

LOVE'S OPENNESS

I.

At the heart of abiding silence and solitude,
of this deep inner restfulness of love,
is not the flight from created reality,
but rather the attitude of trustful letting-go
--surrendering the need to control and comprehend
and the grasping possessiveness of the flesh--
in order to dwell in the depths of the inner truth
of my heart in its belovedness, held by you,
and to open this heart, from within this place
--this heart, obedient, virginal, and poor--
to every other person, and to creation's fullness.

Since the sin in the first Garden,
the pure openness of obedience
has given way to fear in the face of the Father,
whom we now conceive as being a Taskmaster and Judge,
who imposes his will arbitrarily, simply out of greater Power.
We no longer recognize that this will, dear God,
is but the expression of your Love
and the imprint of your Goodness, Truth, and Beauty.
It is a manifestation of your tender care for us
and the mystery of Gift impressed on our life
and living deep within every created thing.
To obey therefore is simply to acquiesce
to the mystery of the Trinity's life
of trusting acceptance and reciprocal surrender,
and thus to the blossoming of personal communion.

Yes, this attitude of obedience is, as we have seen,
but an element of a child's grateful acceptance
of the gift of life, in all its forms, in all its fullness,
a life that bears the marks of the Maker's Love.
What are these marks but inner openness
to communication between one and another,
and this impulse to join-together in harmony,
and thus to bear fruit in beautiful fecundity?

Thus, within the all-encircling mystery of acceptance
(acceptance, above all, of belovedness, of the gift of life!)
the heart blossoms in purity and freedom
to live in accordance with authentic truth and love.
No longer turned in upon itself in fear and possession,
it welcomes freely and freely responds
to the liberating beauty it encounters
in every thing and every value, speaking of you.

And, above all, loving God, it is pliant and docile,
like warm, soft, and malleable clay,
to the gentle imprint of your touch—
but malleable, it should be said, in a personal way,
which is fully conscious, free, and intentional,

springing from the ardent desire to welcome the Beloved
and to bear his Mystery impressed as a seal upon the heart.

Indeed, it is, through this intimate union of love,
by which, utterly welcoming you, I let you live freely in me,
and thus find myself able to live freely in you--
it is through this intimate union
that the beauty of co-operation is born,
the mystery of two hearts interpenetrating,
sharing one vision and one desire:
the little human heart taken up wholly, and sheltered,
in the all-encompassing tenderness of your embrace,
and vibrating through and through with the Spirit.
This Spirit liberates...first for the sake of simple repose,
repose in the joy of Love which is its own end, absolute,
like the rest of the Son in the bosom of the Father.
And, within this repose, he liberates for activity,
for word, for movement, for discernment and understanding,
which blossom radiantly in this place of belovedness.

II.

If this inner place of abiding belovedness,
silent and still, restful in the mystery of peace,
is a mystery of *obedience*,
it is also a mystery of inner *virginity*
and of *poverty* of spirit and life.
Obedience, we could say, is the outermost ring
which contains the two other rings within itself.
But as we have seen, obedience itself
is but the expression of a deeper dwelling,
of abiding in the Circle enfolding all the rest:
the Circle of restfulness in the arms of Love.

The heart that acquiesces to belovedness,
to the truth of humbly welcoming each moment
and each reality of life from your loving hands,
and of relating to it in gratitude and responsibility--
this heart can also love in purity and chastity.
Just as, for obedience, all is Gift, and Gift alone,
so too for virginity of heart all is radiant...
radiant with the mystery of sacred gratuity.
In the contours of creation's face
and in the face, the form, the flesh of every person
the heart discerns the imprint of the Creator's hand.

Indeed, it encounters the ravishing mystery
of the divine Bridegroom's beauty and tenderness,
which manifests itself in every thing,
a radiant Form bursting through the matter,
and the perfect Image flashing forth
from the created image that bears it in itself.
The heart thus loves every thing, every person,
from their place within the Bridegroom's love,
and also loves the mystery of the Bridegroom alive in them.

Chastity is, precisely, this matter of *seeing*,
of seeing and understanding all things
as they are bathed within the enveloping light of Love.
Is not this why, in the beginning, clothing was not needed?
When every person is clothed in glory,
in the beauty of the Father and of the Bridegroom Son,
then why is it necessary to cover over
what is already enshrouded in mystery?

But now, while this beauty is still present,
this majesty and mystery in human heart and flesh,
it is no longer encountered in reverence and awe,
but rather, so often, with the tendency to grasp and use,
or even simply to ignore and disregard.
Chastity and purity, therefore, is but super-affirmation
of the beauty that you have made in each of us
and in the whole order and existence of creation.
It is that humble prostration of self
before the majesty and mystery of the other,
which welcomes their unique gift and being
in a heart that clothes them first in respect.

Only within this grateful awe and respectful silence
can the heart discern, thus, how to relate,
in each unique encounter and each relationship,
to the other person in their unrepeatable dignity.
And this means, above all,
to love them as brother or sister, as child of the Father,
and, within this enveloping childhood,
to begin indeed to see them with the Bridegroom's love,
thirsting, thus, that they may find their way back
into his loving embrace for which they were made.

III.

Finally, we come to the mystery of poverty,
which springs forth from this same belovedness,
and of the awareness of life and existence as Gift.
Poverty, too, is wholly chaste and wholly obedient,
and manifests itself in my concrete body and my life.
For when a heart knows itself to be beloved
it ceases to grasp and to control,
but rather lets go and opens hands and heart
to welcome anew each and every thing
and to give them freely in the movement of love.

The restless need to gain and to protect,
to accumulate, to control, to enjoy
gives way to the simple movement of reliance,
the trustful dependency of a child.
It gives way, indeed, to spousal sharing,
in which all that is mine is yours, and yours is mine,
as all things are shared by those in love.
And finally, this spirit of radiant poverty
is inherently fruitful and creative.
Ah, but here...here poverty becomes one,
inseparable from obedience and chastity
as the single, indivisible reality of love.
For it allows the gifts that are yours, dear God,
to flow through me for the good of others,
and allows me, too, to hold others in myself,
and to carry them gently back to you.

Yes, in obedience, in chastity, in poverty
the heart that was closed and isolated in fear and sin
is gently re-opened to relationship,
in the ceaseless movement of acceptance and surrender.
It thus remains in constant contact
with the all-enveloping Dimension of Gift,
which is nothing but the Circle of your Divine Embrace.
And it allows this Gift to become incarnate
in every moment and every aspect of life,
while life itself, again and again,
returns simply to abiding in the Gift.

Here in the all-enfolding mystery of belovedness
I know myself to be a little child, freely loved and held.
I also become a spouse, joined to the divine Bridegroom
through the movement of shared surrender and embrace,
through the intimacy of mutual indwelling
by which he abides in me, and I abide in him.
And, finally, I am irradiated through and through
by the beauty, creativity, and fruitfulness of the divine life,
which reflects the overflowing fecundity of Father and Son
in the Person of the Spirit, Gift, Bond, and Fruit of union,
and who is, ultimately, the Kiss of Joy
that the two, Father and Son, eternally, share,
in the indivisible unity of Three in One.