

## **A Day In the Spiritual Life**

### **A Reader's Theater Service**

**September 13, 2020**

#### ***A Haiku for morning:***

**Charmed**

#### **A Sunny Day in Winter**

**A New You**

### **Waking Up**

Darkness was upon the face of the deep, and God said "let there be light" Darkness laps at my sleeping face like a tide, and God says, "let there be light" Why not? Out of the primeval chaos of sleep he calls me to be a life again....He calls me to be this rather than that; he calls me to be here rather than there; he calls me to be now rather than then....Waking into the new day, we are all of us Adam on the morning of creation, and the world is ours to name. Out of many fragments we are called to put back together a self again. ---Frederick Buechner In *The Alphabet of Grace*

### **Brushing Your Teeth**

Take teeth, which are so insignificant in God's layout of the human body that they're not even visible until you smile. I am committed to brushing them twice a day, not just back and forth as I was taught as a child, but one tooth at a time, in front and behind, with a vertical motion. This is not quick cleanup because company's coming. This is closer to polishing the silver every night of your life.

I always felt that brushing my teeth twice a day was religion enough, but that was before the periodontist instructed me in the ceremony of the rubber tip at the end of my toothbrush. I'm devoted to the well-being of my teeth as much as anyone. Still I'm not prepared to take the veil for them. --- Linda Weltner In *No Place Like Home*

### **Waiting for the Water to Boil**

Standing at the kitchen stove early in the morning, looking pasty it through an open window, I feel sleepy, unfocused, fragmented, waiting for the coffee water to boil. An impulse to pray arises in me, but the thought of God remains as vague and unfocused as I feel myself to be at that moment. I am not in the mood for words. A few months ago, I was in India, and now, without consciously thinking what to do I find myself raising my

hands in front of my face and putting palms together, the way Indians do in their gesture of respect.

Quickly, my emotions change. I become Aware of a stir of energy throughout my body. My hands, palms still together, move downward until they are in front of my navel. I feel centered for the first time since arising, and the tree leaves outside the window begin to sparkle. During this little rite, which I have never performed before, no words pass through my consciousness. Theologically, there is either nothing or everything to say about it. Some, including myself, will call it prayer, others not. In any case, it was a short and subtle ritual of transformation. ---Wendy Wright In *Sacred Dwelling*

### **Making Breakfast**

The woman sets the table. She watches me beat the eggs. I scramble them in a saucepan, ... I take our plates, spoon eggs on them, we sit and eat. She and I and the kitchen have become extraordinary: we are not simply eating; we are pausing in the march to perform an act together; we are in love; and the meal offered and received is a sacrament which says: I know you will die; I am sharing food with you; it is all I can do, and it is everything. --- Andre Dubus In *Broken Vessels*

### **Sitting on The Porch**

From the porch one observes the simple rhythms of daily life: the neighbor setting out the garage in the early morning, the woman from the next street who regularly walks her little dog just after suppertime, the school-age boys exercising prowess in bicycling, the elderly widow receiving a rare visit from an in-law, the business- like drivers of passing cars whose faces mirror their intent to get where they are going.

On the porch one hears the sounds that surround us- the worried chirping of jays hovering over a nest, the cries of a waking baby across the street, the approaching bell of the ice-cream man's truck, distant sirens from the city, the neighborhood dogs whose resonant barks carry airborne canine conversations well over the barriers of fenced-in yards.

Seated upon the porch one finds it unnecessary to comment upon or analyze what one sees and hears. It is enough that it is. Being is not something to be taken for granted or overlooked but something to be breathed in and celebrated with sweet contentment and a grateful heart. ----Wendy Wright In *Sacred Dwelling*

## **Reading the Newspaper**

I've never been very good at feasting on the daily newspaper. It turns bitter in my mouth. And yet, this is my World. This face of suffering I must embrace as a part of my responsibility. Part of the feast is becoming aware of the world that is mine. Part of the feast is owning this broken world as my own brokenness. I clasp the newspaper to my heart and ask once again in the stillness of the night, "What are we doing to the image of God in one another?" -----Macrina Wiederkehr In *A Tree Full of Angels*

## **Wandering Around**

There is an art to wandering. If I have a destination, a plan—an objective—I've lost the ability to find serendipity. I've become too focused, too single-minded. I am on a quest, not a ramble. I search for the Holy Grail of particularity and miss the chalice freely offered filled full and overflowing. ---Cathy Johnson in *On Becoming Lost*

## **Entering a Building**

We make a building beautiful when we stop for it, arrest the motion of thoughts, and linger with it, rather than merely using it. A glass tower is not unlike a computer. Both are media whose message is to increase efficiency. To spend time each day giving attention to a technical building where one works is a very unfamiliar gesture toward a thing designed to receive little attention, designed to focus attention on efficient work. The soul work here consists of defamiliarizing it, loosening the web of anesthesia.--- Robert Sadello in *Facing the World with Soul*

### ***A Haiku for Afternoon:***

**Quiet house**

**Flavor of peppermint tea**

**Hot on the tongue**

## **Playing with the Dog -**

Everyone needs a spiritual guide: a minister, rabbi, counselor, wise friend, or therapist. My own wise friend is my dog. He has deep knowledge to impart. He makes friends easily and doesn't hold a grudge. He enjoys simple pleasures and takes each day as it comes. Like a true Zen master, he eats when he's hungry and sleeps when he's tired. He's not hung up about sex. Best of all, he befriends me with an unconditional love that human beings would do well to imitate. ---Gary A. Kowalski in *The Souls of Animals*

## **Putting away socks**

From the day you bring them home from the store, socks require care out of all proportion to the services they provide in return. Socks need to be put away, found, worn, washed, dried, folded or balled up, put away, worn, thrown in a corner, found, washed and dried—an endless cycle of obligation and loss....

You can get metaphysical about socks if you like, pondering the grace of their design, their stubborn, catlike refusal to be team players, their bachelor-like tendencies to pair off unpredictably, and so on, but I think that may be like looking for the cosmos in a pebble: you can do it, but it takes a high level of belief. ---Laura Green in *Reinventing Home*

## **Driving in Traffic**

It was gorgeous traffic; it was beautiful traffic—that's what was not usual. It was a beauty to see, to hear, to smell, even to be a part of. It was so dazzlingly alive it all but took my breath away. It rattled and honked and chattered with life—the people, the colors of their clothes, the marvelous hodgepodge of their faces, all of it; the taxis, the shops, the blinding sidewalks. The spring day made everybody a celebrity—blacks, whites, Hispanics, every last one of them. It made even the litter and clamor and turmoil of it a kind of miracle. ---Frederick Buechner in *The Clown in the Belfry*

## **Swimming**

Water to me is a saving grace. As a child I forgot my anger at my parents or camp counselors or teachers if a I went to a swimming pool, or to the lake.... Water was freedom, an element in which I believed I had perfect control. Lake and pool waters were calm enough to provide that illusion. I moved through the water in a kind of ecstasy, cut away from the rules of the land, social requirements, limitations, disapproval. Water was action, more effective that payer. When I swam, I believed in God. ----Doris Grumbach in *Coming into the End Zone*

## **Weeding by the Walk**

I am a naturalist at heart, with a patio for my classroom. I may not be the only student in attendance, however, for last week, as I was pulling out weeds where the walk goes by the garage, I was scolded by a squirrel who seemed to be overseeing my labors. If I continued with this task, I may get to see the baby blue hays by the compost heap learn to fly. Or be around when the first autumn leaf sails on the bricks.

This I know: There is absolutely no hope of beating the weeds, which are out there growing back this very moment. I need to reframe this task so that my thinking fits reality and sends me outside with the proper attitude, When I step out on our patio, I'm not fighting the weeds. I'm joining them.---Linda Weltner in *No Place Like Home*

## **Sharing Gossip**

We are interrelated in a small town, whether or not we're related by blood. We know without thinking about it who owns what car; inhabitants of a town as small as a monastery learn to recognize each other's footsteps in the hall. Story is a safety valve for the people who live as intimately as that; and I would argue that gossip done well can be a holy thing. It can strengthen communal bonds....

Like the desert tales that monks have used for centuries as a basis for a theology and a way of life, the tales of a small-town gossip are often morally instructive, illustrating the ways ordinary people survive the worst that happens to them; or, conversely, the ways in which self-pity, anger, and despair can overwhelm and destroy them. Gossip is a theology translated into experience.

In it we hear great stories of conversation, like the drunk who turns his or her life around, as well as stories of failure. We can see that pride really does go before a fall, and that hope is essential. We watch closely those who retire, or who lose a spouse, lest they lose interest in living. When we gossip, we are also praying not only for them but for ourselves. ---Kathleen Norris in *Dakota*

## **Writing a Letter**

Our correspondences show us where our intimacies lie. There is something very sensual about a letter. The physical contact of pen and paper, the time set aside to focus thoughts, the folding of the paper into an envelope, licking it closed, addressing it, a chosen stamp, and then release of the letter to the mailbox—are all acts of tenderness.

And it doesn't stop there. Our correspondences have wings—paper birds that fly from my house to yours—flocks of ideas crisscrossing the country. Once opened, a connection is made. We are not alone in the world. ---Terry Tempest Williams in *Refuge*

## **Taking Off Your Shoes**

Taking off your shoes is a sacred ritual. Is a hallowed moment of remembering the goodness of space and time. It is a way of celebrating the holy ground on which we stand. If you want to be a child of wonder cherish the truth symbolically or literally matters little. What is important is that you are alive to the holy ground on which you stand and to the holy ground that you are. ---Macrina Weiderkehr in *Seasons of Your Heart*

## **Taking Care of the Car**

My station wagon is being fixed now and I hope everything comes out OK. It's good to have a car you don't worry about denting. The wagon was always the one that got left out in the rain and snow. If there was a dirty job to be done, I did it in the wagon, I saved my good car because I wanted the good car to last. I've had three good cars since I bought the wagon. The wagon, mistreatment and all, has outlasted the cars I pampered.

When I get it back, the first thing I'm going to do is give it a nice full tank of high-octane gas, some clean, fresh oil and a warm bath. I want the wagon to know that it's loved. ---Robert Sardello in *Facing the World with Soul*

### ***A Haiku for the Evening:***

**Knocking**

**Cold Comes in Unmasked**

**The Night House**

## **Gathering up Crumbs**

Be careful with the crumbs. Do not overlook them. Be careful with the crumbs; the little chances to love, the tiny gestures, the morsels that feed, the minims. Take care of the crumbs; a look, a laugh, a smile, a teardrop, an open hand. Take care of the crumbs. They are food also. Do not let them fall. Gather them. Cherish Them.

---Gunilla Norris in *Becoming Bread*

## **Reading**

I read in the hope of discovering the truth, or at least some truths. I look for truth in what some might deem strange places: novels and poems, histories and memoirs, biographies and auto-biographies, letters and diaries.... In reading for truth, you understand I am not seeking a Full plan, some large system that will explain the world to me, or a patent for bliss. Instead I seek clues that might explain life's oddities, that might light up the dark corners of existence a little, that might correct foolish ideas I have come to hold too dearly, that might, finally, make my own stay here on earth more interesting, if not necessarily more pleasant. ---Joseph Epstein in *The Middle of My Tether*

## Looking at the Stars

As I write, I am thinking particularly of an evening not long ago when I was far from city lights under a sky of crystalline clarity. The earth was tented with stars, stars so numerous they appeared as a continuous fabric of light. The Milky way flowed like a luminous river from north to south, banked with dark shoals, eddied in glittering pools.

Our sister galaxy in the constellation Andromeda was visible to the naked eye, a blur of light from a trillion faraway stars. Meteors flashed like fireflies. Such skies never fail to excite the imagination. Certain constellations—Orion or Ursa major—are perhaps the oldest surviving inventions of the human mind. The depth and beauty of the night inspired religious and philosophical speculation. ---Chet Raymo in *The Virgin and the Mousetrap*

## Lighting a Candle

To light a candle by myself is one of my favorite prayers. I am not talking about reading prayers by candlelight. The very act of lighting the candle is a prayer. There is the sound of striking the match, the whiff of smoke after blowing it out, the way the flame flares up and then sinks almost goes out until a drop of melted wax gives it strength to grow to its proper size and steady itself.

All this and the darkness beyond my small circle of light is a prayer. I enter into it as one enters a room. My being alone is essential to this prayer. The presence of even one other person would completely change it. Something would be lost. ---Brother Davis Steindl-Rast in *Gratefulness, The Heart of Prayers*

## Going to bed

The heart of my house has to be my bed. If relaxation and acceptance are the warp and woof of domestic life, and if home is the place where I am most free to be myself, then my bed is the place where it all comes together. Here is where I think naked thoughts, daydream, make love, worry, plot, argue, get my back scratched, speculate, talk about growing old, and, finally, cut the mooring ties and drift out with the dream tide. The bed, the place where we are born and die, is our primeval place... ---Laura Green in *Reinventing Home*

## Checking on the Children

It has been my habit to look at my children's feet when they are sleeping. This has helped me to cultivate an awareness of their uniqueness, their God-givenness, and to disarm myself of the posture of defensiveness and combativeness that I have crated in myself. There are three different sets of feet, each perfect, each expressive of the life-stage and personality of each of my children: the blunt, babyish toes and flat arches that

support a tirelessly running body, sturdy enough to use the way a rabbit uses its hind feet in defense;

the slightly larger, more graceful toes and heels that are fond of practicing "ballet," feet that often remain tucked up under a frilly skirt that, when the impulse strikes, can run like the wind; the slender feet, half-child's, half-woman's, that kick off their shoes whenever they enter a room, that are alternately decorously placed in a lady-like pose or sprawled out on any and all available pieces of furniture. It is those feet that have taught me the very little I know about seeing with the eyes of love. ---Wendy Wright in *Weavings*

### **Getting a Late Snack**

This is not a group activity. It is a private religious experience the holy solitude of the midnight hour, you are taking communion with the spirits of bird and fruit and field. The best moments from past feasts come to mind. And it is at times like these you have no doubt that life is good, that your family, all tucked away in their beds, are royal folks, and that grace abounds. Amen. ---Robert Fulghum in *Uh-Oh*