know, because you are going to become your image of God.”

## SEXT (NOON)

*I am a turbine to your wildness  
stepping down the roar of you  
that you might be experienced  
as a breeze of relief  
a glass of comfort on a hot summer day.*

A friend of mine, Beth, filled her jeep with rocks from Home Depot in preparation for her weekend task of constructing a stone wall. Late that night, she remembered she was supposed to pick up two people from the airport early the next morning. She panicked at first, realizing there was no room for them or their luggage. Then the anxiety subsided, and a calm resolve took its place. She would get dressed, put on her work gloves, and unload those rocks one by one.

It was dark outside and there was no light to see by, so she just carried the rocks to the place she planned to build the wall. One on top of another, in the pitch black of night, she laid them down as orderly as she could. "It was as if time had stopped," she said. "Hours passed, but I had no sense of it. And though the rocks were big, they never felt heavy." After, when Beth emptied her Jeep, she went inside and went to bed, knowing it would soon be time to go to the airport.

That morning when she went outside to get in her car, she was stunned at what she saw. Her stone wall glistened in the early morning light, beautifully shaped and brilliantly designed, as if it had been put together by a master of the trade.

Spirit flows through our hands like a current through a stream. It is life-giving, light-filled power that pours out of us in our purest moments of love and compassion. And yet we hold back. We hold back tenderness, we hold back our power, we doubt our own ability to work miracles though Jesus himself said, "Any of the works I have done, you can do and more." It is our history that is holding us back—old voices, old ways—while today, this hour, this moment calls to us, "Wake up now! Everything, *everything* is in your hands."

If you are going to be my teacher  
hone your memory like a razor  
so your forgetting is rare  
and doesn't overlap with mine.

If you are going to be my teacher  
wake up polishing the mirror of your self  
so when I sit at your feet, looking up  
it is myself I see  
my own torch burning and lighting the way.

If you are going to be my teacher  
start practicing surgery so you can remove  
my cancerous judgments  
my deteriorating opinions  
my tumors of cynicism and jealousy.

If you are going to be my teacher  
take multiple vitamins  
for your own intelligence  
so you never forget  
I am you too.

If you are going to be my teacher  
get out your church key and open the can of me  
then stand back and make room  
for the shower of stars  
that will fall your way  
each one a question  
and you its mark.

**You start each day with a list of things to do. What if you made a list of Things Not to Do in order to get your other things done? What would go on that list?**

When our souls materialize a body in order to do their work in this world, from the very beginning we are led to believe that we are our bodies. But we are *not* our bodies. We are their observers, their caretakers. We are the Mind behind their movements, the Eye behind their seeing. The cells in our bodies completely replace themselves every seven years, but our consciousness, connected to the Source, maintains its perfect wholeness throughout eternity. Our cells come and go, but our memory of the ocean stays the same.

Living creatively means diving into this fountainhead, this overflowing spring, and letting its freshness source and sustain us. Our souls have conjured these bodies to do their work in the world, and just as a pitcher of water floats in the river—water within, and water without—so do we hold within the very Divine to whom we belong. Ours is a holographic universe and in every part, the Whole is contained. The answers to our questions are in every cell, waiting to be expressed in the flow of our feelings. It is not intellect we need to fix our lives, our relationships, our broken world—it is insight, inner sight.

*The universe is bound together in communion, each thing with all the rest. The gravitational bond unites all the galaxies, the electromagnetic interaction bonds all the molecules; the genetic information connects all the generations of the ancestral tree of life. We live in interwoven layers of bondedness.*

Brian Swimme

NONE (3:00 PM)

*I will leave the chaos behind me  
to sit in your lap of love  
to merge with you is my passion  
to be one is all that I seek.*

Dear Light of Day and Dark of Night,

Thank you for being me,  
Powering me, guiding me  
I am your hands and feet,  
Your voice and ears,  
I am a force of substance  
a revealer, a transformer,  
a healer and midwife.  
I am your consort in creation  
ground to your seed.  
I am the matter  
that you energize  
I am water to your air  
tangible and ever returning in every form.  
Press outward and extend yourself  
Seep out through my pores.  
Be me and more  
so your light shines through this darkness.

I worked once in a mall that sponsored a huge antique show. When I walked around to see what they had, my eyes landed on a pair of tiny black patent leather shoes lined with a stunning pink silk. They were just like *my* shoes, the ones I wore for Easter and dress-up occasions when I was three. My heart jumped when I saw them. Deep feelings stirred when I picked them up—not specific memories, but *feelings* from that time in my life. Cavernous feelings of wonder and curiosity about the world opening up in front of my eyes, ahead of me. Feelings of innocence, fearlessness, trust.



I bought those little shoes for the feelings they caused, the joy that welled up when I imagined myself in the shoes of a child again. One day I took those shoes and my camera to the playground, to the lake, to the church steps—and I photographed them in every environment. I placed the shoes in front of the bottom step to the big slide, at the water's edge, approaching the huge golden doors to the cathedral. Each time I did this, new feelings would rise up and I could access something old and true about myself, something untainted, untouched by anything outside me. I felt my body like I felt it as a three year old. I was fully present, completely embodied. Feelings from forty years earlier came to life like a waking dragon coming out of a long slumber. I felt fearless again, in awe again.

When I packed my backpack for a trip around the world, I slipped those shoes in at the last moment. It seemed like a ridiculous thing to do, but in some way, they felt like my vehicle to wholeness, what some might call a transitional object that kept me in touch with a part of me I didn't want to lose. It wasn't that I was afraid to go without them—it was that there were places I wanted to go *with* them, in order to feel the fullness I sensed with them.

When I reached the base camp to the Himalayan Annapurna Sanctuary, I rose at dawn and placed the shoes on the ground before some of the world's most magnificent peaks. As the mauve tones of daylight crept over the horizon, a wild joy surfaced as I photographed those little shoes. I remembered myself. I was the little girl who had climbed the mountain. I was the one who had no fear, who was in the moment, who felt the breath of God in the blowing wind. I was safe, in the arms of the Mother, always cared for, never alone.

In some strange way, those shoes helped me. They transported me to my deepest desires, my earliest knowing. They revived feelings I had learned to suppress, and once I learned the secret of finding my feelings, I was free to let go of the patent leather shoes.

Trekking down the mountain, I came upon a mother bathing her young daughter at the village pump. The girl looked small enough, I thought, for the shoes to fit her. I reached into my pack and pulled them out, offering them to the mother when the bath was complete. With smiles and sign language, I did my best to say: "Have her try them on. If they fit, she can have them."

The girl's face lit up like the morning sun. She put one on and it fit her perfectly. Then she climbed into the other one, strapped up the shiny straps and

danced with delight. The mother bowed over and over with gestures of gratitude, and I bowed back, over and over, thanking *her* for the chance to be of use.

Every time I think of those shoes, it all comes back, and mostly what I cherish is knowing that I *can* reclaim my body. I *can* have those original feelings. I just need to remember what it feels like to be three, to be walking again for the first time. And to be conscious that the direction I move in is toward joy, toward nature, toward that desire throbbing in the middle of my heart.

*Do not accept what you hear by report, do not accept tradition, do not accept a statement because it is found in your books, nor because it is in accord with your belief, nor because it is the saying of your teacher. Be lamps unto yourselves.* Buddha on his deathbed

Joshu asked Nansen: "What is the path?"

Nansen said: "Everyday life is the path."

Joshu asked: "Can it be studied?"

Nansen said: "If you try to study, you will be far away from it."

Joshu asked: "If I do not study, how can I know it is the path?"

Nansen said: "The path does not belong to the perception world, neither does it belong to the nonperception world. Cognition is a delusion and noncognition is senseless. If you want to reach the true path beyond doubt, place yourself in the same freedom as sky. You name it neither good nor not-good."

At these words Joshu was enlightened.

*We cannot know God until we know our own soul, and the soul is both substance and sensuality. Sensuality is the miracle of the incarnation through which we are oned to the Trinity.* Julian of Norwich

## VESPERS (SUNSET)

*Wherever I am, you are there  
yours is the breath in my lungs  
Blow through me like a reed flute  
To the world I will play your song.*

We are not here to transcend life, but to be fully immersed in it. Our bodies are not something we must triumph over. They are the medium of our transformation, the cauldron in which the elements of heaven and earth are steeped until they transmute one day into the Being of which we are now the embryo. The journey we are on is a journey to fulfill this destiny, and we accomplish it through remembering our true nature, not through learning. We accomplish it by being true to our instincts, by listening to the wisdom of our bodies, and by abandoning all notions of separateness and other.

This is the great challenge upon us, and it is revolutionary work. It calls for extraordinary heroism in the realm of the everyday. It calls for us to take a stand. To stop colluding in the darkness of duality, to stop trafficking in negativity, and to let out, once and for all, over and over, the light within. To separate ourselves from multiplicity, to reveal the good news of the kingdom all around us, we must act on the basis of what we feel and know from our own experience.

A Zen student goes to the temple to become enlightened.

"I want to join the community and attain enlightenment. How long will it take

me?" he asks.

"Ten years," says the Master.

"How about if I work very hard and double my efforts?"

"Twenty years."

Double Entry Accounting

Yours, the heavens, the mysteries, the seeds  
Mine, the earth, the awe, the sowing

Yours, the soul, the living, the dying.  
Mine, the body, the meaning, the mourning

Yours, the day, the birdsong, the rainstorm  
Mine, the gratitude, the laughter, the harvest

Yours, the Mind, the sea, the cosmos,  
Mine, the thoughts, the sailing, the conscience

Yours, the hunger, the war, the earthquake  
Mine, the feeding, the armistice, the rescuing

Yours, the breath, the eagle, the mountain  
Mine, the words, the freedom, the climb

Yours, the sunset, the moon, the tide  
Mine, the photograph, the song, the pearl

Yours, the forest, the seasons, the sky  
Mine, the sap, the changing, the dew

Yours, me  
Mine, You  
Ours: the One, the Whole,  
the All.

Song: Alphabet Mantra

Like the all in the oneness,  
Like the branch and the vine  
Like the call and the answer  
Like the drink and the wine

Like the earth and the heavens  
Like the forest and trees  
Like the gate and the pathway  
Like the hawk and the breeze

Like the iris and petals  
Like the jewel and the mine  
Like the known and the knowing  
Like the laugh and the line

Like moonlight and darkness  
Like nowhere and near  
Like the oak and the acorn  
Like pain and the tear

Like the quest and the seeker  
Like rain and the flower  
Like the sea and the islands  
Like time and the hour

Like union and yearning  
Like the vision and view  
Like waves and the water  
So I am to you.

So I am to you, Love, and you are to me  
We dwell in each other, like salt and the sea.

## COMPLINE (9:00 P.M.)

*I am a ray of your golden sunshine  
I am a spark from your endless fire  
I am your Energy slowed down to matter  
I am the particle born of your Wave.*

Word spread across the countryside about the wise Holy Man who lived in a small house atop the mountain. A man from the village decided to make the long and difficult journey to visit him. When he arrived at the house, he saw an old servant inside who greeted him at the door. "I would like to see the wise Holy Man," he said to the servant. The servant smiled and led him inside. As they walked through the house, the man from the village looked eagerly around the house, anticipating his encounter with the Holy Man. Before he knew it, he had been led to the back door and escorted outside. He stopped and turned to the servant, "But I want to see the Holy Man!"

"You already have," said the old man. "Everyone you may meet in life, even if they appear plain and insignificant... see each of them as a wise Holy Man. If you do this, then whatever problem you brought here today will be solved."

**Think about it: How is it we worship in the wrong direction looking upward instead of around to see who needs us?**

*Unless you start hearing your own voice no one can help you. Boddhidharma*

A Zen master was asked what happens when we die.

"I don't know," he says.

"Aren't you a Zen master?"

"Yes, but not a dead one."

*God, when he has just decided to launch upon his work of creation is called He. God in the complete unfolding Being, Bliss and Love, in which he becomes capable of being perceived by the reasons of the heart...is called You. But God, in his supreme manifestation, where the fullness of His Being finds its final expression in the last and all-embracing of his attributes, is called I.*

14<sup>th</sup> century Cabbalist Moses de Leon

**This is the kind of statement that can be known by the heart more easily than understood by the brain. It is ineffable, a deep mystery. Sit with it for awhile and see if you can feel it nestling into your heart. What is it trying to communicate to you?**

*Examination of Consciousness*

*Did you say only kind words today?*

*Did you remember your thoughts become your life?*

*Were you aware of your thoughts?*

*What was your first thought?*

*Did you have a prevailing emotion throughout the day?*

*What and why?*

*Did you remember that bliss is your natural state?*

*Did you feel it?*

*Did you say thank you as often as you were grateful?*

*Did you reveal your light?*

*Did you notice others' light?*

*Did you laugh out loud?*

*Did you sing?*

*Did you hug anyone?*

*Did you love your body?*

*Did you see yourself reflected in anyone?*

*Did you see God?*

*Are you thankful?*

*Did you say it?*

At our last Evolutionary Creativity session, we went around the room to hear people's comments about what had changed for them over the six weeks. One woman said that she had always been kind of self-centered and had to constantly remind herself to ask about the well-being of others in her relationships.

"It just never occurred to me to ask about how other people were doing. I was so caught up in my own ideas. I had to write myself notes reminding me to talk less about myself and ask more open-ended questions," she said. "But since this class, I find that I'm doing it more naturally now. I'm aware of my actual oneness with others, so I don't have to work at it. Tuning into their issues is like tuning into my own now."

Another woman of German descent said she often felt a split down her middle. Half the time she was an assertive, direct person who spoke her mind easily, even to the point of intimidating others. She was an engineer by profession. The other half of the time she was an artistic jeweler who made beautiful art but was afraid of sharing it, feeling shy and hesitant to reveal this part of herself.

"After this class, I feel that the two parts of me have moved closer together," she said. "I don't feel so shy about my art anymore and it is easier for me to connect with others for more meaningful and casual conversations. I feel more whole, somehow."

In my opinion, this was the result of them having created new neural networks because of the discipline and consciousness they maintained throughout the six weeks. We all rewired our brains in some way, but for these two, it was actually apparent and able to be articulated.

This is how we evolve ourselves forward, how we upgrade our corrupt software — through dedication and commitment to higher levels of thinking and being. They are both free in ways they were not free before, and more conscious of the integration of heart and brain in their daily lives.



## CHAPTER THREE WEDNESDAY

*Whatever you do will be insignificant, but it is very important that you do it.*

Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948)

# CREATIVITY AND THE NEW COSMOLOGY

**W**e're like caterpillars getting close to the Great Transformation. In preparation for its metamorphosis, the caterpillar eats 100 times its weight, falls asleep, and then forms a chrysalis. When the first imaginal cells of the butterfly begin to form themselves, the immune system of the caterpillar tries to fight them off. The immune system fails, and the caterpillar cells become the soup that nourishes the emerging butterfly.

We, as humans, are going through a similar process. We're in a massive consumption phase now, and many of us are asleep, napping in the chrysalis. Since we're all at different stages, some of us are feeling the invasion of "the new" and are resisting it with all our might. We don't want to give up what we know and have. Even though we're participating in a civilization that keeps millions of people starving while a small percentage own most of the wealth, we don't want the upset that fixing that might cost us. Even though most of our institutions are failing us, we don't have enough moral outrage to fuel a change in course. We've stuffed ourselves—those of us who can—and we're sleeping now. It's just too bad about the others.

In order to sustain this thinking, we have to tune out our emotions, because if we let ourselves *feel* our oneness with those people who have nothing because of this imbalance, then we'd have to *do* something. We'd have to bear the weight of our complicity. We'd have to feel the sorrow, and the hunger, and the angst, and the terror of the ones left behind. We'd have to cry, we'd have to forgive ourselves, and we'd have to act in different ways.

So instead we come up with all the rationalizations for not letting in the

emotions. We live half-lives, buying more and more to make ourselves feel better, as if joy were something that comes from outside instead of bubbling up from within as a reward for being true. No, if we are to find real meaning, feel real joy, it will come on the wings of a fully engaged life, a life in the service of more than our self. It will come when we remember that giving is receiving, and the more we share ourselves, the more meaning and joy will come our way. Our spiritual traditions have tried to encourage this—"what you do for the least of these, you do unto me"—but we have failed to connect with the potency of the message.

We were born into the myth of one God in the heavens who created the universe in six days, rested on the seventh, and now spends all his time granting or turning down our prayers. We've seen the image of God and Adam on the Sistine Chapel ceiling and the masterpiece is branded onto our imagination. *The images on which we feed govern our lives*, according to mythopoetic author and Jungian analyst Marion Woodman, and the myth behind this image lies behind our worldview.

But this mythology no longer serves us and is giving way to a new revelation, a new cosmology that is relevant to these times and our evolved consciousness. It worked fine at the time Isaiah was a prophet, 700 years before the Common Era, when word had it God was punishing Israel for the nation's unfaithfulness. It worked as well for a medieval world that believed it would take 8000 years at 40 miles per day by mule to reach the sphere of the stars. It even held up in the 17<sup>th</sup> century when Bishop James Ussher, based on calculations from Genesis, announced that the creation of heaven and earth occurred on October 23, 4004 BCE.

But at a time when we can trace the lineage of the cosmos back 14 billion years, when we have sculptures from the period 200,000-500,000 BCE (the Berechat Ram and the Venus of Tan Tan), when science informs us that 10% of our body weight consists of elementary hydrogen nuclei that came out of the Big Bang, and when more people are acquiring the ability to destroy the planet with nuclear weapons, we are seeing our relationship to the cosmos through a brand news lens. Now that humans have created the means to destroy the world, it is unconscionable to collude in a story that sees God as the creator of circumstances and humans as the victims, God as Geppetto and people as Pinocchio.

The Sistine Chapel of the future might be a mirror, reflecting the part we each play in ongoing creation. Human beings, through the powers of our creative imaginations and unified consciousness, are re-pairing the opposites, transcending the dualities that have kept us separate from nature, from the Divine, and from each other. What is spiritual is the relationship between our cosmos and our mind.

We are coming to understand ourselves as expressions of the universe, activities of the cosmos. We are the universe reflecting back on itself, evolution pondering its next moves. We are the first ones—*homo sapiens*— to recognize the future is largely in our hands. It is happening *through* us, not *to* us. We are collaborating in the ever expanding cosmos by expressing creatively the ineffable mystery that surrounds us, sustains us, enlightens and sanctifies us. In the Hui-chol myth, Grandfather is Fire and Grandmother is Growth—an image quite different from the ones we've inherited.

It is blasphemous for any of us to say "I am not creative." All we *do* is create. We have desires and we create experiences from our desires. We have experiences and we create stories about those experiences. We hear the stories of others, and we are moved to tell our own, turn them into songs or poems or youtube movies. We wake up every day to an empty canvas of twenty-four hours and every night we go to bed having created our masterpiece for the day. We can do this consciously or unconsciously, but we all do it nevertheless. And the ones who are conscious of it are the ones most actively engaged in the work of evolution, of unification, of ongoing cosmic revelation.

Our culture is in deep trouble and everybody knows it. Every institution is in its death throes. Half the world's scientists are engaged in war research. Religions insist on separating humans from God and humans from their earthiness. Capitalism has begotten a greed that is growing like a malignant tumor as we globalize our pathologies. People are returning to fundamental beliefs so they won't have to sort through the complexities of social matters and form their own opinions. Churches are silencing the prophets and absolving the perpetrators of crimes against children.

A culture can't lift itself out of dark and destructive mindset, but creative acts and ideas from a few can ignite the moral imagination of the many. Look at Egypt. Our imaginations are the most potent engines of change in the universe. They are the receptors for Supreme Intelligence, incubators for evolutionary

creativity. It is through the imagination that our thoughts become our lives, our lives become our stories, and our stories become bridges to higher consciousness and ultimate union.

The Bible's prophets were not intellectuals or theologians, they were storytellers. They painted pictures for people, wove exotic tales for people, created metaphors that were consistent with the cosmology of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium before the Christian Era. They did a great job for their era, and now it's time for us to do our part in creating a spirituality that works with the 21<sup>st</sup> century cosmology. It's time to call God home, reconnect ourselves to the natural world, and proclaim the good news that as people on earth we share a single origin, a single community and a single destiny. The Creative Force is communicating its design to all people simultaneously, just as our DNA is communicating its genetic information to all our cells at every moment.

As photosynthesis came forth to enable the planet to evolve biologically, so too are we experiencing the emergence of a new phenomenon that is enabling the planet to evolve consciously. We ourselves are agents of a new transformation, engaged in a process of "infosynthesis" whereby we convert intelligence into inspiration through the creative power of our imagination. Through our spiritual practice (interior) and creative expression (exterior) we unite the opposites of spirit and matter which results in a combustion of original thinking and inspired action.

Every mystic and prophet alive today understands that their interests are not separate from anyone else's. Healing the wounds of the world is an act of self-interest. Mother Earth is healing herself through us. Every activity we engage in is both an activity of the universe and a human activity. The catastrophes of the times—the collapse of the economy, the failures of our institutions, the ineptness of war as a solution to any problem—all signs of a planetary mid-course correction. The earth as an organism will evolve, with or without us.

The universe itself is the primary revelation of the Divine and it is continuing to unfold through our thoughts, words, lives, and creations. The Divine speaks through Nature, Nature speaks through us, and the sacred is communicated through our rituals and relationships. Like the whole world in a grain of sand, revelation is enfolded and unfolding in all directions.

Our conversations are not *about* the Divine—our conversations *are* the Divine. We are awash in the Mystery, saturated in sacredness. This is the aware-

ness that will bring us to our knees, stop us in our self-indulgent tracks and return us to our senses. This is the kind of spirituality that can *mean* something, lead to something that is poignant, personal, *passionate*. This is our chance to *BE* the ones we've been waiting for—to be prophetic, poetic mythmakers conspiring in the evolution of a conscious culture, a compassionate culture. As my mystic friend David says, “WE is just an acronym for Who Else?”

What does it matter  
the myths of old  
if they don't feed the soul  
and fire us up  
when we take them in?

What does it matter  
if God exists or Jesus rose or  
Eve ate an apple  
if in our time we  
allow hungry children,  
human trafficking,  
the shunning of gays  
by the “people of God.”

What do I care about church or religion  
when they don't lead to justice  
or mercy  
or truth?

I am here to live out the meaning of God,  
not to argue about what God means.

Don't make me laugh  
with that pompous talk  
about true religions.  
Get up on your feet and *do* something.

Show me what it looks like to *be* a believer.

## MATINS (MIDNIGHT)

*Isaiah speaks: "The Lord GOD has given me a well-trained tongue, that I might speak to the weary a word that will rouse them."*

*"You are gods," say the Psalms, "and all of you are children of the most High." What more do we need to start creating, to call forth words from the mouth of God?*

Someone asked me what I thought was dying to be born. *Homo sapiens*, I said. *Homo sapiens* (Latin: *wise man* or *knowing man*) is dying to be born into the next iteration—the *homo sentiens*, perhaps. *Homo sapiens* *knows*, and *homo sapiens sapiens* even *knows that he knows*, but look where that's got us. Brains without a heart. *Homo sentiens* (Latin: *feeling human*) will bridge the brain-heart gap and compassion—*feeling with*—will be their *modus operandi*.

*Homo sentiens* will usher in cultures of kindness, economies of equity, politics of collaboration. They will rise up from the ashes of fallen institutions and imploded religions, bringing with them new myths and stories that heal and guide. They will honor creativity and see that every day is a canvas for every living being. They will be notorious for displays of adoration and awe, famous for crying at the drop of a hat—male and female both—and they will declare war obsolete once and for all.

*Homo sentiens* will revere the young and the aged. They will create communities where extraordinary education is common and ongoing, where people learn many languages, where food, health care and a decent home are available to everyone. They will have transcended religions and committed themselves to the common good with the greatest of faith. Children will be encouraged to make music, make art, and make culture. They will know their value from an early age as they will see this value reflected in every community's choices.

*Homo sentiens* will be aware of their oneness with the creation and the creatures and they will not distinguish between sacred and secular. All things will be holy in the eyes of these beings who are our descendants. Perhaps we will return one day in a *homo sentiens* body and will cry for joy. Alleluia! We see the light!

The American Astronomical Society informs us that the composition of the cosmos consists of 4% atoms and 96% dark matter or energy (which cannot be measured with current instruments.) Nothing outweighs everything by a huge margin. Physicist Michio Kaku explains the beginning of things: *Nothing became unstable and particles of Something began to form.*

Our Father, Holy Mother,  
Creator of the Cosmos, Source of Life,  
You are in my mind, in my garden,  
in my cup of wine and loaf of bread.  
Blessed be your names:  
Mother, Allah, Goddess, Beloved, Father,  
Radiant One, Yahweh, HaShem, Sophia  
Your presence has come, your will is done  
on earth as it is in the cosmos.

May we give each other strength, mercy,  
tenderness, and joy  
and forgive each other's failures,  
silence, pettiness, and forgetfulness  
as we ask to be forgiven  
by those we've hurt.

Lead us home  
to ourselves, to You,  
to clarity, to oneness  
and deliver us from the darkness  
of our ignorance and fear.

So we pray and so we receive. Amen

*In the region of nature, which is the region of diversity, we grow by acquisition;  
in the spiritual world, which is the region of unity, we grow by losing ourselves, by  
uniting.* Rabindranath Tagore

Once, in India, I was on a train riding in a Ladies Compartment with three women and two children. We had plenty of extra room. When an elderly woman and her daughter appeared in the doorway, I motioned for them to come in. The other women in the compartment seemed perturbed, pursing their lips and shaking their heads with tight little movements. No one moved over to make room. Instead, they cast their eyes down and pretended not to notice the two women looking for seats.

Finally I stood up and took the older woman's hand, leading her to my place on the bench. There was only room for one, so she sat on the floor and motioned for her daughter to take my seat. Leaning toward me in a gesture of appreciation, the two bowed their heads and joined hands, never looking at the women who'd rejected them.

Wanting to make up for the rudeness of the others, I took out my camera and asked if I could I photograph them. They nodded, and I began to shoot—the mother's head on her beautiful daughter's lap, the protective arm on the shoulder, four eyes looking into me with weariness and wonder. I shot and shot, honoring them, thanking them, loving them. Our intimacy grew with every exposure.

Though I could not speak their language, kinship glimmered in their deep dark eyes. Through smiles and expressions, they offered me something of their essence, their inner light. And I gave back my own form of light, an adoring eye, a gaze wholly focused on the radiance I perceived. Whatever distance there was between us disappeared in those moments of complete attention. We were no longer separate parts; one existed where three had been before.

As a result of that connection, something shifted for the other women in the compartment as well, a subtle opening up, a moving toward. The women who had witnessed this encounter rearranged their bags and created more space for the mother and daughter. They opened up their lunch baskets and passed out *dosas* and fruit, handing portions to me and to the mother and daughter as well.

After our snack, I left the compartment and walked down the aisle to the train's open door, stretching out as far as I could into the hot, humid monsoon air. In a few minutes, the woman and her daughter appeared behind me and sat down on a bale of hay across from the door. They looked up at me smiling, and I sat down on the floor and took the mother's hand in mine. She leaned



over and touched my face, stroking it like a mother would a child. The daughter reached out for my other hand. As the train rolled down the dusty track, we lingered there on the bale of hay, holding hands, rubbing palms.

The next stop was theirs. The women tugged on my arm, begging me with motions to come with them to their home. I was sorry I couldn't, but I had to be in Delhi the next day. As the train pulled away, I hung out the door waving until they were two tiny figures in the golden light.

Shortly after I returned to my seat, a porter arrived with a bottle of Campo Cola and a huge fresh orange. Gifts, he said, from the mother and her daughter. Though I thought no one in the cabin spoke English, one of the women said to me, "They were Muslim, you know. We do not associate. There is a war going on right now in the Golden Temple between Muslims and Hindus. A terrible massacre." It was then I realized what a social faux pas I had made, due to my ignorance of the culture. I nodded my head with a serious look on my face, taking it all in, reflecting on what unfolded, and ultimately, I was happy that I had made space for them, happy that we formed our little holy trinity on that bale of hay in the hallway. In this case, ignorance was bliss.

The threshold we're at right now is a precious one. The whole world is in our hands, and every one of us has the power to act consciously or not. If we do, what will change is us, what we'll save is ourselves—and what will happen in turn is a heightening of our joy and a deepening of our relationship to whatever we cherish.

## LAUDS (SUNRISE)

*I am an activity of the cosmos.  
My life is a wild seed come to bloom in the soil of time.  
I am intelligence ever-expanding  
thought ushering forth from Divine Mind  
A ray of light from the Original Source  
I am the Great One taking shape in human form.  
I am a chalice for the Holy Wine.*

When my mother was living in upstate New York, she invited several friends over for a Christmas party. Since there was a fireplace in her newly rented apartment, she gathered lots of newspapers, put in some kindling, topped that off with some seasoned logs, and lit the fire just as the first guests began to arrive.

There was a great flurry of welcoming, shaking off snowboots, putting on slippers, hanging hats and coats on the rack. Lots of hugging, oohing and aahing over the tree, and carrying plates of food and fudge into the kitchen. Nobody noticed that the house was filling up with smoke until they all started coughing. By that time, the smoke was so thick they could hardly see each other. It was then my mother realized she had never opened the flue.

***Our throats are like the flue. When we don't open them up, speak our truths, let out our feelings as they arise, the fire in our belly turns to smoke.***

*We have been socialized to respect fear more than our own needs for language and definition, and while we wait in silence for the final luxury of fearlessness, the weight of that silence will choke us...The transformation of silence into language and action is an act of self-revelation and that always seems fraught with danger. We fear the very visibility without which we also cannot truly live...and that visibility which makes us most vulnerable is that which is also the source of our greatest strength.*  
Audre Lorde

I call out like the rooster at sunrise  
your name on my lips as I wake  
what mystery is this I am part of  
what is this force called divine?

They speak like you live in the heavens  
though I feel you inside like a sun  
burning away my illusions  
till all that I am is your light.

My head is bowed daily in reverence  
at my bedside I'm on bended knee  
everywhere, every moment I feel you  
there is nowhere to look you are not.

I cry at the wars we engage in,  
the lives that are lost over greed  
our actions are rooted in ignorance  
fear is the seed of our sins.

I do not call out your name to save us  
already you dwell in our midst  
we are the vessels that hold you  
through our hands does your love come to life.

I once visited my high school music teacher who was teaching a music course at Catholic University in Washington, D.C. She had a guest in the class, an Argentinian musicologist who had been studying with some medicine women in the Andes. The musicologist asked for a volunteer to participate in an exercise. A young man raised his hand and she had him lie down on the carpet. She then held a pendulum over each of his chakras. The pendulum swung in wide circles over his first three chakras and his sixth and crown, but remained at a standstill over his heart and throat. They were emitting no vibrations whatsoever. She asked him to breathe deeply, then she held his feet and sung a chant over him.

She asked five others of us to kneel at his head and by his arms and legs. Then she gave us a tone to sing, instructing us to sing it through clenched teeth so it would reverberate in our own bodies first. We did this for several minutes, singing the tone into his body, while she walked around and around us, shaking a rattle and chanting the tone.

Then she retested his chakras with the pendulum. At this point, the pendulum made complete circles over all his chakras, indicating that his energy was now flowing freely. When the exercise was over, the young man had tears in his eyes. He said that his girlfriend had left him recently and he had been full of sorrow and anxiety. His heart was breaking and he had no words to express his grief, so his heart and throat centers closed down.

The woman told him to start breathing consciously, and with the power of his breath, he could revitalize his own energy system. "You can breathe your way back to health," she said. "Just stop a few times during the day, close your eyes, and breathe love into your heart and your whole being. Your breath will open your centers and the flow of spirit will heal you."

The throat chakra is our will center. It is known in Hindu as the Vissudha, which means "purification." It is the place where the wisdom and feelings of our heart and lower chakras synthesize with the energies from above to be released as something new into the world. Its healthfulness is related to how honestly we express ourselves. If we lie, or refuse to speak authentically, we constrict its energy, violating the body and the spirit. If we express our truths fearlessly, open the flue fully, we increase the flow of energy throughout our entire being.

**Song:** (This is a love song where my body and spirit give thanks to each other)

My body, my temple, my palace,  
My body, my vessel , my chalice  
I thank you for being my home away from home  
For giving me a chance to be on earth.

O Spirit, My wisdom, my wellspring,  
My question, my answer, my knowing  
With open arms and bended knee  
I call you to my breast  
Where you will find a holy place to rest.

## PRIME (6:00 A.M.)

*All praise to you my Love  
All gratitude your way  
All praise to you my Love  
I offer you this day.*

*All praise to you my Light  
For every breath I take  
All praise to you my Light  
For the dawn to which I wake.*

We live on a tectonically unstable planet. The rose doesn't ask in a wind-storm, "What did I do to deserve this?" The forest doesn't look at the maple ripped apart by lightning and say "God has punished it for wrongdoing." We are the children of the Holy Mystery, born of the marriage of heaven and earth. Our bodies are made of stardust and clay, our spirits are as infinite as Creation Itself.

We are vulnerable and invincible, wise and wicked, generous and greedy. The line between good and evil runs from the temple to the toes of each of us. When evil occurs and drops us to our knees, all we can do is intensify our light, turn up our heat against the chill of the dark.

Do not think of God as a punishing force, as the creator of events that rob us of hope. Look instead inside yourself and ask what you can be to the ones crying out, ask where to shine your light to overcome the shadow. The mysteries of life keep us in awe and protect us from arrogance—that is their gift to us, as the gift of an ending is a new beginning. In this human lifetime, evil haunts and humbles us day and night. Catastrophes confound us, paradox surrounds us, and there is nothing for us to do but give what we can give, withhold judgment, radiate kindness, and use every sorrow as a stepping stone to love.

God's handwriting is so bad sometimes  
I can hardly make out the words on the page.  
My pace is like a snail when I pen my questions  
one by one, but the answers come  
at roadrunner speed making me wonder  
if a court reporter might be useful here.  
I like it, though, that there's always a response  
always that feeling I'm not alone  
that somewhere in the deep dark down of me  
is someone with a map whenever I am lost.

*Revelation is an unveiling. It comes to the heart. When you truly hear, you will know. And when you say to another what you truly know, you will speak with the power of a prophet.* Edward Brennan

### Morning Prayers

This is heaven.  
This cup of coffee, divine.  
This air I am awash in,  
sacred as the feather of an angel's wing.  
This candle flame, Immanence Itself.  
The stack of books, these poems and journals  
The Word revealed anew.  
This sound of silence,  
The voice of the creators at it again  
Earth and sky, particle and wave,  
North and south, melting into One  
fusing into future,  
as I lie here in wonder  
happy as a loon on a mountain lake.

### **How do you recognize a false prophet?**

1. If when they say we, they don't mean everyone
2. If the story they tell doesn't inspire you to act for the common good
3. If they do not speak out when unity is disrupted

Song: I Am the River, You are the Flow

Do not complain,  
your gifts are so many  
you have breath and sight  
and life all around  
don't let yourself worry  
or dwell on what's missing  
for all that you need already abounds.

There is food for the hungry,  
you need only to share it  
all truth is revealed,  
you need only to see  
each soul I've created  
contains all the heavens  
I am there in your midst,  
look around you, that's me.

Others may tell you  
your sins keep us separate  
they'll speak of the miles  
between heaven and earth  
but I tell you, my child,  
there's no distance between us  
I'm the light of your fire,  
you're the sound of my breath.

And I hold you like sunshine  
and bright colored flowers  
I am one with you always,  
I never let go  
wherever you journey,  
I journey beside you  
for you are the river  
and I am the flow.

TERCE (9:00 A.M.)

*How could we not be one  
when the lines of your poem  
fall like a bucket  
into the well of my heart?*

I bought a statue of Buddha in Tijuana before heading to the east coast. With all my luggage in the trunk of my Honda, the only place I had to put him was in the passenger's seat. So I strapped him in and off we went. Being a gypsy at heart, I had driven across country a dozen times before, but never had a jaunt gone quite like this one.

Externally, everything looked much the same. Lonely, endless highways through the desert; steep, hairpin curves through the Rockies; quaking in the wake of massive diesel trucks; day after day of barrenness through Texas; lightning storms through the Midwest; endless construction through Pennsylvania, and dozens of pit stops along the way for food and coffee that never managed to flow through the body with any regularity.

After awhile, you know what to expect. The usual discomfort of sitting so long and eating wrong; the long stretches with nothing on the radio but right wing religion; the borderline panic attacks when there's no sign of life in the desert, or too much of it in the cities. Then of course, the fear of tornadoes in Kansas, of heights in Colorado, and armadillos in Louisiana. These are the common perils of the cross country trek.

But with Buddha at my side, everything changed. I don't know if it was me or Buddha, but for the first time, not a thing came up that caused me grief. No fear through the desert, in the mountains. No hassle from any trucker or roadside rowdy. No indigestion, no panic, no problems. And every minute behind the wheel, I was calm and collected in the presence of that little guy next to me.

What images we expose ourselves to, in our real lives and in our imagination, have a powerful impact on how we feel. Having that statue of Buddha beside me altered my experience on that road trip. It calmed me down, changed my way of feeling and thinking. It kept me mindful of his words, "We are what we think. All that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts we make the world." I could not, in the presence of the master of mindfulness, absent-mindedly drift into negative thinking. My thoughts stayed positive. My trip was a joy.



**To Be List**

Star in the sky of God  
Kernel in the cornfield of God  
Word in the encyclopedia of God  
String in the orchestra of God  
Trout in the stream of God  
Window pane in the conservatory of God  
Nanosecond in the light-year of God  
Snowflake in the blizzard of God  
Marshmallow in the campfire of God  
Ink drop in the fountain pen of God  
Sap in the maple tree of God  
Ice crystal in the glacier of God  
Grain of sand in the beach of God  
Thread in the comforter of God  
Decibel in the laugh of God  
Blade of grass in the fairway of God  
Hydrogen molecule in the sea of god  
Consonant in the autobiography of God  
Bulb in the greenhouse of God  
Calorie in the coconut cream pie of God  
Half-note in the symphony of God  
Blank in the scrabble game of God  
Pine needle in the forest of God  
Bristle in the paintbrush of God  
Diamond in the mine of God  
Apple in the orchard of God  
Grape in the Gewürztraminer of God  
Feather in the wing of God  
Viridian in the palette of God  
Cell in the right brain of God.

*To create is to make something whole from the pieces of our lives and, in the process, to become more whole ourselves. It is a healing act, a leave-taking from the chaos as we move from the choppy surface toward the stillness of the center. What was the last thing you created? What pieces were you putting together? Was it healing?*

Into your hands I commend my failures,  
my rash judgments, my criticisms,  
my proneness for separation,  
my harsh opinions.  
Into the bowl of your cosmic lap  
I heave my ten thousand undigested sorrows,  
my tempests of thoughtlessness,  
my ramblings of misery, chaos, loneliness.

Lies, lies, all of them!

Me falling into this featherbed of forgetfulness:  
O, what a sight!  
Remove all mirrors when I flail like this,  
when I become a lost one  
wandering in the dark.

Imagine that when we're born, each one of us comes to earth with the radiance of, say, a hundred watt bulb. That's our natural state—100 watts. As we go through life, our job is to maintain that brightness, and even improve it if we can. What dims it, we learn through experience, is negativity, anger, resentments, regrets. What brightens it is harmony, balance, joy.

If you consider the people you encounter on a regular basis and reflect a little on their energy level, you could probably bring to mind a few who fit the 100 watt category, and others who are in the 50-60 watt vicinity. And you probably encounter 10 watt people every once in awhile, though chances are you don't linger long. It's the 100 watt-ers that keep your attention. These are people who don't complain, who don't say negative things about themselves or others, who are the first to offer help and the ones who stay until the work is done.

Hundred watt-ers laugh a lot, they draw people in like bears to honey. They're the ones you wish you were more like. And now, you can choose to become one, if you want. All it takes is a little practice. First, you must become an observer to your own thoughts and words, so you are conscious of your thoughts and the words that you speak. Second, you must speak as if your words were materializing into your very life. This means no self-deprecating remarks and no negative comments about others. In other words, you must actually *love* yourself and love others as yourself.

If we operate from this premise, than we have a good chance of keeping our light bright. If we speak positively, think reverently, then we maintain our original state of grace. If we enter into a meeting imagining that every person there is a peer, then our encounters will begin to change. Once we start noticing our thoughts, becoming aware of their power, letting go of judgments, resistance, opposition, then we experience a more radiant energy. As we think, so shall it be. As we speak, so shall we create.

*The rule that covers everything is: How you are with others, expect that back.* Rumi

## SEXT (NOON)

*As others have calmed me on turbulent nights  
as they've led me to shelters away from the storm  
may the love of my heart be like dawn to their darkness  
may the mirror of my eyes let them see their own light.*

Our body and brain are the physical manifestation of our immaterial mind. The mind is like the symphony, and the body and brain are the instruments and players. Every second a massive information exchange is occurring in the body and each system has its own unique tone—a signature tune. These tunes rise and fall, wax and wane, bind and unbind, according to Dr. Candace Pert who writes: *“If we could hear this body music with our ears, the sum of the sounds would be the music we call emotions.”*

Our raw emotions are striving to be expressed in the body. They're always moving up and down the chakras and the spinal cord, carrying information on

a cellular level, communicating through a psychosomatic network with every system in our body, and seeking a final release and integration through the brain. They're like seedlings burrowing through the soil in search of the sun. If they are stunted in their journey, denied expression, there is no flow, no growth.

Releasing our emotions is part of the process of unmanifest consciousness becoming manifest. It's through the expression of our emotions that we, as incarnate versions of the Divine, allow the Beloved to flow through us and become present in our world.

*The alienation we feel is not about distance from God, but about our estrangement from creation which was, and continues to be, God's first revelation to humanity.* Diarmuid O'Murchu

## NONE (3:00 PM)

### *Finding Yourself on Sacred Ground*

*There is nowhere else to find yourself,  
since all ground is sacred,  
nowhere to kneel that before you  
the Holy One is not in sight.*

*If the noise of the city makes you scream  
and stuff cotton in your ears  
it does not mean the One Who Made You  
is faraway.*

*It means your soul needs quiet now:  
the canopy of an oak tree,  
the silence of a forest,  
the calm of the sunset on a canyon ridge.*

*The ground is holy wherever you stand  
the Windmaker never moves out of sight.  
To find that One, turn just slightly to the left,  
ready yourself for wonder,  
and open your eyes.*

In 1967, when I was eighteen, I entered a convent. After two years, I was dismissed for “lack of a religious disposition.” The news that I had to leave came suddenly; one night, without warning, my parents appeared to take me home. I had no chance to say good-bye to the friends I was leaving behind, and was told by my Superior as she ushered me through the basement corridors, “We don’t want you communicating with anyone here. The sisters will keep you in their prayers.”

I moved to California from New York shortly thereafter. Nine months later, as the birthday of my best friend in the Novitiate was approaching, I decided to make her a birthday present. I would create an album of photographs and quotations that might convey, in the language of images, all that I wished I could say to her. Since mail was censored by the order’s superiors, I tried to keep the album as impersonal as possible. No card. No letter. No notes on the page other than quotations from authors we’d loved, songs we’d sung together, prayers and poems we’d passed back and forth. The photographs had to do most of the work. In their silent language, they had to reveal me, speak the words I couldn’t say, carry the weight of my tangled feelings, my failed attempts to get past the pain.

With a Kodak Instamatic in hand, I went out in search of pictures to portray my struggle to reassemble my life, to regain my footing and rekindle my joy. I rummaged for images that would *be* the words I wanted to speak, that could whisper my voice in every color and shade of gray.

I went to the mountains and the desert, the ocean and forests. I found myself reflected in parched desert floors, redwood saplings, homeless park dwellers. I photographed footsteps dissolving in the tide, my body against a twelve-foot cross, my shadow in front of a locked church door. Images of crashing waves and toppled sand castles, friends huddled on a moonlit beach, a woman alone strumming a guitar, birds soaring into golden sunsets—each reflected something I felt but could not say, a metaphor for a sentiment I could not share.

As the photos were developed, I studied each one, looking for the emotions they contained—finding strength in one, fear in another, loneliness and joy and conviction in others. Everything I had experienced since I left the Motherhouse was captured in those prints—the rejection that seemed to have come from God, the loss of my community, the loneliness for my friends, the fear of what was to come, the doubt about my own worth, the disappointment that I could

not have the life I felt called to, the anger at being dismissed without a chance to defend myself.

In my quest for photographs that would tell my story, I revealed myself to myself in a new way. Photography pushed me to understand each feeling in order to portray it. Every detail mattered immensely. The light mattered, the shadows mattered, the mood and tone and contrast mattered. There was nothing else on the page—only one image after another saying:

*Dear Lois,*

*Here I am. Here is how I'm doing. This is what I'm thinking. This page is my loss. This page is the joy I am trying to hold onto. Here is the fragment of my faith that remains. Here is my long, lonely howl in the night.*

Making that album was a healing ritual from beginning to end. It gave me a new way to let grief out—to see it, experience it, understand it. In the process, my sorrow became less a malignancy I was bent on destroying and more a companion I was seeking to befriend. As I glued each photograph onto the page, I was touched by its power, in awe of its ability to give voice to my silence, shed light on my darkness.

I almost didn't matter, by the time it was done, if the book made it to Lois after all. It had done far more work than I'd ever imagined, helping me to know my feelings, then express and release them. As it turned out, when the book arrived, Lois was summoned by the Novice Director who had her read the book in her presence. Page by page, Lois studied the pictures, read the quotations, and entered the world between my lines. In that process, we connected across three thousand miles and she knew what a long, long way I was from home.

**In the course of manifesting what we hold within, transforming spirit and ideas into matter and language, we experience the delight of creation. As we give form to Spirit, so are we informed and healed by it. As we express the Divine through our creative work, so do we experience the Divine within. What exists in the world that wouldn't be here if you weren't?**

## VESPERS (SUNSET)

*O Mother, O Source, O Giver of Life  
I bow to you, I kiss your fingers,  
I lift my arms in praise and joy.  
Alleluia! I am born and born again  
all the days of my life.*

I was once staying at a Gandhian ashram when the community came together to build a new barn. Eighty people gathered at the river bed, which was about a quarter of a mile away from the building site. They formed a long line from the stream, up a hill, through a meadow and to the site of the new barn. It was monsoon season, the temperature was 104 degrees and the air was thick with humidity.

Our job was to pass tin bowls of sand, stones and water from the stream to the building site. From one person to the other, hand to hand, the bowls were passed along the snaking line. Hour after hour went by and no one complained. By noon, I was soaking wet and losing steam. At one point, I scanned the landscape for signs of relief, finding two tractors in a nearby meadow and two empty carts on the side of the road. Moments later, a group of ashram kids passed by leading a team of oxen to the river. I thought it was ridiculous that all this people power was being used for something that oxen, tractors and wooden carts could do.

“This is stupid!” I shouted to Nayan Bala, an English-speaking woman from Delhi who stood next to me in line. “We’ve got 80 people here wasting a whole morning in this heat, when we could just hook up the carts to those tractors and oxen and let them do the work in half the time. Don’t you know time is money?”

I knew, even as those final words tumbled out of my mouth, that every one of them was a mistake, but they were traveling too fast to stop. Nayan Bala put her bowl down and walked over to my side. Gently, she put her hand on my sweaty arm and whispered in my ear, “These people are proud to be building this barn with their own hands. One day they will bring their children and grandchildren here and tell them how they helped build it, rock by rock. They are all proud to be here. You wouldn’t want to take that from them would you?”

I was too humbled and ashamed to say anything more, but Nayan Bala gave me the gift of a lifetime that day. She brought her East to my West, her peacefulness to my anger, and in that loving moment I learned a lesson I'll never forget.

*We are penetrating and being penetrated by an archetypal Ground of Being in an effort to bring into consciousness whatever it can of the vast unknown.*

Marion Woodman

### Magdalene's Diary

He is not so gentle as they say or think—  
a thundercloud on some nights,  
a hurricane of sorrow on others.  
No one sees this private man as I see him  
his hands big as the world  
clenched in madness one moment,  
folded in prayer the next.

At night it is I who must calm him down  
remove his robe, kiss his face  
wrap my arms round his burdened back,  
rub his heavy laden shoulders with healing balm.

He needs me as the others need him  
which causes fury in a few of them.  
Peter's rage and jealousy has frightened me  
more than once  
though I don't share that with Yeshua—  
he has enough problems with them  
without adding that to his list.

They call him Master,  
though he asks them only to master themselves,  
to make of their lives what he is making of his.

What anger he feels  
when they won't take their power  
saying he is the Master, his gifts are unique



Over and over he repeats the same thing:  
*Anything I have done, you can do, and more.*  
He calls them to manhood  
yet they refuse to grow up  
and though I know his thoughts as I know my own  
they will not listen when I speak his truth.  
I bear the sorrows of my beloved each night,  
as I offer him bread and a cup of wine.  
Into my lungs I breathe his pain,  
out of my mouth, I send forth my love.

His tears fall like blood  
from a heart broken open  
He thrashes in his sleep  
like a boat in a storm.

Though separate we are one,  
our spirits undivided,  
he is the dawn of my every day  
and I am his northern star.

Deep dialogue is essential to creative thinking because it is a tool for helping us discover what we value and why. As soon as you speak of your values, your visions, your fears, my mind begins a search to discover its own beliefs in the matter. We are hardwired to compare and contrast, to scan for differences and similarities, to take in and synthesize and evolve ourselves forward. We define ourselves through problems, which are statements of contrast, not absolutes. And in order to arrive at these statements of contrast, we need to hear each other's stories.

They are the grist for our mills. Your deep telling feeds my deep knowing. Or as the French poet Paul Valéry expressed it: *Nothing is more 'original,' nothing more 'oneself,' than to feed on others. But one has to digest them. A lion is made of assimilated sheep.* The truths we cling to are based on the stories we've been told, and they are altered and enlivened by the stories we continue to hear. We take something in, we digest it, we decide what to keep and what to let go of. Sometimes we change our thinking. Sometimes we don't.

## COMPLINE (9:00 P.M.)

### *Prayer for Kind Speaking*

*Be my speaking, You, the Word  
that tells no bitter lie  
shape my lips in such a way  
that only You get by*

*Take away my anger  
cast out all my need to blame  
let my words be comforting,  
a balm to someone's pain.*

*Let me not forget the power  
of words to soothe the soul,  
Let my stories be a fire  
to lost ones in the cold.*

*Be my words, come flood my mind  
come drench my every cell,  
till every thought beneath my speaking  
rises up from You as well.*

It's not easy these days, making time for our creative work. Voices call us from everywhere demanding our attention, our energy. And many of us, somewhere along the line, got the message that making art is self-indulgent, so we relegate it to the bottom of our list. It becomes the thing we get to when the laundry is done, the bills are paid, the groceries bought and put away, the e-mail is answered.

We get so caught up in the flurry of our lives that we forget the essential thing about art—that the act of creating is a healing gesture, as sacred as prayer, as essential to the spirit as food is to the body. Our creative work reveals us to ourselves, allows us to transform our experience and imagination into forms that sing back to us in a language of symbol who we are, what we are becoming, what we have loved and feared. This is the alchemy of creation: that as I attempt to transmute a feeling or thought into an artistic form that can be

experienced by another, I myself am added to, changed in the process.

As we center ourselves in the act of creating, attune to our inner voice, a shift occurs in our consciousness, allowing for the birth of something new. Our attention is no longer on time and demands and errands. It is caught up in the extraordinary metamorphosis of one thing into another. What begins as cocoon emerges a butterfly. What once was sorrow may now be a song.

As I am changed by the art that passes through me in the process of becoming, so am I changed by the creations of others. I am moved, in some way, by every image I encounter, as I am moved by music, poetry, plays, and novels. I am healed by the creations of others every day, conscious of the obstacles that each artist faced in the process of birthing them, and aware that if they did it, so can I; and if I do it, so can you.

For it is the same with all of us—we have our fears, our doubts, our cultures that negate the work of the spirit. And yet we continue on, journeying inward to find what is there that seeks release and offers comfort. Over and over, we transmute one thing into another, turning tragedies and triumphs into powerful images, colorful landscapes, illuminating poems. We conjure these images in our private hours and offer them to the whole like food for the soul, a wrap against the cold.

The call to create is a calling like no other, a voice within that howls for expression, the shadow longing to merge with the Light. It is an act of faith to respond to this voice, to give it our time; and in return we are blessed with work that has light and life of its own. One photograph can spark a revolution, thaw a frozen heart, inspire another's masterpiece.

Art that emerges from our inward journeys is a tale-telling mirror that collapses time and expands dimension. Our creations contain the past and the future, the known and the unknown, the breath of spirit and the heft of matter. As we respond to the world we are part of, what we create adds to its essence, changes its shape, heals its wounds. No matter what the medium, art reveals us to ourselves and raises the level of human consciousness. Art is a mirror not only to the soul of the artist, but to the whole of civilization that celebrates its creation.

Simone Weil once wrote: "The work of art which I do not make, none other will ever make it." We, as creators, hold in our bones the lessons of history, paths to the future, glimpses of a world yet to come. The lines that we draw are

lifelines, lines that connect, lines that sketch the contours of the future we're creating.

**It is up to us—those who feel the tug of the inner voice—to create the world we want to be a part of, to utter the words we want to inspire us.**

If, through our images, we can reveal the heart of humankind, shine a light on what is precious and holy in ourselves and others, then let us find that in our midst and capture it in our work. Let us not wait for the heroic, conspicuous gestures, but rather look more carefully for those small, daily kindnesses, those rituals of bonding and sharing that show us as people revering life, revering each other. Our sensibilities are assaulted on a daily basis by a press consumed with fear and destruction. Heartbreaking photos of a world run amok wash over our days, invade our dreams. The shadow of humanity makes the news, while the light goes unnoticed, the good unrevealed.

May we, as image makers, shapers of the culture, set our sights on things we value, rituals we engage in that heal and serve. May our images honor the ordinary endeavors of common people, and may they make their way to the eyes of the weary—light to the dark, fire to the chill.

**There are a lot of things we don't have in life, but time is not one of them. Time is all we have. One lifetime under this name to produce a body of work that says, "This is how I saw the world."**

Each of us is here to express our potential, manifest that *something* that's unique to us. None of us is aiming for triteness, in pursuit of the shallow. It's greatness we're after—and not some hollow applause coming from somewhere beyond us, but the deep down thrill of knowing we went all out, put our soul into something, created a life or a piece of art that sparked something new, had an impact, could be of use.

I want my fire to blaze, to rage up and light some piece of night that someone's shivering into. I want my life, my work to sizzle with passion, to ignite ideas and laughter and wonder and kindness, to spread hope like wildfire through these times of darkness. We're a culture in big trouble, making big mistakes, and everyone knows it. We need help, and it's the arts that can help us,

because it is our spirit that is wounded, and that's where art goes. That's where it performs its healing magic.

**You can build a temple in the space between your eyes.**

I once noticed in the credits to a film that someone had a job called “fly wrangler.” There was a scene where a body had been dead a long time and there were hundreds of flies swarming around. The fly wrangler had to see to it that those flies behaved well and did their part. As you begin to pay attention to your thoughts and words, you're going to start noticing others' speaking as well, and you can take on the role of “conversation wrangler.”

If you're with someone or a group of people who are being critical or negative, you can wrangle that conversation right around to something positive. Think of it as a creative challenge. How can you kindly, compassionately redirect the energy toward the light? How can you reframe the issue so people can focus on what they want, instead of what they don't want?

*If I put my cheek against the earth's body, I feel the pulse of God.*

Meister Eckhart

The apostle Philip says to Jesus, “I do see you, but I want to see God.” And Jesus responds, “Whoever sees anything at all is looking into the eyes of the Only One Who Is.” We are evolving toward this consciousness, but it is a rigorous climb, entrenched as we are in old ways of thinking. The very culture that has shaped us is the culture we must now transcend, and we will do that by co-creating it consciously day by day. Our neighborhoods, our cities, our churches, our workplaces look like they look because we co-create them. They are made of our energy, our commitments, our ideas and creations. They are what they are because of what we have done or failed to do.

I can imagine that people looking back on our world from a hundred years in the future will be horrified that we allowed 40,000 children a day to die from hunger when there was plenty of food to go around. That we poisoned our rivers, destroyed our forests, considered war a viable option. I can imagine them with saddened faces, poring over documents of our devastating history, trying to understand the suicide of children, the stoning of women, the obesity

of one nation and the starvation of another. Why we spent more on smart bombs than smart children. Why we killed people to show people that killing people is wrong. Why so many billions of dollars were spent on drugs, plastic surgeries, prisons, and weapons, when just a few of those billions could have met the basic needs of every person on the planet. We are all involved in one of the greatest mysteries on earth: *why don't we care for each other?*

*Prophets play a part in the whole history of a nation, whether in confraternities or singly as influential persons. At times the prophet may be powerful enough to reprove a king or direct national policy; at other times s/he may be in lonely opposition and her message takes the form of a tissue of menaces and reproaches against the ruling powers.* Jerusalem Bible

Every human being is like a leaf on a tree, receiving sunlight and rain and converting these into food for itself. This process in nature is called photosynthesis. The magic ingredient is chlorophyll. In humans, it is called *infosynthesis*, and the magic ingredient is our imagination.

We convert what comes our way into stories, into youtube movies, into text messages, books, and facebook pages. We are social turbines converting the winds of change into power for the multitudes. Part of what makes us human is our ability to share our experience—to make it through the desert and leave behind a journal that's a guidebook for others. This is our nature. We share what we notice to help the ones who are behind us. The pioneers leave word of the shortcuts and dangers.

We become prophetic when we recognize where justice is absent and strive to correct it. We absorb knowledge and convert it to wisdom when we apply it for the betterment of all. Knowledge by itself is information. Knowledge mixed with compassion turns into prophetic action. Facts become transformed into essays, sermons, letters to the editor, poems and plays. Information comes to life in the process of *infosynthesis*. It is transmuted into intelligence and inspired action.

We do this on a small scale with our families, but as we grow in consciousness, more of the world comes into our view. The prophets among us are in service to the many. They have a worldview. They commit themselves to justice. They are a stand for unity. They are the yang to the mystics' yin. If you watched

them for a week, you could see their dedication. You would see the hours they devote, the energy they contribute to peace on the planet. This is evolutionary creativity: when we engage in the transformation of thoughts into language, language into practice, and when the practices of our lives encourage, sustain and energize others. This is prophetic work. We are not predicting the future. We are giving birth to it, co-creating it in consort with the Great Mystery. We bring our consciousness to the table and it meets with the unknown cosmic forces. This is the creative dance of a lifetime. This is truly “dancing with the stars.”

Where does revelation come from these days? Not burning bushes. Not voices in the sky asking you to kill your son. Not snakes in the desert. Nor snakes in the garden. Revelation comes quietly, in times of stillness, when one ponders how to be of use. Revelation comes at the intersection of compassion and the daily news. Revelation rises up in response to injustice—as it rose up in Moses, in Jesus, in Harriet Tubman, Mahatma Gandhi, Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Jr., Mother Teresa, and the ones who’ve stood up and spoken out for the benefit of others.

Revelation is in the air we breathe. It has never changed. It never will. It is always the same: *Take care of each other. I am with you and in you.*

The heart is a sophisticated information processing center with its own nervous system. It has the ability to sense, learn, remember, and make functional decisions independent of the brain. It sends messages to the brain and the rest of the body in four different languages—neurological, bio-physical, hormonal, and electrical. Research from the Institute of Heart Math in northern California shows that by simply shifting our heart's rhythmic beating patterns from chaotic to coherent we can produce profound and beneficial changes in the brain. These changes open the brain up so we can see the big picture and build new neural pathways that allow us to more easily experience positive emotions.

With the power of our own consciousness, we can cause a change in the rate of our heartbeat and create new pathways in the brain that lead to expanded imagination, evolutionary creativity, and more visionary solutions.

The heart's energy field is coupled with a subtle energetic field of ambient intelligence which is limitless and perpetually accessible. Love is dancing with wisdom all day long. Real learning, for the most part, is an unconscious process. It happens when we are most present—body, mind, and spirit—to what is before us.

If we overwhelm ourselves with too much information, our brain's synthesizing functions exhaust themselves trying to keep up. The challenge is not to overload the brain with data, but to open the channels for information to drift down into the heart. The goal is to embody the wisdom of the cosmos, to be aware that our consciousness is one with the ever expanding universe. Our bodymind is a manifestation of nature's quintessential being.