

Little Flowers for God

Core Reflections

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To learn more about the author, or to access further materials (in text and audio) for prayer and reflection, you may visit his website:

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The Reflections

THIS REST I BURN TO GIVE YOU

Christ/Bridegroom:

You beget me in the ineffable silence of eternity;
Father, from you I am and in you I subsist,
finding in you all my joy and delight
enraptured in the beauty which I see
in your face—the beauty which you give me.
All I am is from you, all I am is yours.
All you are you bestow on me
to possess as my own,
truly mine but only as your gift.
This loving donation reveals to me
the very depth of your love,
the love which passes between you and I
as a silent breath or a gently dancing flame,
or a kiss of two in love.
This breath, this amorous fire,
as he flows, leaps, dances between us,
uniting us in mutual embrace,
nothing other than our shared love,
is loved by us both and
loves us both in return,
a single flowing of the divine substance
united as a single charity
in threefold act, Father, Son and Spirit.
Begetter, Begotten, two together
breathing-forth the One between us as
reality and very act of unity.

Forth from us Three this love flows
in superabundant plenitude,
forth from the floodgates of Godhead
most pure and sublime, radiating,
reflecting, emitting into the abyss of
what was once the darkness of naught
the luminous and lightsome glory of love.
Numerous glimmering stars, singing of our
mutual beauty in which they share;
planets spinning in reverential harmony,
singing their share of the divine music
which is ours; on earth, made for our
especially beloved one, a copious profusion
of grace and loveliness in plants, animals,
earth and sky, seasons, days and nights.
In the gentle fall of the summer rain,
the sky flashing with the
glory of lightning beams,

thunder telling of our majesty and power,
and in the hush of freshly fallen snow,
blessing through its pallor the purity of Truth,
in the hopping, playing, the singing of sparrows
on the branch, none of which

falls to the ground
without you, Father, seeing.

In each glory which we have made
is seen the Glory of the Unmade Maker.

In each image is placed the magnetism
which urges the mind to rise to the Imageless,
to return once again to the One from whom
the many flow in ceaseless and glorious array;
as armies set for battle leave and return again
to the home they are sent to defend,
or as the waves flowing up from the deep
to return once again

to the place from whence they came.

All these things we made, my Love,
to ravish the heart of her, the Bride
whom we hold most dear, the Bride
who through her loveliness
ravishes our Heart.

We furnish her with beauty
through the very splendor of our gaze,
and, wounded, captured by this beauty in her,
which is our very gift,
we are thus moved to give,
to pour out further beauty,
indeed, to wed her to ourself.

In calling her to return,
to share in the very mutual self-gift,
the self-emptying donation,
the loving and joyful acceptance,
which I share with you and you with me,
and the Spirit between us equally,
at first we were frustrated by the pride
which, setting itself against humble love,
chooses the abyss of nothing rather than
the Abyss of Life.

And yet, in movement sublime
we willed that I pass into the world
which we have made,
that Creator become creature,
that all power take on the weakness of the weak
to bestow the strength of the Strong.

This one, our beloved, most lovely in our eyes,

yes, most lovely;
she moved me from my throne
to wed her to myself, to raise her in my arms,
to share with her my kiss,
to bring her to yourself
so that she may share with us
the single breath of love,
the Spirit of us both.

To do this I became a child, exchanging glory
for humiliation, riches for poverty, and bliss
for suffering—yet a suffering suffused by joy,
Light penetrating the darkness deep within.
This descending love, Father, reached its
height on the wood of that tree which,
mirroring the tree of sin,
becomes the Tree of Love and Life.
On this, my throne,
our marriage bed, our nuptial mystery,
I give to her myself
and eternity enters time
while time steps into the eternal.
I open to her my Heart, broken by her
sins and lack of love, yet moved by my
love which stirs me to mourn for her.
In this mourning she discovers true joy,
mourning in contrition her own sin and
turning to be healed in the very salve and
water which flow from this opened Heart.
She enters in and my Heart becomes hers.
I press her to my Heart, pulsing, beating,
loving, bleeding, that hers too may love,
and, wounded by the wound of love,
alone, find true health.
Health in the love, which,
wounding, alone leads to life.

Oh, my beloved bride whom I love,
the love of my Heart is yours;
you have ravished me, my love,
my sister, my bride; you have ravished me.
Now I want, as the very purpose of
my love, to ravish you in myself,
in the Embrace which is shared between
my Father and myself. I take you as my
own that you may say “Father” as I say it,
that you may experience his goodness

as I know it to the full,
that inebriated with the drink
which I drink, which he drinks,
and the Flame of our loving Breath,
you will find your joy in loving.
For to love is to drink and to
drink is to love. So, in this life,
my bride, drink of my Blood,
that I may abide in you and you in me,
that as the Father and I are one
so you too may be.
I await only, my dearest one,
I await only your “yes”, your
“I do” which to my ears will
fall so sweet.
Withhold not from me,
will you, that which I most desire?
But in that loving surrender which you
once refused, say now to me,
those sweet utterances for which I yearn.

Bride:

O my Love, my divine Bridegroom,
you have given yourself to me,
in such ardent love, the vehemence
of which enfolds me in such majesty,
that my heart, moved so deeply,
almost bursts with the words you want.
I desire with every fiber which
constitutes this being of mine,
to return to you that love which
from you first radiates.
Yes, to become through my love
a perfect radiance of your light,
a perfect image of your love,
a mirror of your splendor,
transformed through this sweet
contemplation of your face,
from glory unto glory even to
the Glory which is divine.
Lost in you as a drop of water,
falling into the ocean, is lost,
or consumed as a speck of dust,
dropped into flame is turned to flame,
—yet not at all lost or consumed,
but simply awakened thus to fullness of life—
so taken into yourself, I desire,

more than anything, all my shame burned
away in the Furnace of your love,
pure and luminous as your true bride,
fitting to share with you the nuptials
of eternity, to become one through
this union in the unity of the Father,
the Son and the Spirit blessed.
From you I came and to you,
O holy Trinity sublime, I desire
to return.

Humbled thus through love,
exalted in you I shall be,
with the exaltation and glory
which is nothing other than
the radiating immensity of
overwhelming love.

O Love, most desired,
Love which is my Love,
in loving you I desire,
made wholly love, to live
the life of love and with love alone
my joy, in you to find my rest.

Christ/Bridegroom:

Beloved, this rest I burn to give you,
this rest I proffer to your hands.
Stretch them out to receive it,
in the love that stretched me out
upon the Cross.
Arms thus out in that loving gesture,
true love will be your own.
Yours, yes, but only as my gift,
so no longer living alone, I will live in you.
Through this abiding of my life in you,
in turn you will live in me the very
life I live, this eternal donation of
complete Love passing between
my Father and I in the gentle,
yet fervent, ineffable silence of eternity.

ישוע

SANCTUARY LAMP

Burn gently,
little flame.

Lit from the Furnace of eternal Love,
kindled from the warmth

which you touch in this Bread of Life,
inflamed by the sparks
which touch you in the sanctuary of the heart.
Enfolded in the Word
which is all aflame with love and joy.

Burn gently,
in this fire so intimate, so pure,
that you can no longer feel it,
cannot see, cannot touch.
It penetrates so deeply to the core
that it imprints itself upon the heart,
beyond the reach of your senses, your mind;
and yet it overflows here too
to transform and illumine these.
Yet the light of this fire
is so deep in you,
that it often hides in the darkness.
The warmth of this love
is so far within,
that it leaves the exterior exposed to chill.

Do not worry, little child.
Simply abide,
and a deeper light will begin to shine;
remain still in hope and longing,
and you will discover the warmth
of a deeper joy.
It surges up from deep within,
it inundates all you are, so delicate.

This mystery is like a woman
bearing a child in her womb.
All her energy is directed here,
such that she is cold
so that all warmth may enfold the child.
And yet from her womb she feels,
radiating out, a deeper warmth,
the warmth of love, intimacy.

So too, bear this mystery within—
shelter, revere, adore,
my eternal Son, begotten in your flesh;
allow him to be in you still,
a child, a spouse, an image of my perfect love.
And let him shine,
through the transparency of pure and clear glass

—which is the poverty of your loving heart—
upon each and all.

The poverty of empty hands,
littleness, dependency, need—
you see, child? This is all that I require,
in order to reflect in you
the light of eternal Love.
A candle burning without ceasing
in the presence of the Holy One
—silent, still.
A sanctuary lamp,
witness to Emmanuel,
God-with-us.

ישוע

THE EYES OF LOVE

I.

My Father, those eyes of love
gaze upon me so intensely,
eyes of goodness and of grace,
eyes that, looking,
bestow the beauty that they see.
I am—because you see me,
and I am exactly as you see.
The goodness you desire,
you yourself beget in me;
the radiance of my countenance
is only a reflection of your own—
of that face, which, shining brightly,
always gazes out: upon your Son.

**Son, my only-begotten One,
the radiance of your countenance
wounds my deepest Heart:
for in the face, I gaze deep within,
in the eyes, I read the Heart.
And in your Heart, my Son,
I see indeed only one,
your Heart and mine.**

One Heart, for mine flows from you,
an effusion of Love,
like water flowing down
from the heights, cascading,
dancing, upon the depths of water below—

yet how can words express how this water
flows up again to you, united with the Source,
in the very act by which it comes forth?
Acceptance, reciprocal surrender,
these are one, Father, between you and I.
Ah, yes, you give me beauty,
so that I may be Beautiful—

**—Ah, yes, I am captured by your Beauty,
to give myself to you!
My Heart is drawn by Love's magnetism
to communicate all to you, my Son.**

And mine, by receiving,
cannot but pour itself out again to you.

**A glance, a single moment's look,
communicates all, my Love.
Seeing once, I see through and through,
and this moment lasts forever—
an eternity of love.**

Seen once, I am seen forever,
known, I am known entirely,
and I know you, Father,
even as I am known.

**Known, my Son, in this Love,
this Look, this Gaze,
exchanged between you and I,
in our Communication of self,
where, given, received,
we are, and will be,
in the single moment of eternity, one:
in the Spirit of Love who belongs to us both,
in whom, together, we belong.**

II.

My Father, these eyes of love,
mine and yours, gaze out—
upon a world—and, looking,
they create.

In gazing, in a single glance,
which is never-ending contemplation
and radiant, unceasing delight,
we clothe in beauty the creatures
whom we have lovingly made.

Clothe, yet not from without alone,
for eyes of love always look within.

**My Son, you see that the most precious
of my creatures,
the children made to share
in our own image and likeness,
in the radiance of that Beauty, given—
have not seen in what lies true love:
ah, look, my Son, they desire not to receive!
They think they must grasp,
must make beauty, goodness,
as if it were their own,
as if—ah!—as if it were not pure gift.**

I look, Father, but in them
I still see beauty, hidden,
but enduring and true.
Who can take it away?
Beauty, but buried deep within
the shame of the fallen heart.
Come, Father, let us go to them,
you and I, and our Spirit too.
Let us seek them out,
let us dwell within,
after making them again our own,
and open up,
in acceptance, in reciprocal surrender,
those hearts enclosed in fear.

**Yes, my Son,
I am drawn by the magnetism of love!
Ah! how my Heart aches for them
— as yours does as well.
Go, you first,
draw near to them,
and I will be in you.
Draw near and walk among them,
love them as you have been loved by me.
Give the Spirit whom I have given to you;
pour him out
as he has poured forth into your Heart,
eternally,
cascading, like an immensity of water,
falling,
into the poverty of the human heart.
And he will prepare a place for you,**

for me,
to dwell there among them,
to pitch our tent in their very place of exile,
pilgrims in a strange land,
so that,
already, in their very place of wandering,
they may be citizens of the blessed homeland,
children,
in the mansions where we dwell.

—The abode, Father, which is your very bosom,
that blessed embrace of love!
I go, that they may return here to this place.

III.

The dust of our roads,
kicked up by the feet of God—
what is this marvel?
The water drawn from our wells
to quench the thirst of the eternal Fountain!
He is here among us,
eating at our table,
laboring at the same burdens as we.
He feels the same hunger,
fasting,
the same thirst,
parched by the desert heat.
What is this?
Tempted to turn stones into bread,
to show a display of power,
to fall down in adoration before the power of evil
so as to share in its domain?
No, but he is different.
He is bound by the same limitation and weakness,
yet is free from our chains—
a free Man in a world of slavery,
born to set us free.

More than this,
there is something deeper,
don't you see?
A power goes forth from him,
not like what the world calls power.
Those who draw near,
they feel it,
those who are simple, weak,
they know.

It is love they feel,
and mercy,
the compassion burning in the Heart of God,
afame in the Heart of this One
who is present among us,
a child of his mother,
a brother to us all.
The Father of eternal glory
is reflected in his face;
the Bridegroom of all,
the same who led us through the desert
so many centuries ago.
He is here.

How can eternal and infinite Love
be contained by the limits of time,
by the boundaries of our space?
He rises early, very early in the morning
to go into the hills to pray.
Exhausted, he falls asleep
on a cushion in our boat!
Then, awaking, a single word of his
stills the elements which no creature obey.
Who then must this be?

There, in his eyes,
is a mysterious glimmer,
a piercing gaze, which looks,
not to judge or condemn,
but to love and to accept.
Do you not feel?
He does not look to discern
whether there is anything lovable in you
—for he already knows what he will find there—
but he looks to awaken the beauty
slumbering deep within.

I know, I, who have leaned against his breast.
I have felt there mysteries unspeakable,
I have seen things unseen,
touched what cannot be touched.
Who can read this Word,
written into the lines of our history?
Who can hear his voice,
echoing in the wind as it rustles in the trees?
Before our world was,
HE IS.

Our whole creation is like a parchment
on which is written one word:

Son.

For when our God looks upon us,
what does he see?

He sees the image of his well-Beloved,
the One begotten of him from eternity to eternity.

We are all like a scroll held in his hand,
like the blood that flows through his veins,
surging from and returning to that precious Heart.

We are all...ah, what wonder...

a bride he has made, and come,
to espouse lovingly to himself.

This precious Body,
yes, it is the body of every man and woman.

The two shall become one flesh,

God and humanity,
in the Body of the Son.

What is this?

This Body sweats drops of Blood!

What?

It is by fierce scourges rent.

Look at him—no, look away!

Ah, what can one do?

Run, hide? Stand and pray?

This is my body, broken, rent.

But this is the Body belonging to the Son of God.

Power of love, here mocked
and condemned to indignity.

Here, silent like a lamb led to slaughter,
the Word who never ceases to sound.

Listen...

can you hear his silence speak?

Carrying that terrible burden
up the hill of our death.

Do you feel the beams
pressed against your shoulders,
yet, at the same time,
lifted from you?

What he carries, he takes from us.

What we carry, it now belongs to him.

What exchange is this—
the Innocent is condemned,
tortured, crucified,
that the guilty may go free?

Love enters into the abyss of our lovelessness,

and, as a lamp on a lampstand,
is raised aloft in our darkness.
Healing rays of love,
heartbeat surging right up against our own...
This narrow, suffocating heart
within my breast,
expands on contact with his.
Yes...through union with him
I am again made innocent, pure.

Ah...nails pierce the sacred flesh!
This meek lamb gives hardly a cry,
but see the tears streaming down his cheeks?
All of humanity is gathered here.
We all watch this spectacle,
played out before our eyes.
It is something we always knew,
yet something we never knew,
nor could have even imagined.
The ugliness and pain of our sin,
we see...but disarmed
in the outstretched arms of Love.
Yes, raised up for every eye to see—
in this way he descends into the depths,
the depths of our hearts,
where he makes a home,
wedding himself to our creaturely poverty,
yet overcoming the poverty of sin
and transforming it into the poverty of love.

IV.

My Heart yearns, dearest Father,
that they may be with me where I am.
I have come among them—
here I am now,
yet I have not left your side.
I taste the bitter drink of sin,
but from your bosom, the Wellspring of Love,
I never cease to drink.
Your face, Father, is veiled to them,
not because you hide it,
because they have lost the ability to see—
and I must go beyond the veil
that through love it may be rent,
granting them to see again,
as they are seen by us, lovingly,
learning thus, in us, to love.

Yes, so we have desired,
and so I desire now.
This is a sanctuary of mystery
so awesome, so amazing.
Love alone can taste it,
how One can experience in his Heart
both suffering and joy,
the pain of separation
yet the union which nothing can tear asunder.
I surrender to you here,
affixed to this Cross,
breathing forth my last...
this breath, dear God!
It is our Spirit, filling the lungs of humanity.
It is the flame of love
thawing the heart frozen by sin and fear.
It is the light of Love
illumining the darkest place.
Yes, they can know
—immersed in the immensity of love—
this mystery of pain and joy...
more, they can know
the joy deeper than every pain or strife,
which I have known before them.
For in me, I have opened up the path,
the way of love,
which penetrates every substance
and transforms it into itself,
which floods all with the fountain of eternal joy.
For you gaze, Father,
with those piercing eyes of love,
and, even when our eyes grow dim,
that glance of love sees as in brightest day
—and carries us, as a child in its mother's arms,
tranquil and secure,
resting against her bosom,
into the fullness of your embrace!

V.

Ah, my Son!

Today I have begotten you.

**Now: the Today of eternity
and that of time**

meet...

As the Light of your gaze,
Father,

pierces the depths of the tomb,
the depths of the place of death
—and gives life,
the Dawn from on high shining upon creation,
breaking the bars of hell,
shattering the chains that bind,
illuminating the tombs of those who sleep.
I rise, Father,
I come to you!
And in my Heart, my flesh,
I carry every person!

**You stand with them, my Son.
In you, Love abides in the very fabric
of redeemed creation.
Your Heart beats silently, gently
—and mine in You—
in the depths of every heart,
in the slightest stirring of the breeze,
the whistling of the birds,
the voice of man, woman, child.
The sunrise, casting its rays over the earth,
the tender warmth, the golden hue:
this is the gaze of my Son,
victorious over death,
coming as a Bridegroom from his tent
to take his Bride unto himself—**

—to bring her to you, my Father,
enfolding her in my arms,
so that she may be where I am,
to behold my glory that you have given me
in your love for me
before the foundation of the world.
That she may share,
fully and completely,
in the radiance of this single glance of love
that passes for all eternity
between you and I,
in this knowledge and intimacy
which is ours in the Spirit of Love.
Right here, in the midst of this
silent dialogue,
she abides...
I in you, and you in me,
and she, in us both,
one...in the bliss of eternal Love.

A SINGLE DROP

I.

I look upon your face, my Son,
 upon the abyss of your mystery,
 which is so deep that I could lose myself in it
 were it not but a perfect reflection
 of the abyss that I am.
 Behold! today I have begotten you,
 in this ceaseless day of eternity,
 which has no dawn and no dusk,
 no beginning or end,
 but is endless fullness of life and of love.
 But indeed, it bears within it such richness,
 such abundance of grace,
 that all the hues cast by the rising sun
 across the morning sky,
 lighting up the earth with brilliance,
 and all the dancing colors streaking across heaven,
 filling the air at the closing of the day,
 all the changes of seasons and times,
 all forms of weather—thunderclap,
 lightning-beams, the gentle dripping of the rain,
 the wind, the calm, the heat and the gentle cool—
 are all like so many reflections
 of that single light,
 undivided, pure,
 which passes eternally from me to you,
 and from you to me.

Like gathering moisture which distills
 into a single drop,
 upon the edge of a leaf in the early morning dew—
 so love distills,
 my Father,
 as the gift of creation.
 The whole ocean of divinity,
 majestic, immense,
 the roaring of the waves,
 so great, yet so calm
 that they cannot be heard by mortal ears,
 becomes but a single drop of water,
 falling.

The single mystery becomes refracted light,

the One, many and multifaceted.
Yet abundance, too, becomes so small,
the infinite and uncontainable,
veiled in forms of flesh, plant, animal, and earth.
Yet man and woman, above all, my Son,
in our image we create,
breathing into them our Spirit—life.
How can a tiny mirror
reflect the whole expanse of sky?
However you position it, won't it reflect but a part?

They reflect, dear Father,
not by way of containing
—as a glass contains water,
or even as the shores contain the sea—
but as gazing eyes contain the sky
with its immensity of stars,
or as a glance of love
enfolds in the heart's embrace
the mystery of the beloved.

II.

My Son, they reflect this image, this likeness,
because I breathe upon them
the Breath that passes eternally between you and I,
and when I look,
I imprint upon them
—as light waves caught within the eye—
the image of my Beloved One.
It is in you, Son, that I alone create.

But they are, Father,
more than a passing ray of light
succeeded by darkness,
or a glance which the mind soon forgets.
I dwell among them: the enduring Word of God.

Dwell, Son:
be the Word made flesh.
Yes! The light is more
than a mere reflection upon the glass.
Knit together in the womb,
spirit, flesh, sinews, and bone,
a Son is conceived in time
by a lowly mother—a Son
who is begotten from all eternity
by the eternal Father.

**Born, in a single moment,
in a poor and lowly manger,
you who are born eternally
in my sheltering bosom, so full of love.**

This is my body,
taken from her who reflects the light of love,
radiantly refracted in so many ways
throughout the history of the world,
concentrated again in her,
like a single intense beam of light,
sealing a marriage between God and man.
A scroll with writing on both front and back,
a library with more books
than the world could contain,
is now contained in that soft flesh
of a little child.
I AM.

III.

**A silent glance, a look of love
between mother and child,
shares in that eternal glance
between you and I,
my Son.**

Here is more than words can express,
however much time or ink one has—
yet less.

**Deeper within,
in the depths of love,
less is more.**

Less, my Father,
less I will be,
deeper, further into their lives,
until all words and activity
—the whole life of a man—
reaches but a single point:
LOVE.

**The Spirit is breathed silently
from that failing, broken body
upon a Cross.
Ah...
This says all...**

And yet...

And yet, my Son.

The undivided light
breaks forth anew,
to gather from the four corners
into the fullness of the light's embrace—

**—the eternal Breath of Love
between you and I,
silently.**

Father,
all becomes a single gift,
accepted from your hands,
and given, in this flesh of mine,
to those whom you have given me.

**All of life, the whole of man,
yes—the whole of God—
distilled, my Son, to a single point,
where less is more,
where All is contained within the least,
a bit of bread, a drop of wine:**

This is my Body,
this, my Blood...

ישוע

CHILD, MOTHER, AND SPOUSE

I.

Dear Mother, chosen from eternity,
chosen in the love that unites me
to my Father, in the one breath
of our Spirit of love and intimacy.
A child needs a mother
in this world we have created—
even though, in God,
it is enough that I have
a Father alone.

But you,
you, Mother, image him,
in the transparency of your love,
virginal and pure.

Maternity:
the sweetness of motherhood,
a blossom and a fruit;
yet mother is different than Father,
for Father, you see, he gives all
and from his gift I spring.
But for you, all is received,
all—pure gift.
So you are a mother as a child,
and a mother, a child you remain:
for it is proper to a child to receive,
as it is for one who generates,
who carries, nourishes life in her womb.

*How sweet it is to receive,
dear Son, this gift in my spirit,
my heart, my body.
Son from the Father,
begotten in the daughter,
who becomes, in grace,
Mother.*

Acceptance in trust,
welcoming love—
the complete surrender of self
to the power of creative Love.
Will you?

—*I do.*

**My dearest child, daughter most dear,
I see reflected in you the radiance of love,
the love flowing from me into my Son,
and from my Son back again—
the love who is our Spirit,
who overshadows you now.
Yes, daughter becomes mother,
and mother a child is,
and a child bears.
Two little ones,
beloved of my Heart,
for it is in such that I rejoice.**

*Who am I, lowly handmaid of the Lord,
that such is done in me?*

You are a little one, don't you see?

There is in you the blessedness of poverty,
the pure love of a virgin, given to God,
the pure, obedient acceptance
which sees in all things the pure gift of love,
the embrace, enfolding every moment,
of Love, who is the Father, Spirit, and I.
Yes, you see it in the rising of the sun
breaking through the early morning clouds,
dissipating the mists of the night,
and in the heat of midday,
when sinful women go to draw water,
and wayfarers of Love sit and ask for a drink.
You see it in the evening,
when worn by a day's work,
in nightfall, when the burning orb
returns to his tent, sheathing his fiery sword.
In a breath, a beat of the heart
—the Beloved is here, you say—
I know, for I hear it,
your every hidden thought.
To me they are most sweet,
these words of love in your heart,
known to none but you and I,
and to the Father in whose bosom I rest.
Ah...yet now, Mother,
when you breathe these hidden words,
they not only reach out to heaven, which,
in spirit, is so near,
but they also find rest, in the One
who rests in your womb.

II.

**As the early morning sun
rises above the earth
to scatter the darkness of night
and the shadows of slumber,
my Son is led out to trial,
the Light of the world.
At midday, the sun, burning brightly,
for the space of three hours
allows its light to be eclipsed,
in homage to the pure Light
who bears darkness in loving compassion
with all those who sit in darkness
and in the shadow of death—
breaking through as the ever shining
Son of God,**

Child, full of love and trust.
And there, my daughter, do you stand,
seeing, as you always do,
the gift of pure, all-encompassing Love,
in each and every thing.
Love, which, as a needle and thread,
now plunges into the fabric
of the fallen, broken world,
yet only to return again
to the bosom of God,
into the abyss of my own wounded,
compassionate Heart,
weaving together, as one,
in intimate love,
what was once so estranged.

Mother, the sword pierces your soul too.
A sword—a lance—
yet Love alone,
in all.
For Love has led me here,
and you.
Love which receives our Father's Love,
even in the darkest place.
Light—is his.
Darkness—theirs.
Yet in love I embrace them both,
so that in the sinews of my own Heart
both may again be one,
a Father and his beloved children.
Daughter of my Father,
and my beloved Mother,
here beside me now,
I want you, also,
my precious Spouse to be.
As once, through childlike acceptance
and the intimacy of pure love, you conceived,
so now again receive what flows from God,
in me, in the radiance of my gift,
the Blood and water flowing, in love,
from my own wounded Heart.

*I receive,
and offer, my only-beloved Son,
taking what you give,
and giving all of me in return,
to offer you, in this Passion,*

*a compassion joined to your own.
And I feel it, deep within: this union
reaches out to all the world.
Espoused to you in love, compassion,
a bride I have become,
living in this flesh, this spirit,
the union for which—each one—
every person has been created.
And a spouse, I become again a mother,
of this man who stands beside me,
your intimate friend, given to me,
entrusted into my care,
as you, soon departing,
entrust me wholly to him.
Yet not of one man alone
—dear God!—
but a mother of every man and woman,
born here from your opened side.
For it takes also a woman
to give birth to new children,
a woman of pure acceptance,
Virgin, Bride, Mother—
the one who, without spot or wrinkle,
washes in the waters of rebirth
and feeds with the Bread of Angels.
Now I am there; there I shall always be,
joined with you wherever you are at work,
my Son, my Spouse, my Lord,
sharing with you, as one,
the Spirit of salvation.
Once he descended upon me,
in the beginning of this story,
the Breath of Love and Life,
and in me I conceived.
Now you breathe him forth
with a final cry:*

*“Into your hands, Father,
I commend my spirit!”*

III.

*Silence of the night,
what do you speak?
Invisible darkness,
do you conceal the one I love?
I look for him, I yearn—
with the wound deep in my heart.*

He is gone.

*Others may search madly
through the streets and the squares,
going also to see
if they can roll away the stone.*

No, but I understand already:

Life cannot die.

*Love that gives itself,
as you, my Son, have done,
cannot be lost.*

*The cords of love binding us together,
you and I,
may indeed seem stretched beyond reason,
even—broken, beyond repair.*

*But my inmost heart knows,
as it beats its sorrowful tune,
in the emptiness of this night of waiting,
in this early morning
before the rising of the sun.*

*It knows that blood flows through my veins,
not from some place in my heart alone,
but from yours, surging within mine.*

*Gone—but present—in flesh broken,
but mingled already in the Gift,
divinity and humanity:*

Eucharist.

Cross and Passion:

*Love in that very crucified flesh
cannot allow such flesh to remain
to see corruption in a place of death.*

*In me you rise already,
and I await the Savior whom my eyes shall see.*

*I draw in breath, as I wait, and hope—
for where are the springs of being
from which we draw the breath of life,
but in the very Heart of God?*

IV.

*Silent and still—
a flutter, a noise!—
Light in the darkness.
Awake!*

*I am awake, never shall I sleep.
He is here, the One whom I await.
Ecstasy of joy, the knot of love:
simply pull, and its stretches tight,
drawing us together.*

I am here, in flesh, in blood,
and here I shall always be,
dear Mother.
Be here, also, with all those who shall come.
Be for them my presence,
the radiance of my light.
Be, in their midst, also,
what each yearns to be,
yet affirming, guiding,
so each may be what, uniquely,
I desire for that one alone.

*Among them I shall be,
as I know, here, you shall depart,
and there, you shall here remain.
But if they don't see you,
in case their trust grows dim,
my faith I will provide.
Be with us, Son,
when you are gone,
deeper than before.
And let me be there, too,
with you, in the Father's bosom.*

You shall be, my Love,
in his embrace until the end,
not of your short earthly span alone,
but until the end of time,
and for the endlessness of eternal day.

V.
Rise! My dear one, come:
for the winter of life is past,
the night is over and gone.
See! The fig tree puts forth its figs,
the vines, which have budded,
are now in blossom.
You sleep at last,
you whose heart was ever awake.
And, sleeping at last,
you awake completely for the first time,
not to love, to surrender, to acceptance,
which you always knew,
but to the intimacy and knowledge
that a heart can know only after the veil is torn.
Rest, abide, in the being that you always were,

in the embrace that enfolded you
from the first moment
of that sacred, immaculate conception.
And, resting in the repose of love
against my breast,
feeling the beating of my Heart,
I draw you also,
my Mother, my Spouse, my Love,
into the bosom of our Father.
Here, one for all eternity,
knowing him as I alone can know him
—and now, yes, also you—
we shall rejoice,
until, at last, with you,
they shall all taste also, to the full,
this same bliss of love,
caught up in the midst of this single embrace
shared by us eternally.

ישוע

THE FLAME OF JOY

I.

*Do not think, my littlest child,
that you are alone,
however alone you may feel.
Am I not here, I who am your Mother?
Are you not enfolded in my mantle,
in the crossing of my arms?
Is not my presence the fountain of your joy?*

Dear Mother, what does your presence mean to me?
At the foot of the Cross you stand,
beside the anguish of your dying Son.
You feel in that immaculate heart
every last reverberation of his own.
When he cries out, "I thirst!"
you have already offered all you are
to quench this immense thirst in his Heart.
You feel already, fully, the same thirst in your heart.
There is not a single movement of your soul,
a single sorrow or joy of body or spirit,
which belongs to you alone,
but everything you have and are
belongs to him, your Beloved One.
So too, therefore, all he has, and is, is yours.
The bond between you, knit together so tightly,

means that every suffering is compassion,
every breath is the breath of two together,
every joy is the joy of harmony, communion,
which is, indeed, the only true joy there is.

*A flame of joy, my little child!
burns in my heart now, as it burned in me even then
—a flame kindled from the Heart of God,
that warmed me as by a hearth of love
even in times of the greatest chill.
In my womb this flame burned
and filled my being with the bliss of love,
one I could not contain within me,
crying out his praise, magnifying his name.
This flame of love became visible,
in my Son, in that tiny cave,
cold in the winter's night.
In the love that passed between us,
this little frail woman...
gazing into the eyes of the Infant God!
A glance, a smile, a kiss,
this little one is greater than I can hold within my arms.
Holding him, it is he who holds me.
But then when he is held by different arms,
rough and bitter wood, raised up above the earth,
his arms are outstretched, holding me,
embracing every person: you and all.*

II.

*That cry of thirst—dear Son!—
you are crying out the thirst of God
to have compassion on his children.
This thirst fills my heart too, even now.
And, dear Jesus, when you cry out,
it is not only the thirst of God which you express,
but the thirst of every man,
every woman, and every child.
The cry of a fallen, exiled humanity
yearning for the Source of Life,
for the Fountain of Joy that you are,
even in the place of death.
This twofold thirst, meeting and bound together
in that single Heart of yours, my Son,
lives on in every person,
lives on in the holy Church,
lives on in that hungry Bread,
in that thirsty Chalice,*

*but in a special way it lives on in me,
your Mother, Child, and Bride.
I am near, in tender love,
to every human heart.
If they could see my footsteps
they would know that I am ever by their side.
If they could feel my mantle,
the bitter wind would not bite.
If they could know the flame of love
that burns within my breast,
which, unceasingly, I yearn to impart to them!*

*This is the unbreakable joy,
which even the anguish of the Cross
could not break,
the bond of love between us, he and I,
tied by the Father and the Spirit of them both.
In the dawning Resurrection
this joy breaks out and burns anew,
never to be quenched.
See it now, dear child!
Feel it burning in your breast,
for you are pressed up close against me,
and I give you what is my own.*

ישוע

A WITNESS TO LOVE

I.

My God, make me a true witness, aflame in your Fire,
transparent to the light of your Merciful Love,
emitting warmth in the flames of Divine Compassion!
Yes, Crucified Jesus, in conformity with you
in the gift of love upon the Cross...
springing from the wellspring of acceptance
of your Father's perfect Love, which,
surging forth ceaselessly into you,
also flows forth freely for the sake of all.
It is a Fountain of Love in the most arid place,
a Wellspring of Joy in sorrow and pain,
a Light raised up as a beacon in darkness,
or a burning Torch descending
into the caverns of our hearts,
there to illumine our lives from within.

Jesus! Yes, my God, my Love,
I feel this light, this love, this joy no more,

but the flame of faith burns within me
—your gift of grace!—
yes, the flame of hope, of love, of joy!
Burning like a gentle flame
—speaking gently, without voice,
touching gently, without hands,
carrying me, unseen, unfelt,
close to your bosom, your opened side!
Enfolding me on every side,
a true flame of Divine Charity
engulfing the little candle which I am!
Ah, Jesus, Lord! Bridegroom! Friend!
I accept, in trust, simplicity,
and surrender all to you,
today, in this moment, here, and now...
and forever, without reserve or holding back.
I surrender, totally, to the Flame that consumes,
not to destroy, but to perfect,
that my life, as small as it is,
may burn as a light of your Love
in the darkness of this world,
burn in your gentle, loving Flame,
to warm the hearts of those
burdened by the cold of sin and fear!

Jesus, crucified and risen from the dead,
living still in the heart of your Church,
in every human heart and life,
this same Paschal Mystery of death and life!
So too in me, my Lord,
in the ineffable mystery of your Love,
as in your Mother first of all
and in countless hearts since then until today:
abide in me, and I in you!
You have called me to the solitude,
to stand atop the hill,
arms upraised in prayer, intercession,
for the battle that rages in the valley below.
Jesus, but my arms are weak, they fail!
I find myself unable to hold them now.
Indeed, but the solitude itself—too much!—
I find myself in exile from this place.
Who will give me the strength to stand,
yes, to walk this exodus into the heart?
What a mystery—that the greatest journey
is to what is within, into that ineffable space
where I stand poor, defenseless, before your Face,

in unspeakable, hidden heart-to-Heart!
Jesus, please, in your mercy,
grant the fidelity that I, myself, do not have.
For their sake, whom you love so much,
and whom I, too, want to love, as you.

No greater love, you said, has one than this,
than to lay down his life for his friends.
Then let me be a true friend, dear Lord,
to you and to every person.
A brother who stretches out his hands,
marked with the scars of your own
—which you bear even in your risen body,
to show that death is swallowed up in life,
yet also that you bear our pain in loving compassion
even now, impressed upon your flesh—
so, my God, I know,
this same mystery, you desire,
to be perpetuated in my flesh too.
Hands stretched out, they speak the heart
—to each brother and sister, in the poverty of love.
Yet above all, Jesus, in communion with you,
to stretch out my hands, ceaselessly,
before the eternal Father's Face,
speaking, in my inmost solitude,
the thirst, the love, the cry of your own Heart,
bearing in itself the mystery, the hope, the thirst
of every person, whom you have impressed upon your
Heart!

II.

My dearest child, do you not know
that I am present, not in what you want to be,
but in who you are?
In your poverty, your limitation,
in your inability to endure.
Not where you would like to be,
or even where you think you “should,”
but simply in this moment, beloved one:
I am present *now*.
The rest I will take care of, child,
for I deeply care for you.
Simply trust me with a simple, childlike heart,
for, you see, that is truly what you are.
And, trusting, surrender all to me,
so that, in each moment, my love,
—as often as you draw breath—

you may accept from my hands what I give,
yes, child, that you may receive my Heart!
See, in every circumstance, in every day
—even when you are groping in the darkness,
when you feel unfaithful, wretched, broken,
in exile from the heart—
you are still reaching out to me,
you are still walking as best you can.
And, even more, before your slightest desire stirs,
I already come to you, reaching out in love,
walking on the stormy waves.
I lead you out—you see, dear one!—
so that, testing and purifying your faith and love,
this may become, for my Church,
a beacon of my own radiant Light and Love,
a light lit from the hearth of my Presence,
a prophetic word, spoken, gentle and sure,
from the solitude of encounter
between your heart, beloved, and mine!

Ah, dear Jesus, I surrender all,
placing it in your hands,
opening myself to this daily bread
which only you provide.
Thank you, in advance, my God,
for the hand of your loving providence!
Take my heart, my mind, my will,
my flesh and body too!
Do with me—and in, and through—
all that most pleases you.
That deepest truth, impressed upon the heart,
etched like an image deep within,
may you bring to light, dear Lord,
in whatever way that you desire,
forever and ever, without end,
yet in this moment, too, my God!

It is done before you ask, dear child,
for every moment would not be
did it not flow from my inmost Heart,
and there return, unceasingly.
Just drink deeply, without care,
yet with care for each and all,
sharing in the simple trust,
the loving compassion
which burns so deeply in me,
a flame between my Father and I,

enfolding you, and every person,
one, within our embrace!

ישוע

WAVES OF COMPASSION

Every human heart is like a sea,
immense in its depth,
in the abyss of mystery it contains
—and yet only an image, a reflection
of the Abyss of God,
who is a limitless Ocean of Love and Mercy.
Image yearns and strives for likeness,
the resemblance of the creature for the Creator,
like a seal impressed upon soft wax,
or the form of a person reflected in a mirror.
But indeed the whole of our humanity
is enfolding in that Ocean of Love,
each heart sending out ripples
from its inmost depth.
Who can feel these vibrations
sent out from the mystery of a human heart?
Only one who knows true compassion,
who can see beyond suffering and pain,
not as a merely personal experience,
a cause of isolation, sorrow, or confusion,
but as a bond, a link in the chain of love,
which connects heart to heart,
allowing one to feel the pain of another.
And therefore, always, true joy.

Dear God, this is how souls are saved
—not in the reckoning of divine justice
which demands strict expiation,
reparation through an accumulation of suffering—
but in the calming of these waves of pain,
accepted, trustingly, by a loving heart,
borne in the peace and joy of love,
the complete surrender of the heart to God.
At first the ripples flowing out from the suffering heart
will lap against another heart which they meet,
but if embraced in loving compassion
they are stilled,
and the waters can become calm again.
But even the resonance of pain
arising from within the very heart of one
who is surrendered to divine compassion

flows out, not to cause
a disturbance in other hearts,
but to link together, in this world of suffering,
the passion of one and the passion of others,
so that loneliness becomes compassion,
and compassion, communion
—the wholeness of love.

Since these waters envelop us all
no suffering is alone, isolated,
but each is already, from the beginning,
compassion—in the compassionate
Heart of Christ.

To embrace and transcend suffering,
of whatever form,
and from whatever cause it springs,
with one's eyes fixed unceasingly on Love,
is already to enter into
the pacifying power of love,
if only the heart welcomes with open hands
and gives all for love alone
—for the beloved, both God and man.

Then what is alienating,
this alien force which seeks to in-humanize man,
is personalized, pierced by the presence of love,
and suffering itself becomes a place of meeting,
a blossom, rooted
in the intimacy of a heart with God,
and also a path back
into the heart of love's embrace.

ישוע

THE PASSION OF LOVE

I.

There is a "passion" ever alive
in the Heart of my God,
a flame of love burning
between Father, Son, and Spirit,
and shared by each, as one.
A passion of complete acceptance
in the vulnerability of a naked Heart,
a passion of self-giving
flowing from the gift received
—mutual self-donation
binds them together as one—
Lover, Beloved, and their single Kiss.

There is a “passion” ever alive
in this fallen world,
in the heart of each and all,
a painful isolation, a thirst,
grasping here and there for fulfillment,
and closing back in upon the yearning self.
We are made for complete acceptance,
vulnerable reception of his love,
and for reciprocal self-giving,
springing from the wellspring of his gift.
But the magnetism of love, in sin,
has been redirected from “You” to “me.”
But where am I to be found, truly,
except in your embrace,
in mutual self-donation,
abiding communion in intimate love,
with you and with every one?

Passion descends in loving compassion
from the bosom of the Trinity
into the narrowness of our world.
Thus it re-opens from within, expanding
what has been enclosed within itself,
pouring out light into the darkness,
so that darkness may be transformed in the light.
The passion of isolation
now learns to become acceptance
and the reciprocal gift of self
—expansion of this tiny heart
to receive the immensity of the gift,
and exodus towards the Beloved
in whom alone my soul is at rest.

II.

Therefore “passion” itself is simply
a part of the mystery of love.
In this way God himself “suffers,”
not in lack, but in the fullness of love’s ardor—
the Father the Son, and the Son the Father,
the Spirit between, and in, them both.
Yet this means, also,
that the sufferings and joys of my life
can become, in God’s compassion, a sharing
in the passion of the Heart of God.
Each moment becomes a sacrament
by which you give yourself to me,
each instant of this life a summons

to give myself back to you in love.
I accept within this moment,
between you and I, my God,
every thing that there is
—joy and sorrow, happiness and pain—
certain that the passion of your love
has already penetrated
and transformed it from within,
and seeks to do so in my life too.

To love in, and through, all things,
in openness of heart before you,
accepting all, and giving,
abandonment in love.
This is a “passion” which awakens
the image of your love in me,
a gift your Passion teaches,
effecting transparency to your light:
loving compassion for my brethren
who are your gift to me,
to love them as you love them,
so that they too may experience
the passion of your love,
until, at last, we are all one
in the inmost heart of your embrace,
which you share with the Father and the Spirit
in the eternal Passion of Love,
in perfect, endless Joy.

ישוע

PRAYER OF ACCEPTANCE

Holy Trinity, God of Love,
I accept the love You have for me,
this Love pouring forth from Your inmost Heart,
this Love ever burning within You
—the flames of perfect acceptance
and mutual surrender,
the joyful fire of intimate communion,
embrace of consummate love!
I accept in trust and simplicity
this Love that enfolds and penetrates me,
as it flows out to flood the entire world,
to inundate, fill, and save each and every heart.

Jesus! I accept the gift flowing
from Your Crucified and Risen Heart.

I accept Your embrace of loving compassion,
and I in turn embrace You
in compassion and in grateful love.
Accepting, Lord, this all-encompassing Love,
I lovingly surrender all I am to You,
to the Father and the Holy Spirit too.
Inundate all of me, my inmost heart,
its every silent movement, its every stirring,
its every beat
—to beat in Yours, and Your Heart, Jesus, in mine.
Fill my mind, my every thought,
with Your presence,
transfigured, transformed in pure love,
and may my will, too,
be perfectly conformed to Yours,
one, in You, with the will of the eternal Father;
may my every affection, desire, and experience
accord entirely with You,
so that I may not only will, but thirst,
with all that I am,
seeing, thinking, feeling, yearning,
in every moment,
as You and the Father see, think, feel, and yearn
in that blessed intimacy that You share eternally,
as one.
Live freely and fully, Lord, in my very body,
in my every slightest movement,
my breath and my heartbeat deep within,
in word and silence, in solitude and community,
in work and deed, in stillness and repose,
in every gladness and every sorrow,
in suffering and in joy
—in the joy and peace of love
that is deeper still,
burning in the heart of all things
and enfolding each and all of us,
yes, deep within my breast!—
in the unceasing prayer, the hymn of love,
rising from my inmost heart, filling all I am,
and receiving, unreservedly,
the outpouring of Your Love,
flowing forever, freely,
from the Trinity's embrace!

Let it be in me, wholly, entirely, now and forever,
in everything, as You desire, my God, my Love...
Flood and inflame, possess and transform,

shelter and embrace,
in the tenderness of sweet love,
in gentle mercy, loving compassion,
in Your own compassionate Heart, Jesus,
and the compassionate Heart
of our heavenly Father,
and the ardent passion and gentle breath
of the Holy Spirit!
Enfold me—and every heart!—
embrace the entire world,
and draw us, my God,
into the inmost heart of Your eternal embrace,
into the depths of Your life
of love and blessed communion,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
forever and forevermore. Amen!

ישוע

NIGHT SKY

The glare of city lights
—made to illumine our lives,
not only securely marking our steps
and giving security from the stranger
but casting their glare to heaven,
blotting out the light of the stars.
To see the night sky again
(have we perhaps forgotten it?)
I must leave the bustle of the city,
it insecure security, its anxious, feverish control,
its insufficient self-sufficiency,
and step out into darkness.
Alone in the remote countryside
—the desert of the heart—
the city left behind,
and the car, too, left by the roadside,
I walk out into the emptiness of a field,
turning my gaze upward.
And what I see is not empty.

All my life spent filling
this empty space in my soul
with chaff blown by the wind,
with rubbish destined for the trash-heap,
or even with light and warmth of good things,
yet which cannot ward off
that deeper darkness and chill.

Glistening stars in the night sky,
they were hidden by the light to which I clung.
The gentle sound of wind, whistling in my ears,
the breeze caressing my face,
like a hand of one who loves.
The meek sound of nature,
the gentle cooing of a dove,
the chirping of crickets,
the howling of wolves in the distance,
all only deepen the sense of silence,
of being enfolded in earth's arms.
Yet enfolded thus, it is as if she raises me,
offering me in her hands, to heaven.
I feel, in this way, what is meant
by the truth that I am summoned
to love the earth, yet to despise the world.
All this beauty, this sound of silence,
this peopled-solitude, is blocked out
by the noisiness and ruckus of the world.

Yes, a deeper voice is speaking still,
announcing a word inarticulate, yet clear;
a silent voice, yet radiant, sure,
clearer than any other I have heard.
The deepest voice speaks within,
more interior to me than I am to myself,
silent word of love echoing within my heart.
To hear it I must enter in and become silent too.
The noise of the world, deafening
in its intensity, with very little to say,
in its proximity, pressing in upon my ears,
a closeness which has penetrated
even into the "inner room"
where one prays in secret to the Father.
This is the new prayer, fashioned by us
—our old idols made of wood or gold—
now with lights and sounds, complex interface.
Yet even in this is hope,
for is not every sin, really,
the heart's desire for prayer gone awry,
seeking fulfillment in a place
where no true rest is found,
rather than in the intimate dialogue
for which the heart is made?
Thus, I can ask every desire which leads me to sin:
"Where is your true home?"
And I can direct you gently back to him.

Gathered from fragmentation,
the multiplicity grasping here and there,
into the unity of the heart, virgin, poor,
where I learn again to be silent, still,
to receive the gift of love ever welling up
from within this deepest, sacred place,
from him who dwells within.
I am wounded by the gift of love
—a healing wound upon my heart!—
this heart yearns, and gasps,
and pines for him again,
drawn out, as it were, from within my breast,
reaching out to touch, to feel, to know
the one Beloved of my heart.

O my heart, why do you run
from that which you most deeply desire,
why do you avoid that
which alone brings you true health?
Perhaps you simply do not know
the abyss of longing hidden within,
covered over, suffocated,
by so many paltry things.
From youth you have been given so much
that you have lost the ability to truly desire,
to say “Thank you” when you receive,
thus being awakened to desire and receive anew,
to be drawn out of yourself
by the gift that you bear within.
Or perhaps you are afraid
of the nakedness of love, of empty, open hands
which cannot simply close over the gift
as a possession under my control—
or of the pain, which, at times,
makes itself felt even in a heart as numb as mine,
the pain of unfulfilled desire,
of a mystery, a joy in hope, and hope in joy,
which is bigger than I can understand, or grasp.
It hurts to be truly alive,
when one is not possessed of true life,
and thus, it pains to love—
yet this is a suffering unlike any other,
an “already” and “not yet” meeting and kissing,
wounding me with gratitude and desire
in the same, single instant,
to receive and to give myself, utterly,

in a moment so full, so rich,
that it cannot be grasped or contained,
yet mysteriously contains me in its arms,
like clouds descending on the mountains,
gently shadowing earth in their soft,
impalpable embrace:
the destination present
in each moment of the journey,
hidden, yet breathing out
the breath of life and joy,
and drawing all towards the fullness yet to come.

ישוע

LITTLENES

“And he went about doing good.”
This is true of you and of all your saints, my Lord,
who humbly walked in your footsteps.
But what am I, dear God—
living this little, insignificant life,
trying each day to pray, to love,
to let light possess, and shine in and through
the tiny heart within my breast?
It often seems not only little, but unimportant,
vain and empty, in comparison
with the richly-laden actions of your saints.
I am tempted to ask:
who in my life do I really benefit,
what fruit, indeed, do I bear?
Indeed, which heart can I say
that I have truly, wholeheartedly loved
—as you have first loved me?
I have empty hands,
which not only have nothing to offer,
but which have done little or no good,
in the face of a world aching with need,
crying out for the God it does not know!
If you yourself have drawn me here, my God,
to the place where there seems
indeed to be nothing,
nothing but naked hope, prayer,
and hidden desire,
impalpable even to myself,
then let it be, simply, as you will.
Even if it does good for a single person,
draws a single one closer into your embrace,
it is more than a thousand times worth it.

If it brings joy to you,
or reflects your radiant light,
allowing the love to flow, which yearns,
unceasingly, to flow like this,
then it is more than infinitely repaid.

I offer my little, tiny, infinitely loved self,
without reserve, for the sake of all, to you.
Even if I *do* nothing, offering no more
than a poor and hidden heart,
let me only live each moment to the full
in the love that you yourself desire,
which you alone make possible
by pouring your own love into me.
This is the test for a little child's heart:
to find the greatness of love in the littlest thing,
to embrace the whole world
from my hidden room.
Why have you asked this, my God,
this path of the littlest, the least,
when you could have asked something else
—when you could have used me in ministry,
in preaching, teaching, in care for your poor,
in giving the sacraments, in so many ways?
Instead you lead me into the dryness of the desert,
to be silent and still,
not to receive divine revelations,
carried to the world,
or to be a healer of souls who flock to me,
but simply to abide before you
with open, empty hands,
trusting that, through this poverty,
the immensity of your mercy flows out
upon our dry and thirsty world,
to touch, to heal, to satisfy
the hearts which yearn so much for you.

This, I know, within my heart,
is indeed the best there could ever be;
the dryness of the desert sands,
the quietness and starkness of solitude,
indeed conceals abundant springs
and creates space for meeting and embrace.
The human heart, it is true,
desires to be great and noble
(and this is not bad),
to achieve something beautiful,

and yet the path marked out before me
is that of lowliness and humility
—as what is truly great.
Much deeper yet, the heart desires,
insofar as it can, to help the persons
who so deeply need—my God—need you!

Yet again, here too, there is nothing
but to be a little child,
which is everything.
Avoiding all that sparkles in the eyes of man,
becoming more little, more dependent, each day,
is the blessed, inconceivable grace
of being simply a “little brother” to each and all,
a brother so humble and so small
that my brethren, encountering me,
experience only the comfort and joy
of your tender closeness, your gentle mercy...
For here we are all sheltered in your Heart,
knit closely together, Jesus, in your arms.

ישוע

BREAD OF COMPASSION

I.

A world burdened by unnatural isolation,
a life touched by the loneliness of despair;
depression and anxiety—symptoms of the sickness
so common to men and women in our world
—a society which has all but forgotten
what it is to communicate in love,
in loving gift of self to one you trust,
exchanging the vulnerable openness of love
for individualism, love of pleasure, ease,
the freedom to do whatever one wants,
leading to enslavement and dire poverty,
the poverty of the lack of love:
a heart closed in upon itself,
a heart alone and isolated
like a hut in the barren wilderness,
swept by the burning sands,
parched by the heat and cold,
vulnerable at night to the attack of wolves.
You have created us such that, alone,
we cannot protect the sanctuary of the heart
or furnish it with trappings
of beauty, love, and joy.

Only in belonging to another
is the vulnerable heart, made for love, safe.
Only in surrendering itself to you, Beloved,
does it blossom from within,
sheltered in the warmth of your embrace,
pressed gently against your tender Heart,
filled with the breath of life
which you unceasingly breathe into it.
The human heart, my God, you have made a gift:
a gift to be received, and given,
flowing from your hands, and back,
and given, unreservedly, fully,
to every person: "Love as I have loved you."
Yet we cannot even see, or feel, my God!
How can we love when our eyes
cannot see the beauty, the need of others?
When we cannot touch your mystery
at the very wellspring of our life?
You seem to be silent—
because we can no longer hear.
You seem to be hidden—
because we can no longer see.
Yet to enter into hiddenness and silence
—the mysterious solitude of the heart—
to find you, embrace you, in faith, hope, and love,
to be enclosed within your embrace,
penetrated by your love, through and through,
rendered transparent by your grace—
this is to return to that inmost place
where my heart, alone, is truly least alone:
for we, estranged from you, are alienated also
from ourselves, from others.
Only in returning home,
restoring the heart to love,
finding my abode there with you
who abide there with me,
does my heart also become a gift for others
and a home where they may dwell,
drawing closer, in transparency,
to the home of your own Sacred Heart,
in which, alone, we are all at rest.

II.

Solidarity with those who suffer,
my brother, my sister, my friend,
in the painful loneliness of the heart,
a lost and broken existence—

yet it is not suffering itself which redeems,
darkness itself which serves the light.
No, but abiding faith, constant hope,
the radiance of love in trusting surrender to you
—even in the darkest places of our hearts—
allows your light to shine more deeply
as a beacon in the night,
the light illumining the darkness
which darkness cannot overcome.
Son of the Father, in compassion, descending
to dwell in the broken human heart,
to embrace us in our darkness,
to draw us back, in you, to him.
This mystery is alive, also, within me,
in every human heart there is
—and you desire to live and renew it
in us, until the end of time,
until, at last, we are fully renewed in you.
To enter, lovingly, into the interior sanctuary
where I am most alone before you
is to return to the place where least alone,
bound together, in you who embrace us all as one,
to every person, all of us children in the Son,
a Bride in the arms of her Bridegroom,
redeemed from exile and carried by you
back into the bosom of the Father.

III.

Lord, I cannot see the way
to the habitation of light
—yet we were not made for darkness,
to pitch our tent within the night.
Even you, Lord Jesus, dwelling among us,
pitching your tent in our midst,
did not settle for darkness,
but became a cloud of shelter
and a pillar of fire in the night.
You press ever onward, and draw us within you,
to the abode of the Father, light inaccessible,
and open, welcoming arms.
Even in our exile, our pilgrimage return,
let us sing songs of joy and hope
that, in you, we belong to him.
It is only a matter of time
until the dense fogs of night
are dissipated by the rising sun,
as its warmth clothes the earth

and its light dispels every shadow.
Let us possess, in hope, what we possess in you,
as you possess us, already now—
as we are hidden with you in God.
The bitter bread of solidarity
at this table of compassion
is salted with eternity, the joy of certain hope—
for it is not enough to know and feel
the pain of my brothers and sisters;
but the bread must be raised in thanksgiving
and be offered, in love, to the Father,
broken and given, totally, to them,
transfigured by love and trust—
becoming thus, in you, my Jesus,
a taste of our Homeland in the land of exile,
the bread of joy and communion
for which we long,
a pledge and a promise of the gift you give,
uniting us all in one
in that Body and Blood, your Sacred Heart,
which, having passed
through the midst of our night
has enfolded it in the light,
transferring us into the reign of love,
into the embrace shared by you and the Father
in the banquet of heaven's joy.

ישוע

PRECIOUS

I.

For the wondrous uniqueness of the path
walked by each person, my God,

I thank you.

For this beautiful refraction
of the undivided light of your love
in the prism of each unrepeatable,
precious human life,

I thank you.

Indeed, for the abundant fullness
made present, unbroken and undimmed,
in the mystery of each and every heart,
I thank you.

To accept the lot marked out for me,
given anew each day, each moment,
flowing unceasingly from your loving hands:

this is the secret of true joy.
Another name we give it is gratitude.
The spirit of thankfulness
—this is indeed the greatest miracle—
the kiss of faith and love,
fulfilling and enkindling hope.
The beautiful mystery, almost unspeakable,
is that your gift, always one and the same,
divine love, holy, radiant, and pure,
is so great that it can be poured out
uniquely in every heart,
flowing out in the unique story of every life.

II.

Joy itself, my God, this flaming furnace
at the very heart of the Gospel,
is so many-hued and radiant, shining out,
or indeed, sheltered deep within the heart,
that each person manifests this, too,
in his or her own unique and unrepeatable way.
One person's joy may be that of a field of flowers,
colorful and bright, dancing in the wind,
or another a fine white wine, noble and refined,
or a bubbling champagne
singing humor and delight,
or another yet may be that of a single rose,
profound and sober,
wounding the heart with its beauty,
even as it grows amid thorns.
Yet it always blossoms forth,
in each and every kind,
in the ravishing beauty of the Beautiful One
whose Love is Joy and whose Joy is Beauty,
the beauty of Love which ravishes the heart.

We often don't understand
the words you write, Lord,
in flowing script, or in jagged, short phrases,
the painting on which you work,
pressing down on the canvas of our life,
creating a mysterious yet beautiful work of art.
The art is your own, yet not your own alone;
you desire to teach us the secret,
for the story you write,
you write with our hand in your own.
Sometimes you lead
the movement more firmly

and ask simple, trusting acquiescence.
At other times you give the freedom
for us to exercise this art in childlike boldness,
yet you work every gesture and every line
into this masterpiece of beauty
flowing from the union of two wills.
In both, the truth is the same:
a child in the care of the most loving Father.
One time, like an infant cradled
in the Father's tender arms,
letting him carry him
wherever he knows best to go,
and the other,
like a child walking on two frail feet,
yet with the hands of his Father
as sure, unfailing support.
Whatever the particulars of the story may be
—and we find the radiance of beauty
precisely in the depths of such particularity,
indeed, even deeper,
in the unique, unrepeatable heart
that beats, unceasingly,
deep within this human breast—
we know that it is a romance, a romance divine,
your endless Beauty, beautiful God.

ישוע

LIGHT THROUGH THE WOUNDS

I.

The Son remains, eternally,
pressed up against the Father's bosom,
and even in the most mundane events
of his earthly life,
as well as in his path of suffering,
he never leaves, for a moment,
this silent, ineffable dialogue,
this hidden, eternal kiss.
And it is precisely thus
that he is the image of his Father's glory,
the perfect Icon of the Father of mercies:
by being always, the beloved, loving Son.
The Bridegroom, too,
pure Expression of the heavenly Spouse
who led the Israelites from bondage
and into the desert,
there to espouse them to himself.

Fully revealed in the last times,
three-personed God,
yet only one Lover of humanity,
the Bridegroom divine of the Virgin-Bride,
the single Church, yet every person.
She enfolds all in her bosom, and, in her,
they are espoused to God too.

II.

An icon of the Father and of the Son,
radiant with the light of the Spirit's presence,
is this lowly humanity of mine,
yet not mine alone.
For in this unique personal mystery
—my name known to God alone—
I find a powerful expansiveness,
bonds connecting me to every other person,
as we are united in one family, one Church.
Icon of the love of Christ, crucified and risen,
the Son, Brother, Bridegroom, and Friend,
the one Man who enfolds us all within himself,
a child reposing on the breast of God,
the Father eternal.
Those eyes gazing into me, piercing to my soul,
awaken, mysteriously,
a penetrating look in return.
I am black, but beautiful—sinful, but redeemed
by that gaze of love
that never ceases to look into me,
that brilliant light that shines out
from your tranquil face,
a face marked by simplicity,
the simplicity of One infinitely loved,
and infinitely loving,
your countenance ablaze with the glory
reflected from the Father's face,
and a Heart on fire with compassion and mercy,
which flashes out, a lamp, enduring,
illuminating even the darkest place.

III.

Radiant light, a beacon of love
above the crashing seas,
light shining upon me,
light breaking forth from within.
In that face, Christ, I see and feel this love,
and it presses forth upon me also

from the hearts of my brothers and sisters,
from every rock, and tree, and flower,
from the breeze that blows across my face,
the sun, moon, and stars, the heat and chill.
Piercing light, which, piercing me,
flashes forth from within the faculty of vision,
to see the sacrament of your presence
in each and every created thing:
icon of the God of love.

An icon in human flesh, image of divine glory,
something mysterious,
impressed by the hand of God.
It is like baptismal regeneration,
when the lowly touch of water
accompanies and effects
a renewal of the heart within.
Sharing in the suffering of Christ,
who has shared our suffering first,
reflecting, mysteriously, like crystal water,
the image of Crucified Love—
not in pain alone, or anguish,
but in the depths of spiritual reality,
often hidden from the eyes,
for which a new vision must be brought to light,
which sees in human obscurity the tender gaze,
the blazing light, of those eyes of love,
piercing, forever,
into darkness and the mists of night.
Crystal water, reflecting Mercy's image,
or crystal glass, transparent to your rays,
or a crystal itself, refracting,
in many-hued human light,
the light of the one God-man, Christ the Lord.

IV.

The wounds impressed upon the flesh
by illness, abuse, or injury,
are these not fitting for an icon,
reflecting the image of the divine perfection?
A blot on the inner person,
an obstacle to its expression
in the concreteness of life and love?
The mystery of love and beauty
radiates outward from within,
yet brokenness, pain, and poverty,
from which we may want to turn away

—as fruits merely of sin and of the evil of separation from
you—
bear now a deeper meaning, a deeper face,
manifesting, more profoundly still,
the radiant light of love,
of the paternal goodness of the Father of all.
They share, through the glorious wounds of Christ, your
Son,
through the holes in his hands, his feet, his side,
in the radiance of heaven's light.
The passion of heaven
has penetrated and transformed
the passion of the earth,
present as a living flame of compassionate love,
and shining out as the refracted light,
present already,
of the new and glorious creation.
For as Christ broke the shackles of the tomb,
unbarring the gates of death and pain,
the flood of eternity pulsates into time
and time is swept up in the flood-tides of eternity,
mingling together lovingly, yet distinct,
as in the most blessed embrace:
a beloved one in the arms
of the most loving Lover,
sheltered, secure, and, forever, at rest.

ישוע

AN ICON OF JOY

Little heart, when you feel
that you cannot take any more,
when the path before you is hemmed in by thorns,
when you feel, indeed,
that all good things crumble
—both within and without—
and you cannot find your way,
cannot take even a single step;
when this single present moment
itself seems to have burst asunder
in anxiety and despair,
dearest child, now is the time
not to forge ahead by force,
to bolster strength and grasp for control,
to seek to understand, to regain victory and light,
but to simply place your hand in mine,

your eyes closed,
and to walk, step by step, as I lead;
indeed, to let me carry you forward, trustingly,
for, I assure you,
I am worthy of your complete trust.

You will see that light breaks forth
in the darkest night,
like dawn casting rays
across the early morning sky;
yet this light begins to shine,
not in some far off place,
but from within,
through the cracks of your broken heart,
through the veil, which, stretched thin
through suffering and pain,
lets the pure, gratuitous radiance
of the divine sun shine through,
illuminating and warming the heart, even if unseen.
The broken and contrite heart, my love,
humiliated down to the lowest place,
is brought here not to be cast off, condemned,
but is at last liberated
from the shackles of the fallen self,
given wings, in self-forgetfulness and in joy,
to fly freely, in lightness of heart,
in the confidence of a child, beloved,
through the misery of this broken world,
never stopping until at last in the final embrace
for which the heart, love-wounded,
never ceases to long.

Indeed, my beloved, this heart within your breast
—which you feel is so wretched, a failure,
unable to cope with even
the simplest events of life,
the littlest of the little, the least of the least—
is open precisely in the lowliness of this poverty,
open, not so much like an empty tomb
(yet even this gestures to resurrection),
but like a womb of love,
receptive to the fruitful light,
or arms open to a lover's embrace,
lovingly surrendered;
so that the two, at last,
may become one, as both desire:
you abiding in me, at every instant, and I in you,

making our home in one another,
a single dwelling, yours and mine,
which I have built for you, my love.

I know that your heart yearns, little one,
to create something beautiful, a testament of love,
a reflection, in the dimness of this world,
of the radiant beauty of my own eternal light.
I know the longing within to give birth without,
the desire to create, sharing in eternal creativity.
I want you to know, beloved, and to feel
that the greatest masterpiece I desire for you
is the unspeakable beauty which is you yourself.
You, the one whom I infinitely love, are the icon,
transparent to my shining glory,
enfolded in my grace,
a blaze of fiery light bursting through the eyes,
a figure whose countenance,
whose heart, whose life
is a reflection of the life, the heart, the face
which is my own.

As an icon on wood and canvas is born
in fasting of the body and of the eyes,
which see no longer merely
in a human and natural way,
but gaze at inaccessible light, made accessible
in the creation I have taken
and espoused unto myself;
as the icon is a union of the Cross's wood,
the cloth of the tomb in which I lay,
and the image of the glory of the Resurrection,
so too, you need not despair or be afraid
when the path on which I lead you winds, mysteriously,
over trackless ways,
and the night that enshrouds you
is the most absolute of desert fasts,
allowing you no taste or refreshment
for body, heart, or soul.
Every event and circumstance of your life,
my child,
is nothing but the gentle touch
of my Artist's hands,
my brush pressing up
against the canvas of your soul.

All things—arising even

from the broken world around you,
from the body's infirmity,
even exasperation of the soul,
from the brokenness which has scarred the heart,
from the struggles
of a burdened and afflicted mind,
and not only these, but the gracious delights too,
the glimpses of splendor and love
which warm the heart,
the breaking of the sun's rays
over the horizon at dawn,
the gratitude of sitting down to a simple meal,
the companionship of family, friends,
and love of neighbor—
all these are only tools of the craft
which I employ to fashion you,
not things which separate you from me insurmountably,
or vain and empty realities,
like candles fading away.
Listen closely, and you can hear;
hush, and you can feel,
the heartbeat of the most wondrous thing,
present deep within,
the truest, most authentic reality,
enfolding all the rest:
afame in the inmost heart of all things:
our eternal Joy.

What does the artist ask of his art to do,
except to remain pliable, receptive,
under his master hand?
And you, my child, are not lifeless matter;
only walk forward, your hand in my own,
in the process of your own transformation,
embracing, in love, the gratuitous gift of sanctity,
and offering your willing, heartfelt docility,
springing from the loving trust
and the trusting love
which I never cease to awaken
within your inmost heart.
Look into the eyes of my icon-face,
and you will see,
consider carefully,
and you will know what I desire.
Eyes of holiness and eyes of glory flash out
from the midst of a body
which has suffered and been spent,

becoming in this way, not empty or void,
but transparent for the divine happiness
to shine through.
Look in these eyes, child, and see
(look *with* these eyes, which can also be your own)
they gaze so piercingly beyond the narrowness,
afame with love's ardent longing,
ablaze with contemplation,
a yearning repose and restful activity,
the Fire of Joy, passing, forever,
between my Father and I.

ישוע

THE WELLSPRING OF CREATIVITY

I.
The human heart bears deep within
the desire to create,
to give birth, in love, to beauty,
as a woman giving birth to a child
—a mystery formed within her womb
and fed on her inmost substance,
reflecting her own personal mystery
yet also a mystery greater than she can grasp.
But there is an intrinsic connection
in every act of creativity,
in all our activity within this world,
which has been rent asunder in sin
—but which grace seeks to bind up
as a needle and thread
weaving it together once again.
This is the union of gratuitous acceptance
of the gratuitous gift of love, received,
and gratuitous outpouring of love
in the work of pro-creation.

We glimpse this inherent unity
—but also its present fragmentation—
in the way an artist identifies with her work,
since it has been conceived within her heart
and born from the instrumentality of her body.
She lives in it, practicing a “motherhood”
in ink, paint, clay, wood, and words;
in flesh and blood, in fingers, eyes, and mouth;
but here, too, she must learn reverence,
the poverty of a child—who, receiving freely

also gives without cost, giving birth
to something both her own and not her own.
For she is not what comes forth from her,
as much as this expresses her substance, her love,
but she is always something more than this
—yet poorer—a child with empty and open hands,
receptive heart.

This is her greatest wealth—gratuity—
that her worth is not something achieved by her
or ever adequately expressed without,
yet rather a profound sanctuary within,
a pure gift springing from the creativity of God,
but allowing her in her turn
to give gratuitous love.
Free and poor within herself,
receiving the gift she is,
she can also be transparent, thus,
for the gift of God to shine through for others,
giving birth,
from the womb of both flesh and faith,
to children, pure gifts of the God of love.

II.

This is the great mystery
which is reflected in the fact
that the dawn breaks forth from the night,
that fullness can only be poured out
into emptiness.
As the dawn is more radiant, more welcome,
the more the night has been one
of vigilant expectation,
and as the deepest fruitfulness and creativity
blossoms forth
from the night of deepest receptivity,
allowing the light of divine love to pour in,
allowing this light to shine through,
radiating beautifully through the transparency
of the open, welcoming heart.

Yet childhood is rediscovered profoundly
in the very experience
of fatherhood and motherhood,
when I see myself reflected in a child, yet let go.
For what this child has from me
they have in no way earned or deserved,
yet I give it gladly, seeking nothing back,

rejoicing simply in the fact that they are.
I, too, relearn in this that before you, Father,
I am no more nor less than a child
—even when a mother, a father, a spouse—
for I am what I am before you,
freely given, freely received,
a debt I can never repay, but simply accept:
blessed poverty, sacred dependency,
never more than a son or daughter,
who grows to maturity
not by separation, independence,
but by growing ever more reliant on you, inseparable.
All else finds its place and meaning only in this.

Christ's greatest fruitfulness
comes about when he is most purely Son;
his greatest gift of self coincides
with his most complete and dependent acceptance
of the gift of your love:
as he grows in the womb of his blessed Mother,
as he is held in her arms, an infant,
as he travels from village to village,
as he hangs naked and poor upon the Cross,
as he holds open his wounded hands
radiating gloriously with the light of Resurrection,
as he rest against your bosom, Father,
in spirit and in flesh,
and dwells among us in the Eucharist.
He is a Child, a Spouse,
and an Icon of your Fatherhood,
each contained within the one preceding.
He teaches us, he lets us share, mysteriously,
in his own mystery
—child, spouse, and father or mother too—
enfolded in the gratuitous gift of grace,
flowing out freely in childhood, in nuptial love,
in maternity or paternity, joyful fruitfulness,
until this grace draws us all at last
back to the wellspring of childhood
where we are united in the joy
of sonship and daughterhood,
resting, eternally, against your bosom,
Father of infinite love.

ישוע

BEAUTY

You have created us to share,
my God, in your love,
to participate in the very life which is yours,
a life of pure gift, of intimacy,
and of eternal fecundity.
From the beginning, when you lifted up the dust
and breathed into it the breath of life,
when you fashioned us in your image and likeness,
you impressed upon us as an indelible seal
the image of your own fatherhood,
the childhood of your only Son,
the intimacy of the Spirit,
and his overflowing fruitfulness.

We are, each of us, my God, your children,
and spouses of the Bridegroom-Son,
and sharers in that birthing movement
by which love, so rich and full,
overflows without bounds,
creating something beautiful without
from the beauty that is within,
creating beauty within by receiving pure gift
from the Beauty that is without,
yet given entirely to us.

To be a child is to live on pure gift,
receiving anew at every moment
the pure and gratuitous grace of existence,
life, flowing ever from your loving, fatherly hands.
Yet as a child we yearn to be espoused,
espoused in love to Beauty, Goodness, Truth
—who is the eternal Word himself,
Christ your Son.

This wondrous, threefold mystery
—childhood, spousehood,
and fatherhood or motherhood—
each contained within the one preceding,
each in its proper place, unfolding.
Childhood, pure acceptance of the gift,
enfolding and giving meaning to all the rest.
Spousehood, hearts made one in love,
nuptial intimacy blossoming
from complete surrender,
allowing you to live in us and us in you.

And giving birth
—from the beauty of this intimacy
where we are espoused as one with you,
eternal Loveliness—
to your own beauty and life within this world,
until the world is at last one with you
in your single, all-encompassing embrace.

As someone touched by the beauty of music
yearns to plunge into the beauty they feel,
indeed, yearns, in their own life, music to create,
so too it is with the Love that touches us,
awakening in us a responding love.
As someone is drawn out into beauty
which touches them,
espousing themselves to the art
which has first been given,
becoming able in turn to manifest this beauty themselves,
so too, touched by your own ravishing beauty, God, we
are summoned to espouse ourselves
to your eternal Truth,
to be wed to Goodness, Beauty, Love,
who is yours, and you.

And united, lovingly, to that which has touched us
and which we contemplate unceasingly,
finding in it all our joy,
we are enabled also therefore to create,
to give birth from this loving intimacy
to the beauty which has been given to us.
This Beauty possesses us entirely
and enfolds us as pure gift,
espousing us to himself
and flowing out in his radiant light
to enfold all creation in himself.
Finally, he draws us all back to you, Father,
where we shall rest, eternally, in perfect joy,
against your tender, loving breast.

ישוע

THE GIFT OF LOVE

I.

All giving springs, unceasingly,
from the wellspring of acceptance.
For the gift itself is awakened
by the prior reception of the other,
and what I see in them
is precisely what invites gift in me.

This is true, my God,
even in the bosom of your own divine life.
For, eternal Father, you do not give yourself
to your only-begotten Son blindly,
as if unseeing, with eyes closed,
but your pouring-out of all you are
is, mysteriously, a response to the beauty
which you see and know in him.
Yet he is also constituted
by the very gift you give,
the Son begotten eternally
by the love of the most loving Father.
And for him, my God, as Son,
his gift is only the echo
of the sounding of your own,
the surging back of what surged forth from you,
the spontaneous response of love to love,
a smile of joy springing from the smile
of the One who gazes
and rejoices in what he sees.

We glimpse this, God, within our world,
as partial and fragmentary as our experience is.
For you have safeguarded, sheltered,
a place of love in the midst
of the brokenness of this creation,
and you never cease, lovingly,
to draw all of us back to yourself.
When a woman looks upon her child
who rests within her arms,
she smiles in spontaneous joy
at the beauty, the pure gift whom she sees.
And the child knows, unhesitatingly,
that he or she is loved, known, affirmed,
and so smiles back, loving for love,
indeed, feels that Love enfolds them both,
a Love that has given them to one another.

The child, and the mother together feel that
Love is indeed everything.
Perhaps they do not voice this to themselves,
but in such a beautiful encounter
Love's voice always sounds.
Love enfolds and shelters them, and all things,
in its never-ending, strong embrace,
preserving all in the joy of intimacy,
never broken, radiant, and sure.
This is an image of who you are, my God,
an eternal Communion of Love:
Father loving Son, and Son loving Father,
in the single Smile, the Kiss, the Embrace
who is the Spirit of Love you share.

II.

This pure love, within our world,
this love that enfolds the two together
in an intimate and consoling embrace,
is nonetheless something so frail,
a tiny flame flickering.
For the security that the child knew
can be called into question
the first time they are lost in a supermarket
or await a mother who forgets the time.
The heart cries out in fright:
Where are you?
Where are the sheltering arms of love?
Or even worse, when love itself is broken
in the heart of the family
in neglect or in abuse.
This love which promised
to safeguard and enfold all things,
this smile of certain joy,
is called into question,
something so fragile.

Look, my God, how tender your love is!
Love, which embraces the world,
never letting go,
yet allows itself to be frustrated
by our brokenness and sin,
and yet, more deeply still,
it continues to work
precisely in this way.

Yes, my God, you work to restore,
so lovingly, our certainty in love.
You again give us the experience
of the Love that is embracing us,
stronger than every fright or division.
When a mother plays peek-a-boo
with her child, there is no fear,
for the child knows that she is not gone,
but anticipates, in certainty and joy,
the new and deeper revelation of her face.
The child rejoices, again and again,
in seeing those beautiful features
which are the first revealed to infant's eyes.

If only we knew such certainty, Father,
at your own self-revelation, your love,
even when you are silent
and seem to us to be absent.
Ah, but this is precisely
what you teach us, Father,
in the filial trust of Jesus...
in whom Love penetrates, so beautifully,
into our darkness again, transforming.

III.

Your Son, dear Father,
knew this immense, spontaneous joy
as he gazed upon his loving mother.
A little child gazing into the face
of the daughter who was holding him.
And she rejoices, my Father,
to gaze into the face of her God,
yet also of the baby who is her Son.
As he nurses at her breast
she gives him all that she is, freely,
her substance, her blood, her life.
And he receives, trustingly,
all that she is, her love, her being,
and, in her, he knows, already,
that he receives not her alone,
but the immensity of Love from you, Father.

Love enfolds the two of them,
the Love which is yours eternally.
Love in her and Love in him,
Love binding them together, unbroken.
Love, poured out freely from you, Father,

into her, and through her into her Son,
and the Son's love, awakened, a reciprocal gift,
springing from the wellspring of his acceptance.

Yes, the gift he receives from her, my God,
he receives also from you, unceasingly.
The mother is transparent, in her littleness,
to the greatness of the Father.
And the Son, Son of Mary and Son of God,
grows also to manhood, over time,
a Bridegroom of the woman
and an image of the Father.
The gift he received, and always receives,
he gives unreservedly too, gift awakened by gift.
He gives his substance, his blood, his life,
to those whom he loves,
who repose trustingly against his breast.
And his breast, indeed,
is opened completely
as he hangs upon the Cross,
pouring out the love within,
the fullness of God present there.
And the woman, the child and mother
who stands at the foot of his Cross
with the beloved disciple at her side,
is at this time a bride too
of the Bridegroom of all humanity.

IV.

And the Bridegroom is also,
above all, a Child, a Son,
wedding himself also to another child,
who is his Spouse given to him by you, Father.
Yet this also means that he accepts into himself,
unreservedly, all that she is and has.
He descends down to her lowly place
where she dwells in a realm of fragmented love
—the place, Father, of each one of us,
children lost and full of fright.
He takes us upon his shoulders,
yes, into his inmost Heart,
taking us, unreservedly,
and pressing us to his breast.

This embrace, indeed, bears our pain close,
but there is, mysteriously, a greater joy.
Childlike trust and certainty...

the Son can never lose the Father's Love,
nor can the cord
that binds them together be broken.
When he goes out to seek us
he does not leave your paternal arms.
As a mother playing peek-a-boo
with her beloved child,
so the Son's trust in you,
his hopeful expectation in love,
his own love, by love awakened and sustained,
never for a moment dims.

In Jesus the penetrating eyes of your love
at last break through our darkness
and illumine it by their light.
Indeed, you never really hide at all, Father,
for you are here, present
in the suffering Heart of your Son,
as the Son is now, as purest Joy,
present in the inmost solitude of our hearts too.

Yes, Love has found us
in the most vulnerable, defenseless place,
and here has enfolded us again in his embrace,
sheltering, consoling, and giving strength,
begetting unbreakable, sure, and certain joy
in hearts that have again found Love.
Present deep within, and enclosing us
in the eternal dialogue which is yours,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit too,
the blessed exchange of intimacy, bliss.
We rest now, at every moment,
against the welcoming breast of the Son,
as his heartbeat flows out, unceasingly,
the fullness of blood and life and love,
giving to us, not only himself, but you, Father,
and, through the Spirit, surging, silent, full,
draws us all back, at last,
into the heart of your embrace.

ישוע

EMPATHY

I.

Empathy.

Some wonder if it is even possible
to feel what another feels,
to step into their own subjective world,
to know their joy, their pain, their hope,
as they themselves know it, from within.
Indeed, in this life such knowledge
is always partial, fragmented.
This is the result of sin.

As much as I may want to know you,
and you, to share yourself with me,
there always remains a distance, a barrier
to us truly living within one another,
dwelling in the blessedness of intersubjectivity.

Intersubjectivity, a big word,
but it only means that you dwell
within my own experience of reality,
seeing it from within, as I do,
as I in turn dwell within yours
and experience it as you do.
I think that this is our deepest desire,
that for which we really long,
to allow others into this most intimate space,
and to share also in theirs.

When I fall in love
—why is it called “falling,”
when, if it is a pure and holy love,
it is more like “being raised up”?—
I yearn to step beyond the distance
that keeps me away from you.
I desire, so to speak,
to clothe myself in your eyes
and to feel the reverberation of reality
as you yourself experience it.
Yet I am always me, and you are you,
and this is indeed necessary, good.
For I want to embrace you, not as you,
but as me, to truly receive the gift
that you are into what I am,
and to offer the gift that I am
into the space in you that desires it.

I find myself expanded

by what I encounter, as pure gift,
in you.

I find my inmost heart enriched
by the mystery which comes to dwell
in me.

And when you also offer empathy,
when you give the gift of yourself to me,
I find a place of isolation transformed
into a space of intimacy.

I know myself more deeply, in you,
and I know you more deeply, within me,
sheltering you, lovingly, within my inner heart.
Yet the two of us remain, always, mystery,
to ourselves and to one another.

And this, also, is necessary, good.

For a child does not receive a gift
in order to control it and to comprehend,
but rejoices most in wonder, awe,
in the beautiful “something” of the gift,
and, above all, in the beauty of the giver.

This is also why a sunset, or the beauty of a face,
can never be captured in a photograph
or even in the imagination of the beholder.

It remains always something deeper,
speaking of a deeper truth,
of the uncontainable mystery
that is present within, beyond.

The mystery of God himself
present and alive in you,
and dwelling also, lovingly, within me.
He gives us to one another
within the movement of his own gift.

I receive you most deeply
when I receive you as his.

And I can give myself totally
when I have first given myself to him.

For in this way our hearts let go
of the movement of possessiveness
which seeks to contain and control the gift,
always making it, therefore,
less than it really is.

Instead we open up, unceasingly,
to the dimensions of the gift—
yes, the gift which we are to one another,
but especially to the gift of the One
who is always being discovered,

begetting wonder anew each day.

This is the seed that we experience
in the partial and fragmentary
realities of this passing life.
A seed of eternity planted
in the soil of this earth,
carrying us, as we carry it,
towards the fullness that is yet to come.
Some day, indeed, I will know you,
and you also will know me,
in the fullness that we desire.
Yet we will know one another,
fully, within the embrace of God,
and we will know God within one another,
as his light and love penetrates everything,
causing it to radiate in purest light.
And this light, while casting out
all obscurity, all darkness and uncertainty,
also reveals to the full the depth of mystery
that is characteristic of the gift.
This awakens awesome gratitude
which will never even begin to run dry,
but flows unceasingly, forever,
in the joy of discovery,
yet in the security of abiding love,
in the bliss of intimate embrace
which knows no end.

II.

Yes, the essence of love itself
is empathy,
the ability to receive the other,
in "passion," in the pathos of deep feeling
which rejoices with those who rejoice
and weeps also with those who weep.
Yet even beyond the particular character
in which, in a given moment,
the other is received by me,
it is the other himself or herself whom I receive.
Yes, to welcome the presence of the beloved
into the most intimate place in me,
so that heart speaks to heart
and mystery is allowed to echo in mystery.

We were created in the image and likeness of God,
and perhaps here we glimpse this most deeply.

The ability of the heart to receive,
in vulnerability and spiritual nakedness,
the awesome reality that the other is,
and to dwell within the interior world
of the beloved,
cherishing, rejoicing, in reverence, love, and awe:
this is what our God does, for all eternity.
Yes, this is *who our God is*.

The Father accepts all that the Son is,
his infinitely beloved and precious Child,
and allows him to rest against his loving breast.
He receives in fullness, without the slightest lack,
the abundant mystery of the Son
with eyes of love which gaze fully into him,
and a Heart of tenderness,
receiving him, unreservedly.
The whole mystery of the beloved Son
is like a treasure, cherished ever
within the Father...
and the Father's immense joy and gladness
is that he has such a Son as this.

And the Son, for his part,
is pure acceptance of the Father's gift,
the gift which is the Father himself,
lovingly given,
and containing in this gift the Son himself as well.
He is a receptive heart and open hands
to receive what is unceasingly given
in the immense mystery of such a loving Father.
Pure joy and gladness, the bliss of intimacy,
Lover and Beloved resting in one another's arms.
Here there is no other consideration, no goal,
except the pure goodness, beauty, and truth
of this wondrous Love itself.

This Love, so full, rich, abundant,
is an unbreakable bond uniting Two,
allowing them not only to touch each other,
but, much more, to dwell within one another.
Perhaps we feel this at times,
wishing that we could embrace someone so tightly
that the two of us would "meld together as one,"
inseparable, yet distinct,
in the relationship of love.
The Father dwells wholly in the Son

who has received him into himself,
and the Son dwells in the Father
who rejoices to bear him there.
Gift given, gift received,
not an external gift or action,
but the gift which is one's very self.
And this mutual surrender is so full,
this embrace or kiss shared by Father and Son,
that it is another Person, the Spirit of Love,
the Bond uniting Two as One...as Three.

III.

Do we not long for this
more than for anything else?
Image crying out for likeness,
thirsting, unceasingly, for that
for which we were made, by him?
This heart, alone in solitude,
cries out for the love it yearns to receive,
and yearns, also, to give itself in love.
Man was not made to be alone,
but to allow solitude to be penetrated,
filled to overflowing with the presence of another.
Yet also to make this solitude a gift
to the one who is given to him.
For the unspeakable mystery of this heart
is indeed solitary, in that it is unique to me alone;
yet that does not mean that it is alone,
but rather mine alone to give,
mine alone to open to allow another in.

Blessed solitude of intimacy,
as lovers yearn to be alone in love.
Blessed silence of embrace,
in which familiarity is so deep
that words are no longer necessary.
This is your mystery, my God,
Father, Son, and Spirit,
in the burning furnace of your embrace.
And you have created us for this,
pouring out creation, abundant overflow
from the Ocean of Love, overflowing itself,
pouring forth into "another" loved by you: *us*.
Breathing out the breath of life,
you seek to penetrate all that we are,
inhaling then, in loving receptiveness,
and drawing us back into you.

Then we find ourselves, wonderfully,
caught up in the midst of this blessed intimacy,
the solitude of communion
and the silence of fullness,
in the very center of the embrace
shared by the Father and the Son,
vibrating with the flowing Breath
that penetrates all we are, the Spirit of Love,
in endless, radiant joy.

ישוע

WILDERNESS

I.

A word of profound meaning
is born from the womb of silence.
A word of unbreakable joy
is begotten in the heart through pain.
For silence and pain root the heart more deeply
in childlike trust and simple love,
in the filial dependency
which establishes the soul
like a tree planted by the water,
stretching out its roots to the stream.
This living water flows, my Father,
from your own loving, compassionate Heart.

Christ your Son goes out into the wilderness,
and there, in vulnerability before you,
in the perfect security of divine love,
dethrones the powers of darkness.
In the way of lowliness and humility,
the way of those who hunger and thirst,
of those who walk the ordinary way,
of those who are small and unknown,
he is victorious over the tempter's wiles
and emerges from the desert
with the spoils of combat.

The unclean spirits fall down before him,
crying out in defeat.
With a single word he casts them out
and they flee at his command.
Afflicted and illness-laden humanity
comes falling upon him, only to touch him
and thus to be healed.

A single touch,
faith's hand reaching out
for the healing presence of God,
and the burdens are removed.
Yet this is a sign of a deeper healing,
coming about through the hand of God
touching faith's presence within the heart.

Nonetheless, there is something even deeper
that occurs here in the wilderness.
Jesus goes out into the desert solitude,
not so much as a warrior, a fighter,
but as a beloved Child, as One in love.
Who can express the inexpressible intimacy
that exists between the two of you, Father,
in that blessed breath of the Spirit of your Love?
There is a fire here, hidden but sure:
the desert is ablaze!
Not only with the heat of burning sands
and the blowing of the desert winds,
but with the breathing of Love's true breath
and the burning furnace of Eternal Love.

The Son of God, beloved Child,
steps out of the desert, frail and exhausted,
yet filled with the strength and joy of love,
and is a Flame burning in the midst of all.
For in the desert he reposed, Father,
unceasingly against your breast,
and he still does so, enduring,
when he walks in the midst of crowds.

Yes, as an infant in his mother's womb,
as a little child growing in their home,
as a man working in the carpenter's shop,
he always was, and is, your beloved Son.
From the first moment of his consciousness,
Father, he knows and rejoices, unceasingly,
in this gift that you give, in this Gift who he is,
enfolded forever, eternally, within your loving arms.

And now he steps out anew, in an open way,
into our midst, bearing in himself this mystery.
Bursting at the seams, this Love within,
the intimacy which is his with you, Father,
flashes out through those loving eyes,
touches us in that gentle touch,

speaks through those tender words,
reaches out, indeed, and touches the heart.

II.

The call echoes still, Father, today,
to go with Christ into the wilderness,
there to hear, as he did, your word anew:
“You are my beloved child
in whom my soul delights.”
In the strength and joy of childhood,
in the unbreakable surety of that perfect love
ever poured out into us by you,
there is pure and perfect victory.
There is the freedom and lightness of heart
to embrace and do all things,
radiant in the light
that is the truly enduring reality,
conquering and transforming all within itself.

Even the darkness is enfolded within it,
embraced in the compassionate arms of Love,
penetrated through and through, disarmed,
by the flashing of light from the Heart of Christ.
This light flashes, Father, through him, from you.
And it embraces us, children in the Son,
and draws us, through him and in him, to you,
where we rest, eternally,
against your tender breast.

Already now, pressed up against his loving breast
—in that lowly flesh that is his,
in the Body and Blood veiled by bread and wine,
in the mysterious desert within our heart—
we are pressed up against your own Heart, Father.
Can we feel it? Can we know?
The Heartbeat of Love pulsates
right up next to our own;
yes, it surges deep within us,
alive and aflame with joy and gladness.

Hush, my soul, and listen!
Ah, the crowds are surging, looking for something
here and there and everywhere.
But the word of love is not heard here.
Only in silence do we begin to hear.
Solitude itself opens us to encounter,
becoming itself a space of intimacy...

as the desert was the place of communion
between you and him, Father and Son,
and also between the beloved bride,
through him, drawn to you.

III.

Only if I have known the silence
do I have a word to speak to them.
Only if I have experienced solitude
can my presence fully convey yours
in the midst of this world's fragmentation.
Yes, gathered into unity from superficiality,
drawn into the depths of the heart,
into the solitude of love, the silence of espousal.
Then flowing out from this place,
without departing from it,
to communicate, in fullness of love,
the mystery which has been given here, within.

A mystery profound:
to dwell both within and without.
There is fighting, especially at first,
to break away from the grasping hands
which would tie me down,
the world, the flesh, the devil,
—not from the hands of my suffering brethren,
thirsting so much for you, unceasingly—
but from the hands of pride and vanity,
of excessive speech, indulgence, the periphery,
from the broken multiplicity of this exiled world
and the brokenness in me that militates
against my deepest heart, within.
Yet to enter in and here to dwell,
is not to reject or to forsake,
but to expand, mysteriously,
to embrace all...within the Heart of Christ.

Vigilance, my God, at all times,
this is a beautiful gift and invitation,
but not in the fear that tenses the muscles,
in the self-preoccupation
which turns back, unsure.
It is simply like the loving attentiveness
with which one sits by the bedside
of a suffering loved one,
allowing nothing to pull away or to distract.
It is the movement of love

which fixes the mind, constantly,
on the One who is beloved and precious,
the One who, touching the heart, possesses it.
It is the silent awe which wants no more to speak,
but to shelter, reverence, and embrace within.
It is the wondrous tenderness of receptivity
that accepts what is given, gratuitous gift,
and abides here, in solitude,
with the one who dwells within.

Here I glimpse still another truth,
one even deeper than the flowing out
of the word which, in silence, is received,
and than the outward movement of giving
begotten in the mysterious solitude.
It is the pure *abiding* of love,
drinking, unceasingly, at Love's source.
And this occurs already now,
under the veil of flesh and faith,
and will blossom fully at the end
when Love's surging carries us back
to the very wellspring from which we have come.
Here we shall abide, always,
in the ineffable silence of the fullest Word,
in the wondrous communion of perfect embrace,
enfolding and penetrating every solitude
with the presence of Lover and beloved, one,
within the embrace of Father, Spirit, and Son.

ישוע

THE HEART OF GOD

I.
Beating unceasingly,
sending blood throughout the veins,
and drawing it back again
in ceaseless movement,
ceaseless life, ceaseless love.
Life is Love, Love is Life, my God.
You are the only true Life,
present in all that has life,
and your Life is Love alone,
the Love whom you are.
An immense and blazing Furnace
is your own eternal Heart.

What we understand, often, as greatness
is not what your true greatness is.
It is not so much your power,
your authority, as we understand such things.
It is the greatness of eternal Love
in perfect capacity to receive and to give,
into fathomless depth and,
such depth, overflowing.
This is power and authority,
this is grace, mercy, and goodness.
Like two endless Oceans
flowing eternally into one another,
and one another, receiving,
bound together, perfectly,
in this very act of Gift.
Father, Son, and Spirit,
what ecstasy, what beauty, what joy!
Ah, the day when we will know you,
when we will be immersed in such an Ocean
of endless, perfect life, love, and joy!

But now, loving Love, my God,
you hide such an Ocean,
such a burning Furnace,
in the hiddenness of our world.
The Heart of Love himself
becomes present in an infant
born of a humble virgin.
Those baby's eyes look out,
the very eyes of God.
Those toddler's hands grasp,
the Creator rejoicing in his creation.
Those arms work, exhausted,
with wood, hammer, and saw,
the infinite power of God.
That Heart thirsts, weary and longing,
as he sits down beside a well
asking for a drink,
the Wellspring of God's Heart
thirsting to be drunk.

Infinite Love, infinite delicacy,
the tenderness which embraces,
sheltering and consoling,
rejoicing in the closeness
which love always desires.
And also at the same moment,

rejoicing simply that the beloved is,
that they are “another,”
gazing and exhaling life
so that they may be,
simply, “very good.”

II.

As the human heart is like a womb,
so too is the Heart of your Son, my God.
In him we begin to realize
that his sonship and his spousehood
bear the marks of this mothering,
or, rather, that motherhood
is a manifestation of the womb-like
mystery of the Son,
breathing forth, eternally,
and eternally sheltering,
the Spirit of communion and embrace.

The receptivity of the Son
before you, eternal Father,
allows him to receive and to foster
the fullness of divine mystery within,
and his Bridegroom-Heart turns out,
in the Spirit who binds you together, within,
to give his Heart's fullness
to all of those whom you have made.
And this overflowing fullness
manifests the abundance of paternal love
which is yours, Father, forever,
and also radiates with the maternal tenderness
which also belongs, fully, to you.

We long for the embrace of father and mother,
and we find it in human parents,
reflecting the beauty that you are.
But this, of course, is an image,
though in itself fully real and true,
sharing in the mystery that is yours.
You possess in your bosom, Father,
the fullest perfection
of fatherhood and motherhood,
and this lives in your Spirit and your Son,
descending in goodness
to enfold us in their embrace,
like a mother hen her brood under her wings,
and to draw us to rest against your breast.

The Son's sonship is his receptivity,
but it is also his gift, free and total,
springing from the gift received.
It is also, and it enfolds, his spousehood,
as Lover, eternally beloved,
pouring himself out, and receiving,
as you have always done for him.
And this mystery of love, alive forever,
in every moment of his life,
is pure and loving transparency
to your paternal light.

What beauty...
here the three are one,
child, spouse, and father,
refractions of the single light
of your undivided embrace,
Father before the Son, surrendered,
and Son before the Father, in the Spirit
who binds you both together,
not only One before Another,
but all Three living within one another,
sheltered, in the bliss of mutual abiding,
no distance left between,
except the distinction that is necessary
for Lovers to embrace in fullness,
living with and in one another,
radiant with holy gladness
and eternal celebration.

ישוע

AGAIN A LITTLE CHILD

Born a little child,
held gently in the arms of a mother,
I return into your arms, Father,
like a little child again.

Pure gift enfolded me
from the very first of my days,
the gratuitous gift of existence,
the gift of love, warmth, and care,
the gift of Love, indeed, within everything.

In life I have walked
on these two mature, independent legs,

going where I would,
walking, walking towards something.
Yet I have learned, at last, as well,
that, as large as I may think I am,
I remain nothing but a little child,
enfolded in the arms of God.

And when I come to the end
and find my strength faltering,
weakness enfolds me again.
Unable to walk, barely able to lift my arms,
I am completely dependent on pure gift,
the gratuitous gift of love and care,
yet surrender, trustingly,
through all that is happening,
to the Love who approaches me, here.

What a blessed life, and blessed death,
if eyes are open to receive and to give.
But indeed, you are the Giver of all
and you receive all back again, my God.
Is there not hope for those, too, who
during their life we too “mature” to see?
When they come again
to this place of blessed dependency,
you offer them again
the gift of being born a child.
Do not let them, Father,
slip from your loving hands!

During life we walk either
in obedience or in disobedience,
seeking and doing so many things.
But at the threshold of death
the veil of doing is stretched thin
and we see that *being* is the abiding truth.
Now we stand before you with nothing
but our ability to be in your presence,
enfolded in the arms of your eternal Love.

This is a Love offered as mercy
to the repenting heart,
or as a long-time friend to the heart
which has welcomed mercy for so long a time.
Gift, gift, again, nothing but pure, gratuitous gift,
flowing from your bosom, Father,
and returning there again.

Take us, take us to yourself, my God,
and never, never let us go.

II.

In my youth began to blossom
a deep thirst for communion,
something implanted in me from the beginning,
alive through your image in me, yet also
through the love of father and mother,
fostered and growing day by day.

There is fragmentation and brokenness,
it is true, in this movement of desire,
for the purity of the beginning has been lost,
and is difficult to recover.

But the movement of love
that awakens in the heart
is nonetheless a true awakening
to a mystery that you yourself have given.

In the beauty of the other gender
a truth of your own divine beauty is glimpsed,
and it beckons us to trace our way back
to the Source.

To learn this, even after many prolonged years,
is a profound gift of grace:
to see within the beauty the Beauty of God,
and to see beyond the image the Reality,
who enfold the image in yourself, sheltering,
and thus giving to me the ability,
also, to reverence
the mystery of the other, not as “mine,”
but as yours, God of love, eternal Bridegroom.

And yet this movement of encounter,
especially when enfolded in prayer
and the longing for you, my God
—or giving birth to such things—
causes the heart to expand and blossom.
In every moment of the day
the loving heart begins to taste
a blessed romance, planted within,
the relationship of love between you and I,
between you, dear God, and every one.

And my every word and act,
every desire and hope,

becomes an expression, mysteriously,
of nuptial love.
In my prayer and work,
in my efforts to bring beauty
into this fractured and obscure world,
I share in the movement of Christ,
who is knitting together creation's fabric
in a holy espousal, unceasingly.

Yet I come, at last, to the end of my life,
and I find these efforts now impossible.
I can do nothing but lie in this bed,
embracing this pain, and looking beyond,
to the love that is within, deeper,
and that beckons always, mysteriously.
The nuptial mystery engraved in my heart,
the bond-weaving quality of gift and acceptance,
manifested in so many radiant ways,
is now channeled into another,
perhaps the most mysterious, expression.

In this weak and suffering body
I bear in myself the marks of Christ's gift.
As, before, I held in my hands tools of the craft,
as I embraced others in youthful joy and hope,
as I walked and prayed in the rain,
as I sat under the moonlight,
bursting with the fullness of the Love,
alive, embracing both her and I...
so now I find this fullness alive in this pain.

We spent our time together
over so many months,
and months turned into years,
and then we chose, together,
to remain united for the rest of life.
Then we knew, by your gift,
the gift of love harnessing the body,
yet elevating it, because directed to you,
this gift that you yourself
imprinted on our flesh.
I can never be grateful enough
that I knew what this meant,
this gift, before it was ever received.
And the gift, pure and gratuitous,
undeserved even if hoped-for,
the beauty of children born of our union,

sons and daughters, loved by us,
but even more, Father, by you.

III.

Christ your Son bore this mystery too;
indeed, it was he who opened the way
for us to see it unveiled in its fullness,
the fullness alive in the world you have made
yet blossoming beyond into your eternal embrace.
The fullness of vigor and abundant life,
the childlike acceptance of your gift, blossoms,
profoundly, in the Bridegroom's love,
in preaching and healing, yes, in so many
radiant ways of loving through his human life.
In his every thought, act, and word,
he is your Image, Father,
transparent to your eternal Light
and enclosed within your tender arms:
he is Child, Spouse, and Icon of your Paternity.
And this beauty of sonship,
of nuptial love, and of radiant fecundity,
as it is express in so many ways in life,
gives way at last to the Holy Eucharist,
like wheat gathered from the hillsides
and in a single movement, given.

Body broken and Blood outpoured,
in the Eucharistic gift and upon the Cross,
nuptiality blossoming in the deepest of gifts.
Here is the deepest espousal
the world has ever know,
the knitting-together of God and every one,
pierced by the Love that passed through the Heart
of the Crucified One, and bursting forth,
abundantly, in his Resurrection,
as the cord is pulled taut,
bringing us together in unity,
forever unbreakable.

And the birthing of life is contained,
wholly, within this espousal,
for the begetting of children
occurs precisely within this gift,
flowing from and returning
to the Heart of Jesus, given,
and open wholly to receive.
Yes, Jesus is the perfect Child,

the true and eternal Bridegroom,
and the Image of your Fatherhood...
what a blessed truth this is.

And above all he is Son,
before he turns out to espouse us
and to draw us into your life,
before he radiates your love into the world,
he is simply the beloved Son, abiding,
in intimate embrace,
against your loving, tender breast.
Indeed, this he remains in and through all things,
unbroken and unbreakable,
loved by you and given, completely,
into these arms that love and hold him so.

And now in my suffering, Father,
I find this mystery alive also in me.
As I approach the gates of death,
the result of our fault in original sin,
but, more, a boundary that has been opened
by the gift of eternal Love,
I find myself again a little, dependent child,
and in this sonship I am a spouse too,
and through this gift of my flesh,
poured out to the last,
I find your life and love begotten into the world.
This life, this blessed and holy love
flows out, immense and beautiful,
and encloses us all within itself,
sweeping us up and drawing us, at last,
back into the deepest truth of childhood,
resting, in your Son, against your loving breast.

ישוע

ALL IS GIFT

I.
The realm of the heart, deep within,
mysterious and full,
is something that cannot be grasped
and expressed in words;
but it is simply the inmost place
where I dwell,
it is I myself, in my deepest mystery.
Yet how alienated I am from this place,

living in a place so far from me.
This alienation, however, has a deeper root:
estrangement from the fatherhood of God,
from the place where I am his child...
for this, indeed, is who I am.
Estranged from him,
I am also fractured from myself,
and also so far isolated from them,
my brothers and sisters.

One thinks, perhaps, that I would be
at home, therefore, in my body,
since this seems to lie further from the heart,
a kind of shell sheltering it within.
But this, also, is not true,
for the heart is also the deepest truth
of the body itself, and gives it meaning.
It would be more accurate to say that,
in these peripheral dwellings where I am,
I am not living fully in the body,
but am trapped and enslaved
in the brokenness of its movements,
torn asunder and cast far and wide in sin.

The heart is not pure spirit,
in the sense that I draw closer to it
by withdrawing from the flesh.
Rather, it is both spirit and flesh,
mystery incarnate in bodiliness
and body transfigured in union with spirit,
two things in one inseparable reality:
in I myself, this mystery that I am.

II.

To step away, for even a moment,
from the flurry of multiplicity
which submerges me every day,
is to allow the heart again to surface.
Or perhaps, indeed, it takes a while
for the crashing waves of thought
and the suffocating anxiety to subside,
so my heartbeat may again be heard.

The human person was created
—I feel it in those privileged moments
when I glimpse something deeper—
for a mystery that cannot be expressed in words,

for a mystery deeper than external activity,
for a mystery known in the depths of silence,
in the all-enveloping embrace of wonder and awe.
Thirst...thirst...alive deep within!
My heart is not a reality enclosed within itself,
but one stretching out, yearning so ardently,
for the presence, the embrace
of another, all-loving Heart!

To face my innate solitude, therefore, my God,
is to begin to learn to pray.
And to pray is to open myself
to hear and heed this invitation.
How deeply you yearn, Father,
to love us here in this lonely place,
or, rather, for us to accept your love,
penetrating and transforming our loneliness.
And then, encountering you,
we descend into our deepest truth,
the truth of being a precious, beloved child.
Love, flowing so powerfully into this heart,
then spontaneously overflows, expanding out
to love, cherish, and embrace other hearts too.

Ah, every person—those whom I see,
those whom I bump shoulders with every day,
and those whom I have never met before—
every one is a precious child of yours,
bearing this immense mystery of ravishing beauty
deep within their heart.
And it flashes out, for one who has eyes to see,
even through the body, radiant in mystery.

III.

Jesus, my God, incarnate in the flesh,
your Heart burned, unceasingly,
while you were in this world,
like a torch of Love within your breast.
And it burns still, to this very day.
You speak to the crowds in parables,
but in secret you explain it to your disciples.
What is this? Do you hide the truth?
Is it only accessible to some “elite”?
No, this is not the case.
Rather, the Heart’s Mystery
can only be unveiled...to friends.
You can speak about your Father

for hours on end, hinting at his love
and trying to explain his paternal Heart,
but you must use the language of our time
and the faltering words that we have made.
Yet to simply be in the presence of the Beloved
speaks something so much more.

As if I were to explain to another
the love I have for a certain one,
and what it is, in them, that awakens my love.
No matter how much I said
I would never adequately express
the simple beauty that presence gives,
when I sit in the presence of this person,
drinking in, receptive and silence,
what I encounter and feel in them.
When we spend a long time with you, Lord,
drinking in your words, your gestures, your acts,
we begin to sense something deeper still,
not discarding the former, but expanding it,
unlocking a world of radiant beauty within.
Alive in everything you do and are, my Jesus,
is the immense mystery of the Father's Heart,
the mystery of the intimacy you share with him
in the blissful embrace of the Spirit of Love.

It makes me think, in reverent awe,
of what must have occurred
in that blessed, mysterious solitude
to which you retreated in the early morning,
or in which you remained the entire night.
This solitary mystery was present,
not at some times alone, but always,
burning as a flame within your Heart.
And when you withdrew to prayer,
alone in the presence of the Beloved
whose love for you we cannot conceive,
you were doing nothing but what you always do,
yet bearing us up, in your flesh and soul,
into the breath passing between him and you.

Yes, I would stop here, and say no more,
in order to simply cherish this in my heart...
but I yearn to communicate it to them,
to those who thirst for more than they know,
for the love they taste, but not enough!
Words fail in the face of your mystery,

the mystery of Father, Son, and Spirit...
For here all is gift, and Gift alone,
in purest Love and abiding Communion,
with no other end outside of this itself:
the Joy of Intimacy and the Gladness of Embrace.

For this, too, we have been made.
In this, alone, will we finally be at rest.

ישוע

TRANSFIGURATION

I.
This weak and lowly body,
often worn out at the end of the day,
upset by the changes in the weather,
this unwieldy companion in my tasks and burdens
—and more than a companion, part of me myself--
this same body is a bearer of the divine glory.
What is the meaning of this amazing mystery?
Ah...what is indeed more mysterious,
the light radiating out from transfigured flesh
or the beauty of love given in lowliness?
Is this not an attribute of God,
to be present, intimately, within the least,
yet to enfold everything that there is with ease?
For you, my God, the two are indeed one.

Eyes of contemplation, gazing,
begin after a while to see things anew.
There are “peak” moments of life,
when happiness flows with greater ease,
when the world almost radiates with light;
and there are “valley” times when shadows fall,
and the path is heavy and burdensome.
Why is this, my God, when you are
within everything, always at work?
The face of the world is fragmented,
the beauty of each moment, obscured,
and sometimes we need darkness
in order to dilate our eyes to see.
Yet we need light poured out anew, strongly,
to allow us to discern the truth in the darkness.
But I have learned there is still more than this.
There is a deeper truth within.

We were created, not for darkness,
but for the light alone,
yet our broken hearts can often cling
to fading lights, light neon signs,
or the notifications popping up on the screen.
As a little child, nursing at the breast,
reaches the time also to be weaned,
not to depend less on his mother,
but to receive her love in another, deeper way,
so it is with us my God, before you.
The world once radiated with pure light,
transparent to your love and to your gift,
and drew our hearts, immediately, back to you,
yet now, after the sin of our first parents,
we can love and seek earthly things
as if they were something good apart from you.
Does this mean that our whole life must be
a journey rocking back and forth
between consolation and desolation,
between an extreme of joy and one of pain?
No, I do not believe that this is so,
for our hearts thirst, unceasingly, for purer light,
and they thirst all the more strongly
the more we taste your majesty touching us.

Darkness prepares us for the light,
as the nocturnal vigil prepares for morning rays
and the Passion's night gives birth to Easter joy.
As we walk, in faith and hope, through the night,
clinging to your hand in loving trust,
we begin to find the darkness lightening,
not because the sun has yet risen,
but because your Light shines within this night.
The truth of childhood grows within the heart
and the obscurity of sin and blindness fades away.
In this sense, yes, the night does indeed pass,
as the human heart is transfigured
by your risen glory.
Yet such a radiant, unbreakable joy is alive,
right here, deep in this frail body and lowly mind.
It is such a treasure, like a surging ocean,
concealed in a little jar of clay,
and yet it renews this little vessel from within,
showing that it is indeed greater than I thought.

In every instant and every circumstance
I abide before you, Father,

yes, held always within your embrace,
with open, empty, upraised hands,
like a little, weaned child in his mother's arms.
If I remain in this state, relaxed in simple trust,
allowing you to hold, protect, nourish, guide,
even the darkness bears in itself a kind of light.
For a mother cares for her child
even when he awakes her from sleep,
afraid, in the middle of the night.
Perhaps, indeed, she cares
even more deeply at such a time.
So it is with you, infinitely more,
Lord of the day and Lord of night,
yet the God of eternal, nightless Day.
You take us in your arms,
teaching us by your gentle care
the trusting surrender that we ourselves
cannot bring about on our own,
and you carry us, unceasingly,
from the night, lit only with moon and stars,
into the eternal Day of pure and undying Light.

II.

Jesus, God incarnate in our lowly world,
of you above all it is true
that an Ocean surges in the littleness
of your tiny human heart.
An Ocean which is also a Furnace,
burning with the warming fire of tender care
and radiating with the light of eternal love.
Yet you walk among us, as if veiled,
present in such a lowly earthen vessel.
Yet this body is now, forever, your very own...
this body that is exhausted at the end of day,
yet rising in the early morning to pray;
this body, walking the roads of our world
in search of our salvation and our joy;
this body, which through a single touch
mediates the awesome, healing power of God.

How could you be closer to us
than you have become,
than you are even now?
This is the trait of love, is it not?
To yearn to be as close to the beloved
as it is possible to be,
right up next to us, abiding,

yes, deep within the heart, dwelling.
Not only is this closeness physical,
but it is also a spiritual truth, amazing,
yet often so hard for us to trust.
Those whose hearts refused your light
when you walked on this earth, Jesus,
were those who insisted that God was far away;
yet those who welcomed you were those,
the littlest ones, who allowed faith to be born,
opening themselves to the amazing closeness
of your redeeming grace, of you yourself,
and, in you, of the infinite and eternal Father.

Ah, God is so much humbler than we thought,
and he is infinitely more gentle,
tender, and loving.

This is the most awesome, amazing greatness,
that there is a Love so pure, so gratuitous,
so full of mercy and goodness and joy.

When you reach the final stage
of your earthly journey, Jesus,
before you begin to walk towards the Cross,
you take with you a chosen band
and ascend a mountain.

There you are transfigured before their eyes,
radiant with the light for which we thirst,
shining with the ineffable beauty of God.
Yet is not the light beheld by the eyes
a secondary light, pouring forth from the first?
In you, my God, there is really only one light:
Love.

Therefore, what these disciples see
is the same thing that we see, Jesus,
when we gaze upon the crucifix.
Love, giving itself for us, completely.
Love, taking us up into your embrace.
Love, abiding against the Father's breast.
Love, in the unbreakable bond of intimacy.
In joy and in sorrow, my God,
the truth is one and the same...
and this is the true, unchanging light.

The trusting acceptance of a beloved child,
and your surrender back into your Father's arms...
In every moment this is the truth you lived,
irradiating every reality of our world,

and thus enfolding it in the heart
of the eternal exchange, in amazing joy,
shared by you and the Father in the Spirit of Love.

ישוע

THREEFOLD MYSTERY

I.

The human heart yearns, my God,
for greatness and nobility.
The word “heroism” strikes a cord,
deep within us, our heart-strings, vibrating.
We feel within us a yearning for integrity,
and a responsibility, responding
to the gift of love given every day.
And this sense only increases and expands
as the gift is received more deeply.

But we can also be numb, in sin,
to such integrity, disintegrated,
to such responsibility, unresponsive,
as we close our eyes and hands to the gift.
Then a sense of shame and guilt remains,
and a gnawing emptiness within,
perhaps buried over, ignored,
but never extinguished entirely.
We feel that we have turned away
from the covenanted relationship,
and hurt the heart of the One
who so deeply loves us
and calls us to himself.

But the Wellspring of Gift, ever flowing,
carries in itself every invitation,
every call and command and task.
These themselves, it becomes clear,
are only further expressions of the gift,
and gifts given by One who loves.
Yet they are not the primary or ultimate gift,
for this place belongs to pure love alone,
to the intimate, gratuitous abiding embrace
between Lover and beloved, Father and child,
in a joyful and blessed communion
with no end outside of itself.

II.

What a difference this makes, my God,
to the way we approach life every day.
No longer is it so much a matter
of striving forward to become,
some day, what we are not.
Rather, it is a matter of receiving,
in gratitude and filial trust,
and of surrendering back in response,
the gift borne in every instant, every thing.

A young woman who feels unloved,
unworthy, does not find herself
pressed on to greater, freer action
by this feverish need within her.
Rather, she finds herself numbed,
paralyzed by the emptiness she feels.
She may grope about, seeking for something,
or simply move, feverishly, to escape.
Her heart-strings are trying to create,
from within themselves, a song,
but her fingers cannot pluck them
in such a way to make them vibrate thus.

But the moment she realizes that
she is held and cherished, deep within
the heart of another person,
that she is deeply and unconditionally beloved,
her hearts expands, spontaneously,
echoing by the touch of love, without.
Now she begins to think:
I want to truly be, in every day,
the beauty that he sees in me.
He sees something, and it must not,
no, it cannot be a lie.

Something noble and beautiful
begins to awaken, gently, in her soul,
and her body too begins to show,
not its insurmountable inadequacy,
but a unique beauty that is hers alone.
She descends more deeply into her self,
and thus she is raised up more freely
to what she yearns to be—what she truly is!

She is integrated by the gift of love,
from without, given,
and thus drawn from without

deeper within, in integrity and love.
The heart's yearning, bubbling up,
restless and agitated, from within,
returns to peaceful self-acceptance,
like a tranquil lake reflecting the moon,
in response to the light shining
from the eyes of the one who loves her.

Now she yearns, indeed,
not in feverish insufficiency,
but in a joyful sense of being deeply gifted,
an awareness of being connected, united,
by the mysterious bonds of love, to all...
to allow the call of love to draw her,
and to cause her to blossom more deeply,
every day, in beauty, goodness, and love.

And this deep yearning itself springs,
not only from her inmost thirst,
implanted in her from the beginning,
but from the gift of love offered
anew to her each day,
and enveloping her entirely in itself.
It is in being that she at last becomes.

III.

In this blessed love she discovers
that, as a beloved daughter,
she is also a precious spouse.
The two go hand in hand,
the one contained within the other.
Loved freely by a Father's gaze,
she can also let herself be loved
by a Bridegroom's Heart.
And when she is loved in this way,
in deepest nuptial embrace,
she finds herself returning,
more deeply, to daughterhood as well.

The bond created by gratuitous gift,
by the love flowing from the Father's bosom,
makes possible her reciprocal gift,
the giving of all she is and has,
to be taken up within the Father's gift
and to dwell within her own unique beauty,
a reality that delights, always,
his tender, loving eyes.

Enfolded as bride within the Bridegroom's arms
—in the arms of the Son of God,
who is her Brother too—
she is drawn also, as daughter,
to abide yet more deeply,
in this Bridegroom-Son,
against the Father's breast.
She is united, in this way, as daughter,
in the unbreakable bond of reciprocal gift,
and in mutual indwelling, Lover and beloved,
together, living in each other a single life.
Each moment and each day,
what is given by him is received,
and what is returned by her, welcomed.

And above all particular things
the gift which the two exchange
is nothing but they themselves...
inseparably united in this love alive in them,
this love that they both receive from the Father,
and from the Father give to one another, unreservedly.

There is no greater joy than this,
the fulfillment of her every hope and desire,
the quenching of her every thirst,
yet ever deepened, in this life,
to drink yet more deeply and fully
from the Wellspring of this Love.

IV.

And such fullness, given to her freely,
enveloping her and drawing her anew every day,
also begets within her heart and life,
a mystery that expands for others too.
In the womb of her loving faith
she bears and nurtures the gift of life,
the image of the Son of God incarnate.

Yet turning out to the world,
she gazes on it with the Father's eyes,
with the eyes that have first gazed on her.
And so is able to welcome into herself
the beauty and gift of others too,
bearing them, in the womb of her love,
before her God in prayer's pangs of birth.

As daughter and as spouse, therefore,
she finds herself becoming mother too.
Transparent to God's expanding, overflowing gift,
her heart is a place where this gift,
nurtured, cherished, loved in every one,
is able to trace its way back to the Source.

Indeed, in her very motherhood,
the spousal love of God and childlike peace
enfold everything and shelter it,
within the arms of God which embrace the world.

ישוע

REPOSE

My heavenly Father, my God,
you have called me from my youth,
gently touching my heart, yet powerfully,
and drawing me towards yourself.
Restless is the heart
which knows that it can rest in you alone.
Yet I have also found, mysteriously,
that there is a blessed repose present now,
in the midst of this pilgrim journey.
But this rest itself was born
from the ceaseless thirst with which I burned,
from the wandering journey in the night,
in the solitude and loneliness of the desert,
led by the pillar of fire and the cloud of presence.

A rest born within thirst...
yet perhaps this is not accurate,
for from your perspective
it is a thirst born from perfect repose.
As your Son rests, eternally,
against your loving breast,
and you in turn repose, gazing joyfully,
upon him in whom you delight,
so this abundant and perfect love overflows
in the Spirit of you both,
in consummate consummation,
in the embrace of Three in One.
Yet not only this,
but in utterly free gratuity
the floodgates of Godhead overflow
in the creation of this world,

in the children who are made for you,
a Bride for your well-beloved Son.

In our hearts is a nostalgia
for the place from which we have come,
and an often painful, anguished thirst
for the state from which we have fallen
and have never fully known.
But it is present as a seed,
a promise deep inside of us,
beckoning us to you.
We yearn, my Father, to repose,
in Christ your beloved Son
in whom we are children too,
upon your tender and loving breast.
Yet how do you respond to this thirst
that you have yourself placed within us?
When we turn from you in sin
you seek us out, unceasingly,
thirsting for us ardently,
more than we ourselves thirst for you.

You rescue us from slavery,
drawing us through the waters of rebirth
and into the desert of transformation,
there upon the mountain of covenant
to espouse us to yourself.
Yet this is only an image of greater things,
the coming of Christ as man,
passing into and through the wilderness
of this broken yet beautiful world.
He thirsts for us as your presence,
and thirsts for you, bearing us within his Heart.
But indeed he reposes, within this fragile world,
against the heart of a loving mother.
He rests, yes, against your eternal Heart,
under the starry night sky, praying.
Exhausted from the toil of the day
he falls asleep within the boat,
resting, secure within the greatest storms.
How can he be restless
when he is the Child of such a Father?

He takes us up into this thirst...
and even more into this repose.
There we rest against his Heart,
feeling in his the beating of your own.

As he gives his Flesh and Blood to us
his heartbeat surges forth from his into ours,
the life of the Vine through the branches,
the Heart's life through the veins, entirely.
Yet we are not only branches of the Vine
and members of the Body,
but a beloved, ravishing the Heart of such a Lover.
Each of us, unique, precious,
wounding that Heart so tender
with thirst to unite himself to us,
to bring to perfection, finally,
the repose that he came to share.

ישוע

ROMANCE

You have touched, my God,
and you have drawn,
in a way deeper than any lover can.
There is no romance in this world
greater than that between you
and the human heart.
Yet every romance within this world
finds its meaning and security within you.
In your embrace you shelter every one,
and when two come together in your love,
even if they do not recognize you, you are present.
Yet how much you desire
that this union of one and another
will blossom upward,
like a flower toward the sun,
reaching out toward you, the Source and the End,
the perfect Lover and Beloved One
in whom every heart will at last be at rest.

What a romance has my life been, dear God,
a flash of light in the beginning,
profound and full of joy,
and then obscure and faltering for a long time,
yet reborn from the ashes, nothing destroyed,
but all renewed as on the first of days,
flowing from your hands.
Into the solitude you drew me,
even while in the midst of this world.
I wanted to step away from everything
to find myself alone with you, my God,

to taste the blessedness of intimacy
that occurs between two alone;
yet I wanted to reach out from here, also,
to embrace the world within your arms.
And as the solitude deepened it opened out,
at first through pain but then through joy,
to love in the two together, as one: empathy.
What became for a time a narrowing
of the struggling and burdened human heart,
a solitude of isolation and loneliness,
became through your grace and mercy
the blossoming of the heart in love.

I found myself descending,
and being thus raised up,
into the simplicity of a child, loved by you.
The true exaltation of humility
which is great precisely in its littleness,
a son of the eternal and infinite One.
A son within the Son who comes from you,
who is so humble as to conceal himself
under the appearance of bread and wine,
to rest in the arms of a young maiden,
to sit exhausted by a well, asking for a drink,
the drink of our frail love.
Small and needy, dependent as a little child,
an infant, resting secure in loving arms:
this is my sure and certain joy.

And still you beckon me today:
both within, to you, and outward,
to those you love.
The intimacy of solitude still calls me deeper,
for I know that there you await,
afame with a Love unceasingly burning,
able to give so much more, unquenched.
Yet the world also calls me, yearning unceasingly,
thirsting for the love you have.
And I have found, and will find more deeply,
that the two movements are indeed united.
For all things, in the end, are intimacy,
the love for which we were made by you.
In aloneness and togetherness, both,
in the solitude of communion
and the communion in ineffable love.
Mystery echoing into mystery, abyss into abyss,
the mystery of their hearts echoing into mine

and the mystery of mine echoing into theirs,
as our hearts, all together,
are enclosed within your own.

ישוע

MATERNAL PRAYER

I.

As a mother carries a child within her womb,
resting, beloved, just beneath her heart,
so too, in love, I carry, dear God,
my brothers and sisters here within my soul.
The woman feels within herself
the child's slightest movements.
This presence alive within her
irradiates her being with joy.
Yet she also knows that this child
causes her suffering by its neediness,
for it drinks unceasingly from her being
for its very life.
Yet she can hardly call this "suffering,"
for it is penetrated through and through by love.
Someone is not a burden
when they are so clearly a gift.

In the heart of one loving and interceding
the sap of life also is drained,
yet never depleted,
for love begets love, unceasingly.
To let one's every moment
be eaten up by them and by their need
is only to find oneself enriched.
For how could giving, really,
ever be a loss?
It is only the flowing out
of Love, through love, to love,
and the flowing back of all,
through love, into the Love you are.

To bear the world within the heart, dear God,
listening unceasingly for its heartbeat,
pressed up here close against my own.
To rejoice in this heartbeat, lovingly,
even when it is one of pain and longing.
For to bear another's burdens
is always a mystery of joy.

This is because it is intimacy,
the truth of unity which we seek,
and also because, in all truth,
it is not we who carry any burden,
but you, my God, who carry us,
like a mother bearing her child in her womb.

II.

When a woman gazes lovingly
upon her newborn child,
filled with awe and spontaneous love,
delighting in the one within her arms,
she is praying, even if she does not know.
In gratitude at the gracious gift,
in wonder before the mystery,
the heart immediately reaches out to you,
expanding.

It opens like a flower to the morning sun,
its petals wet with gentle dew
glistening in the light.

This mystery of joy, amazing,
was born from those birth-pangs,
another mystery, full of awe and pain,
yet also of mysterious joy, unexplainable.
The whole being is harnessed
in giving birth to something beautiful...
and yet this person who is now a mother
is, and has always been, a child.

Indeed, perhaps she is now more a child
than she has ever been before,
or at least she knows it now,
this gift that she has received
and still receives, unceasingly.

To pray in the prayer of compassion,
my loving God, is to share in this love too,
for the human heart also is a womb,
bearing the reality of Love within
and giving birth to it without.

Yet it also bears the world, growing,
to be born more fully
into your own perfect life of love.

This mystery alive within my heart
is the birth-pangs of all creation,
both mine and theirs,
enfolded within your Love.

III.

I lie here in the darkness
with my forehead to the floor,
my heart close to the ground,
beating.
Here it feels, secretly,
the heartbeat of all creation.
She is often called mother-nature,
but this is not quite accurate.
It is true that she is silently mothering
the fields and the flowers,
giving birth anew to beauty
with every passing day.
And it is true also that
from her dust our flesh has been taken.
Yet she is not, ultimately, our mother,
for it is not from nature that we have sprung.
From your Heart, eternal God,
where we are begotten in your Son,
from the womb of Trinity-Love
from which we are born:
this is the source of our being
and the fountain of all motherhood
within this world in which we live.

The human heart also is a womb,
yes, this heart within my breast.
It does not matter that I am a man,
since before you I receive as a spouse.
And when I abide here before you,
carrying within myself this heartbeat,
silently remaining, hiddenly surging,
which I have received from them,
their pains, their hopes, their aspirations,
I am silently mothering, in this solitude,
the joy, the intimacy, the life
which you desire to give.

ישוע

A SACRED EUCHARIST

I.

Ah, Father, thank you for this gift,
so mysterious, greater than I am,
yet so beautiful, so sacred.
Your love pouring forth from on high
penetrates everything here below,
indeed, rises up from within our earth
like a grain of wheat buried deep within.
It is present here in the beating of my heart,
in every single cell of my body,
every smallest movement of my thought.
It is all around me, enveloping like a blanket,
in the sound of the children playing outside,
in the gentle noise of the breeze,
in the warmth of the room, enveloping,
in the light filtering in from the open door
upon the crucifix hanging before me on the wall.

It is there too in the joy of the one who came
to visit me, and just a while ago left,
in the words of encouragement and friendship,
in the gratitude of so many, and in their thirst.
It is there in the pain I feel within my heart
seeing such joy, yet feeling estranged from it
—yet only on the surface level,
for the heart indeed sees deeper—
burdened by this illness and this anxiety.
It no longer suffocates me as it once did,
for you have led me, Father,
deeper into childhood within your arms.
But I still feel the joy of love so fragile,
a treasure immeasurable in a vessel of clay,
but sheltered and defended by you more deeply.

Precisely this suffering is the gift, however,
of which I am thinking
and for which I thank you now.
The gift of suffering, often hard to receive,
is a place of purification
leading deeper into sonship,
for here the grace is offered of accepting,
in a time that the heart is weak and needy,
the Gift of Love that is present in every thing.
Gift, pure gift in every moment,
this is everything, my God and Father.

In the pain cloaking me I find your presence,
an invitation deeper
than almost any other in my life,
summoning me to open to the Love given here
and to allow myself to be given in return,
opened out in the Heart of Jesus, to be given,
in him, for my brothers and sisters
in a sacred eucharist.

There is a deeper joy that here is born,
indeed, that here is present.
It is true that emotions are burdened,
and this is not what you originally intended:
the fragmenting of the body and mind
away from the inner place of the heart,
and the heart itself wounded in many ways.
But in Jesus, Father,
you have made yourself present,
sanctifying precisely this place through your love.
The pain of the body and of the soul
serves to hollow out the heart
for deeper acceptance,
and to impel a greater and purer surrender,
precisely in this way opening up a greater joy.

This joy is not something merely private,
though it is indeed a wholly personal, intimate gift
—the dwelling of Jesus, Crucified and Risen,
in the inmost depths of who I am, here and now,
the binding of our hearts together
in compassion, love.
It draws me into a sacred place
where I am moved, not by superficial enthusiasm,
but by a deep fidelity of the heart,
allowing me the grace and the opportunity
to continue in myself the loving gift of Christ,
the eucharist of body and blood given,
surging from the inmost place of the heart
which is naked and purified through suffering,
but above all through love, your love, my God.

This gift is also a way that the womb of my life
experiences the birth-pangs that allow your love,
poured forth into me so fully by you,
to be brought forth into this world for others.
And it also works a wonderful thing in me,
that in this life, I think,

can occur only through pain,
though in heaven it will occur without it;
what I am speaking of is loving compassion,
the opening of my heart, my mind, my body,
to be a place of welcoming acceptance,
of understanding,
for the hearts that are seeking you, thirsting.

II.

Eucharist...this is receiving before it is giving,
dwelling always in the realm of gift,
drinking unceasingly, Father, of your love.
When the gift is truly received
it contains in itself the reciprocal gift,
the right response of the heart, awakened.
Ah, my God...love is so much deeper,
so much more beautiful than we often imagine.
We may tend to think
that love is self-forgetfulness,
the generous self-sacrifice that gives and gives,
refusing to count the cost, with iron will.
But this is not the case, at least as it appears.
For true love, I believe so deeply,
lies not in a forgetfulness of self
where I am effaced,
but in the joyful self-acceptance that blossoms,
freely, in self-giving without looking back in fear.
Yet it lies also in the acceptance of the other,
an acceptance possible
only in relaxation of the heart,
where they are embraced and sheltered within me,
reverenced, cherished, and gently held.
It lies above all, my God, in acceptance of you,
the Love immense and uncontainable,
who pour yourself out
to be contained in every moment,
containing all within your loving embrace.
In other words, love is simply the truth of gift,
received and penetrating all that I am,
surging out again from within me as gift,
enfolding us all together as one
and drawing us, Father, at last to you.

Eyes are opened, ears to hear,
and heart to receive, freely,
the gift of love ever flowing.
When this occurs through your guiding grace

everything else is already present,
only to blossom over time
through the power of this gift.
The Eucharist of Christ your Son
teaches us this in its fullness, Father,
for his giving is wholly contained
within acceptance,
and his sacrifice and forgetfulness of self
enfolded wholly within the joy of sonship.
Here he never does, nor can,
leave the shelter of your paternal arms.
Precisely because he is loved in this way by you
he can reach out to us in our anguish,
making it his own completely, yet surpassing it,
finding in the very pain of heart and body
a gift of your love, loving Father.
You offer to him here, not pain itself,
for this is something that comes from us,
but the gift of taking the pain that is ours,
of tenderly embracing
the broken heart, redeeming.

The same is true for us, dear Father,
when we are allowed to walk this path,
a path so sacred and holy, if so difficult.
We are bearing,
in an awesome and mysterious way,
the wounds of Christ which heal the world.
The birth-pangs of suffering, enfolded in love,
penetrated through and through by trust
—the love and the trust of Christ himself,
embracing in itself, and perfecting
the frailty of our own yearning, hope, and desire—
give birth more deeply
to the truth of childhood in us,
or, rather,
give birth to us more deeply in childhood.
Yet this birthing process
not only brings forth this,
the gift of joy and gladness
in deeper faith and love,
but also the expansion of your beauty outward,
flowing forth
from the naked and transparent heart
to touch and heal the hearts of others.

It is like Mary and John at the foot of the Cross,

drawn by their compassion for Jesus
into the place of most profound and holy gift.
They, of all the others who fled in fear,
were able to remain close to him through his pain,
sharing, in empathy and deepest charity,
in the passion he underwent for all.
How were they, alone, able to do this?
Because they, above all others, tasted his gift,
they rested lovingly against his Sacred Heart.
Thus they could see gift
 where others could not see it...
See in clinging faith and trembling hope, it is true,
but see nonetheless, with the heart's eyes.
They tasted, therefore, the Eucharist in its fullness,
the gift of the Body and Blood of the Lord:
in womb, in arms, in hands, and tongue;
in the aching compassion that refuses to let go
because it is, more deeply,
 held by the never-failing God;
in the cord of Love that is knit so tightly
that even across the boundary of death
 it does not break;
and, finally, in the Eucharist of the Resurrection,
pure Light irradiating his human body,
touching the receptive, beholding hearts,
and drawing them, at last, together,
into the embrace of the One they love,
who has first, unfailingly, loved them.

ישוע

JESUS

It is said that learning to love is a matter
of ceasing to live for myself
 and of living for others,
but I understand now
 that this is only half the truth.
It is, indeed, impossible to live for others truly,
unless I first allow myself to live in you.
And to live in you, my God and loving Father,
is to live, truly, in myself, at last at home,
sheltered in the welcoming Heart of your Son.
In him I am a beloved child,
 cherished and embraced,
and from this place—and here alone—
 I can reach out,

I can walk hand in hand
with my brothers and sisters too.

To be loved alone
fully unlocks the door to loving,
loved, God, by you first and most of all,
yet also loved by others,
welcoming them into my inner heart.
Beauty is given as a pure and gratuitous gift,
a gift, not impersonal, floating in the air,
but a gift, Father, given from you to me, uniquely.
The recurrence of the sunrise and the morning,
the air that continually fills my lungs,
the blood that surges ceaselessly within me,
the harmony of this creation
continuing day by day.
Yet the beauty that is encountered
in so many other ways, heart-touching,
awakening in the heart thirst for something more,
is also a unique word spoken from you to me
—even if I encounter it as if eavesdropping.

Everything in this world, every moment,
is a personal gift from your most loving Heart,
flowing out and, embracing us, returning...
each individual person
grasped by love, if unknowing,
yet all of us, together, bound as one.
What are all things, dearest God, if not this?
For they are from you, not only as gift,
but bear the mark of who you are yourself:
Giver, Gift, and One receiving,
and the reciprocal Gift that blossoms,
unceasingly and always,
in the most perfect Gift of all:
in the intimacy of Love's Embrace, enduring.

Then, when this Love, pursuing,
has penetrated through my defenses and my fears,
surging up from my inmost heart, healing,
and enfolds me on every side through everything
...then, my good and loving Father,
the path to loving also is made straight.
Here there is no longer the division
that we so often feel within us,
the painful tension of yearning
to love others, yet ourselves also to be loved,

to forget ourselves, all these things constraining,
and yet also to find and accept ourselves anew.

The answer is so simple, yet so awesome,
and one word alone is enough to express it:

Jesus.

In gazing upon your beloved Son, dearest Father,
I find myself drawn out, forgetting myself in him,
yet I find myself completely unforgotten,
sheltered lovingly against his tender breast.
Here I am both beyond myself, surrendered,
and drawn back to dwell completely within,
within the One who is both within and without,
who indeed transcends the distinction
between these two.

And in his all-enfolding arms, dearest Father,
I find all other things besides.

In him I find myself, Father, within you,
sheltered forever in your inmost bosom,
in the very womb of the loving Spirit
and caught up within his eternal Breath.
Yet I find myself also with my brethren,
there, in Jesus, discovering them present,
set as a seal upon his Sacred Heart.
Here we all live, Father, as one,
one in the One who holds us all together,
knit together in the sinews of his loving Heart.
And here we each know
 our own sacred uniqueness,
held within his arms, pressed against his breast,
as a beloved spouse in the arms of such a Lover.

Whenever I reach out to love another,
I am stepping, Father, into Jesus,
loving in him...the only way to love.
When I turn inwards, Father,
I am stepping also into Jesus,
there dwelling in his own embrace.
Whenever I give I am really receiving,
and whenever I receive I am also giving.
In giving I receive the gift of Love
flowing through Jesus' Heart, from your own.
And in receiving I am giving him the gift
that he most ardently desires:
the gift of myself, accepting his love.

This is a gift, penetrating me so deeply,
uniquely and unrepeatably touching my heart,
that blossoms out also to touch others,
the Gift of Love inundating
and enfolding all there is.

Everywhere I turn, dearest Father,
there is this, again and again, the same:
Jesus.

In him, my Beloved, my Life, my All,
the Life, Beloved, and All of every person,
I find everything else that there could be.
This is so, my God and Father,
because he is also All for you.

Yet in him, dearest Father,
pronouncing in tenderness his sweet name.
Jesus,

I also find myself speaking,
my own voice enfolded in his own,
his voice holding and carrying mine,
uniting it also with the voice of every other:
Abba, Father...

...my Beloved, my Life, my All.

ישוע

WITHIN YOUR LOVING ARMS

I.
Dearest Father, so immensely good,
I find myself enveloped in your grace,
sheltered as with a blanket
laid over my shoulders by a friend,
consoled, indeed, as by their arms, embracing.
Yet human touch is only a glimpse
of the unspeakable intimacy
shrouding me so tightly here,
pressing against every pore
and welling up within my inmost heart.

I know in faith this closeness, so true,
even if my eyes do not see,
nor does my body perceive you.
Yet in every thing I know you are here,
not only hidden by them as by a veil,

but revealed through them as by a window.
The way to gaze through this window
is different than other ways we know,
but then again very similar, so close.
The response of the heart to beauty,
touched and drawn out of itself,
this is nearly it, but another step yet alone:
prayer, and there it is.

Father, it is so beautiful,
a beauty beyond me, escaping me,
and yet a beauty embracing, caressing.
It does not so much matter
that the mystery of each moment
slips, as it were, beyond my grasp.
It is there, unceasingly at work,
your own presence sustaining all things,
your loving arms upholding me.
All that is necessary on my part
is simply to cling to you.
And this also is something so simple
that it perhaps escapes my grasp.

II.

Faith is, mysteriously,
something close to loneliness,
yet it is also close to the joy of embrace,
or rather it is both at once, transfigured.
It awakens loneliness because it expands the heart,
yet it fulfills this hope immediately by the gift,
the gift which precedes faith itself—pure love—
yet awakens a thirst for more love, unceasingly,
until the fullness is at last felt in your embrace,
when the mists of this life have passed
and we see and experience you in pure bliss,
every veil then having fallen away.

How many ways, Father,
you speak to us your gentle word,
how many ways you are present, close.
In our joy and our sorrow, in rest and work,
in the space of illness opening the heart,
and in the experience of well-being, blossoming.
In every way you draw us toward you,
opening in yet another way for us your Heart.
Something as little as a photograph
of a friend I have not seen for years

can expand the heart anew, unlocking a door,
such that the present work of this day,
and this present sickness too,
blossoms and reveals its deeper meaning.
A sacrament...every moment,
bearing in itself your grace and invitation,
but above all simply your enfolding arms.

In such moments of vivid life as this
—present indeed under the surface, ever alive,
but only seen by us at certain times,
when the mists begin to thin a bit
and we glimpse the beauty that is present here—
the past, present, and future
are in some way united.
The immense gifts of the past,
which this friend and I knew together,
the heart-wounding beauty that we shared,
yet also the pain and longing, transfigured,
come again into my mind.

Yet in remembrance they are here,
not in the fullest sense, but in your love,
and in the longing of my heart
for what once was to be again.
This is how, spontaneously,
the past is united with the future,
here within the present,
for the hope of being together again
will perhaps never be realized in this life...
but in the eternity for which we await
we will be together forever, perfectly united,
enfolded as one within your loving arms.

ישוע

NOCTURNAL BEAUTY

I.
The beauty of the night,
radiant with the light of moon and stars,
still and silent, open space.
The heavens unveil their secret
as if lifting, a bit, the cloth
draped between here and there.
Infinite space, gaping open, giving itself,
gaping open to receive the yearning heart.

Have you ever stood
in open space in the nighttime,
with your head up, gazing above,
and felt the dizziness of this encounter,
the meeting between someone so tiny
and the abyss of space, speaking of our God?
The heavens, so far above,
are also draped as a blanket, so close,
like the arms of God sheltering in their embrace.

Yet the awesome mystery is deeper still,
for there is a glimpse, returning indoors
and sitting between these narrow walls,
that the open space within the heart
is greater than anything there is outside.
Deep calls to deep...the human heart for God,
and, my God, the Abyss of your Heart for us.

Your voice, my God, indeed sounds unceasingly,
but it speaks without words, in silence.
Yet in silence too it forms words for us,
written in the pages of this sacred Book,
to be received in the silence of the heart,
silence alone in the inner chamber of prayer,
yet proclaimed also in the community gathered,
sounding there in the fullest way.
Word and silence are thus united,
a beautiful marriage, which is sheltered, my God,
in the marriage you effect between us and you.

It is so amazing, this mysterious union,
not only between word and silence,
between the abyss without and that within,
but between power and weakness,
fullness and poverty.
The heart can be so aflame with inner fire,
so alive with burning joy and ardent hope,
yet carry this flame in a tiny earthen jar.

The flesh is worn, exhausted,
indeed burdened by the external things, without,
yet it is enfolded, lovingly, by the flesh of Christ.
The heart is frail, a tiny child's heart,
and yet it is held tightly within his embrace,
crying out as an infant, still so immature,
and yet, drinking from the divine breast,

already tastes in some way true maturity,
the eternal childhood for which we were made.

The heart, in the midst of a kind of loneliness,
nonetheless feels less alone than it has ever been,
feels like loneliness, once so burdensome,
has been so deeply transformed from inside.
The heart, yearning so deeply to give itself,
has found that giving lies most in pure acceptance,
indeed, that all giving is ultimately a form of this,
the welcoming embrace of the other
in all that is most intimate to them,
and everything else,
into the most intimate place in oneself,
one's inner heart.

And, once so strained
through the yearning to be understood,
to receive the opening-up of others in return,
the heart now dwells in a deeper peace,
welcoming others like an unopened gift,
sheltering this, in its hidden mystery, deep within.
Eternity will show, dear God, in fullness unveiled,
the things that could not be shared within this life.

I suppose this is part of the gift of virginity,
virginity as a gift offered to the virgin-heart,
as well as the virgin-heart's gift
born from deep within in return.
Yet it is also the chaste gift given to all,
to a heart which, perhaps, is virgin no more,
and to the heart that is married in this life,
for virginity is above all an inner state,
a way of being.

There is a kind of joy and fullness
alive within the poverty of open hands,
in receiving the gift of the other
without the need to unwrap the gift.
It is known by you, my God,
and enriches me within your hidden grace.

Indeed, even if there is union in a deeper way,
is it not true that the deepest things
remain hidden still,
that, when man and woman
share that inner sanctuary,

there is still so much that remains unexpressed,
that only the fullness of eternity will reveal?
Yes, this is true, that the innermost sanctuary
alive and present within each person,
their inner heart,
is something that will come fully to light
only in the radiant light
that will enfold us at the end.

Yet there is One now whose Heart is wholly open,
who has given everything without holding back,
a Light shining in the obscurity of the night of life
and illumining all things by his purest rays.
Here too, we see in the dimness of faith's eyes,
believing without seeing, loving without sight,
and yet precisely in this way
both seeing and knowing,
tasting, in the ecstasy of simple love and hope,
the intimacy of nuptial gift, present and alive.

II.

Yes, it is true, in the deepest way,
that the purity of love that you give
fashions a communion, even in this life,
that so deeply transcends that of the flesh.
The mystery of the other is revered,
cherished and revered in its sacredness,
and yet precisely because it is loved in this way
it is in a sense received and held within,
felt and understood in a deeper way.

Love is a way of seeing before anything else,
or, perhaps better, a way of feeling and receiving.
Contemplative-eyes, therefore, see the most,
eyes weaned through the night and the desert,
eyes purged and healed by the fire of love.
Hands and heart, gentle, sensitive, pure
through the fast of love and longing,
through the impalpable feast of wisdom's table,
through the gift given and received
each moment and in each person and each thing.
Prayer is the true ecstasy,
the heart's deepest longing,
the mystery that enfolds everything else.

Do we see this truth, my God?
How much you want to show us...

In every moment, in the heart's deepest thirst,
we are yearning for the beauty of prayer,
prayer which is nothing but the heart's embrace,
clinging, God, to you who cling to us,
and drawing close also, in your loving arms,
to the beauty of your beloved children,
radiant, each,
as a spouse prepared for her Beloved.

ישוע

HEARTBEAT IN THE NIGHT

I.
The starry sky, shining with billions of stars
dancing in their places, full of joy,
is cradled up above this world,
a dome so far, yet so close,
a blanket gently sheltering.
I walk underneath this twinkling dome
along the shadowy road,
reflecting, somewhat, the light above,
yet surrounded on left and right
by formless shapes cloaked
in the darkness of the night.

Many times these feet crunch on the dirt,
these legs carry me slowly along the way,
a rosary dangling from my hand, perhaps,
or both my hands
shoved in my pockets for warmth.
The sounds of cars can be heard in the distance,
speeding down the highway at all times,
yet now only an almost inaudible hum,
joined together to the sound of an owl
or the whistling of the nocturnal wind.

Rain-times, too, cannot hinder this,
and I simply put on a trench-coat,
not only not held back, but drawn
by the rain pouring from the sky.
I stand there in the open space
with my face upraised,
allowing the raindrops to fall on me,
inhaling the sweet perfume of moisture,
and hearing the rain's pitter-patter on the ground.

Nocturnal beauty, dearest God,
and the refreshing mystery of rainfall,
the penetrating aliveness of cold wind,
the dry warmth of summer days and nights...
all of this, my God and Father,
flows on in succession, external occurrence,
sheltering the mystery occurring within.

The world is like a tabernacle, is it not,
in which the sacredness of mystery lives?
The all-enfolding world around me,
every day and every moment, given...
this little human body that is mine, too,
is a tabernacle of your presence,
a vessel of the mystery that I am
—that you, my God, are in me—
yes, an essential part of me myself.

II.

Heartbeat pounding gently in the night,
in the nocturnal vigil, or in early rising,
in the intimate conversations of two together,
walking through the woods, or sitting side by side
under a large tree or on a bench.
The moon shines in the sky,
filtering through the trees,
sheltering and protecting us, gentle mother,
holding her precious child in her arms.
The heartbeat of creation is felt
in the cold wind whistling through the air.
The heartbeat of God is felt,
surging out from that secret place,
from the Host hidden in the tabernacle,
whom we pause before in prayer, for a moment,
before retiring to bed for the night.

In the middle of the night the hermit-monks rise
and, on the sound of the bell tolling
in the nocturnal air,
make their way silently to the church
where they mingle their voices together
in praise of God.
Storms come in the night, sweeping over,
sometimes waking those who try to sleep,
yet they leave their mark by drenching the earth.
The sunrise, breaking across the horizon,
then illumines the moist air,

piercing the clouds with light,
brilliant colors glistening and dancing in the air.
Owls and doves always seem to be vigilant,
perhaps more than any other bird,
for they are full of love and longing,
with gentle voice calling out for the Beloved,
awake even in the depths of night.

My God, my Life, my Joy,
sacred Mystery enfolds my every moment,
my whole life from its beginning to its end...
as it does too the life of every person.
There is nocturnal beauty, radiant, pure,
in the very daytime hours of this world,
stretching our hearts beyond the veil to you.
There is the glimmer of Day, my Father,
penetrating into the night of this imperfect world,
drawing us to reach out, to open ourselves,
to the gift of enduring, unbroken Light,
which is present and alive, fully, already now.

ישוע

CHILD AND SPOUSE

I.
God my Father, God of love,
I thank you for these gentle arms enfolding me.
I glimpse now, through your gentle teaching,
that what I am experiencing
is much more than illness alone.
The space of weakness and dependency
in which I have been abiding during these months
is above all a spiritual state
before it is of the body.
It springs from physical weakness and pain,
as well as from these days of sickness, true,
but it also springs from a deeper place as well.
The disinclination read
or to busy myself with other things,
is not due first of all to external things
but to a deep disposition of heart.

It is not, as it had been in the past,
an imbalanced approach to life,
unhealthy and immature in many ways,
but something more profound,

though in continuity with the seed
that had already then begun to sprout and grow.
You know, Father, if here too there is imbalance,
but what I do realize clearly is the gift,
the gift that this state is for me,
a gift also for you and for our world.
A gift of greater joy than that of mere activity,
conceiving in mystery a greater fruitfulness
than simply that of efficient productivity,
and giving birth to it, in faith,
through the birth-pangs of longing and of love
through the mysterious intimacy present here.

The truth of childhood for which we yearn
and from which we are often so estranged,
this is it, as it always is, my God.
This is being lived by me intensely
and in a very particular way, beautiful.
I don't know how best to express it,
for I don't entirely understand it now,
but only glimpse something deeply at work:
the Potter's hands gently molding.
And this is very good, for all I need
is to yield myself, full of love and trust,
to your gentle and loving touch.

Open, empty, upraised hands...
this is how I have expressed it before.
The Cross within the Circle of Love...
this too expresses so much.
But both of these are just images,
as are the many other ways I could express it,
yet the reality itself is more than an image.
Nonetheless, it lives within life
as the grace of sacrament,
image and sign conveying inner power.
Still, the work of grace itself is hidden, silent.
It is indeed glimpsed, accepted,
and surrendered to,
but the mystery is not contained by such things;
rather, it contains all things within itself.

Openness to grace,
this is not some feverish kind of openness,
the attempt to expand the heart
to divine proportions,
or the indifference

of complete availability to be used.
No, it is the simple and childlike trust,
receptive to love,
which contains the acceptance of all else as well.
True greatness here is found, not in expanding,
in some way, beyond the barriers of my humanity,
nor even beyond the particular limitations I feel,
but rather in abiding within them
with the One who dwells here,
allowing myself to be embraced by you
and in this way also embracing in return.

II.

Bridal love, here etched within the heart,
something so beautiful...
the human person before you, God.
In revealing the true dignity of woman, Father,
you have also unlocked the dignity of man.
For what is the greatest gift and invitation
that is present and alive in each human heart?
It is nothing but this sacred mystery,
this sanctuary
where childhood and spousehood are united, one.
When I stand before you, Father,
I rejoice to be simply your beloved child;
and when I abide before Christ your Son,
I have no trouble accepting myself as his spouse.

For spousehood in this world is only an image
of the true espousal alive in eternity,
in the bosom of the Trinity, my God.
It is true that we share in this, man and woman,
each in our own unique way,
differing in the gender that is ours.
But nonetheless the truth in which we share,
this awesome majesty of intimacy and love,
is only one, a single sharing in the life of Love.
Here the Son abides before you
as the perfect Child,
yet also as the Source
of all it means to be a spouse,
receiving from you the pure gift of your love,
allowing himself
to be freely begotten, without ceasing,
in the loving womb of the Spirit
shared by you both.

TRUE NAKEDNESS

The gift of frailty, my God,
is something so mysterious, yet so beautiful.
On the surface, no, it does not look that way,
but deeper within it reveals something more.
For there is an invitation here,
and within the invitation, grace.

In times of exhaustion and of pain
do we not often find ourselves anxious,
burdened by feelings which are not true,
and by a sense of vulnerability before life,
so great and so mysterious?
Here, precisely, is the invitation...
not to remain here, no, but to go deeper.

I see this, God, in the fruit that is growing
deep within my mind and my heart.
In strength and well-being it is so easy
to be confident and self-reliant,
but when the flesh is worn,
and especially the mind,
one can feel so naked and exposed.
I taste this in my writing,
how one can share oneself with ease, at times,
but at other times, only with fear and trembling.
This, this is an invitation, Father...

What is this trembling a sign of,
this feeling of being left open, exposed,
not knowing how the gift is seen or received?
Ah...it is an awareness full of awe, so beautiful,
like the nakedness of our first parents
in the garden,
yet now seeking to blossom in the midst of sin.
Thank you, then, Father, for this gift.

Here indeed we come more deeply
to the true meaning of nakedness
as in the beginning you intended it.
I will speak here with reserve, reverence,
of something so holy and so beautiful,
and simply seek to live it in my life.

How wonderfully, beyond my imagination,
you have led me, Father, down this sacred path.
I see now, looking back, that this journey
has been one of profound nakedness.
This explains the sorrow and pain I have felt,
but also the tenderness of joy and life,
the tears of longing, of vulnerability,
and also the tears of gladness and of gratitude.

In sin the heart is closed upon itself,
cloaking over what is most intimate,
sheltering in fear from true encounter,
yet reaching out also in greed and pride.
Sin has caused a reversal
of the true order that you fashioned.
But in the life of Christ you have shown us,
and imparted to us in the transformation of grace,
the flipping-back of this upside-down world.
You awaken in the heart,
touched by the nakedness of the Heart of Christ,
the desire to open out beyond itself,
to share in love what is most intimate,
to live in the depths of true encounter,
and to welcome the other, poor and humble.

For nakedness is simply a part of being alive,
the openness of heart to receive, to give,
sensitivity that reverberates at every touch...
every touch of grace, of beauty, of life,
and longs for the fullness
that beckons unceasingly.

ישוע

THIS RING UPON MY FINGER

Mary, my sweet and tender mother...
I thank you for your unceasing, hidden care.
I have entrusted myself completely to you,
surrendering my life into your loving hands.
This ring upon my finger, now for many years,
is a sign of this belonging, Mother,
a sign that I am encircled in your arms,
that your love is the wedding-band
around my heart,
drawing me ever more deeply, day by day,
into the all-enfolding arms

of our Bridegroom-God.

I gave myself to you, and what, then,
occurred as the fruit of this surrender,
this opening up of my life to your maternal care?
You entered in more deeply, below the surface,
and for such a long time I did not
even glimpse your presence, hidden in the silence.
Yet I understand now a little
of what was happening.
You were hiding yourself within me
so that, in me, you yourself may live.
You were enfolding me in your arms so deeply,
and lifting me up, a little child, to the Lord,
that I could not even sense you carrying me,
but only knew that I was being carried,
beyond all my strength, my knowledge, my hope,
into a greater and more intimate
union with Christ.

There are mysterious things,
inexplicable dispositions,
so deeply alive within my life, my heart,
which find their explanation only in you.
What is this virginal receptivity, for example,
that burns so deep within my heart, my flesh?
I feel almost that this nuptiality that is mine
—belonging to a man,
but so feminine in character—
has been so immersed in the mystery
of the Virgin-Bride
that I find myself living this truth
in my daily life...
and looking out to see others in this same light.

I feel a kind of closeness
to the tenderness of womanhood,
often more than I do to the strength of a man,
for I feel that the sensitivity of my emotions,
the openness of my heart to the other person,
has blossomed
more and more powerfully from within.
And my heart yearns, more than for achievement,
or for the sense of being successful
or needed by others,
simply to receive gratuitous love
ever more deeply,

and to surrender myself entirely in love in return.

Yes, Mary, my gentle Mother, purest Woman,
I see the impress of your hand upon my life,
the seal of your character upon my heart.
Yet this awesome gift does not make me less
the person, the man, I am in the eyes of God,
but rather more fully this, as he so lovingly wills.
For the virgin-purity that you work in me, Mary,
is really the same thing as childlike dependency,
and childlike dependency enfolds all things.

Drinking from the wellspring of Christ's Heart,
I find my yearning, my hope, my life,
overflowing thus, without departing from here,
in the eucharistic gift of my own being, in him.
Yes, spousal and paternal love
blossom deep within,
the eyes of a bridegroom to see and love as he,
and a heart transparent to the Father's paternity.
I feel myself, in pure grace, in mystery,
drawn to Jesus, as he gives his own self,
his Body and Blood, entirely, for his Bride,
drawing her, thus, to share with him
the intimacy that is eternally his with the Father.

ישוע

EVERYTHING

Abba, Father... how sweet it is to call you this.
Yes, to nestle close against your loving breast,
to receive from you the love ever flowing
from the inmost place of your tender Heart.
Thus you are above all mothers too,
the source of maternity, nourishing breast,
gentle embrace, deep feeling, love and tenderness.
In you the security given by true fatherhood
and the delicacy of motherhood as well
are simply one and the same thing, united,
the simple reality of the Love whom you are.

*O God, my heart is not proud,
nor haughty my eyes;
I have not gone after things too great,
nor marvels beyond me.
No, rather, I have laid my heart in peace;*

*as a child has rest in his mother's arms,
even so is my soul.
I will hope in you, my God,
forever and ever.*

This, my Father, my God, my Love,
is everything...
there, with the Son of your love and tenderness,
I abide against your loving breast,
feeling with him the joyful pulsation
of this single Heart that you share,
this single Breath of the Spirit whom you breathe,
one, passing from lips to lips, a holy kiss.

ישוע

LOVING ARMS

My beloved child, I rejoice
to hold you in my arms.
This is my only desire, enduring,
for every person too.
Do you see, I truly desire nothing else,
opening my Heart,
than to hold you here, each and all,
pressing you to my breast,
carrying you, in this way, to my loving Father.
There, held in my arms, a child, a spouse,
you experience the love of the Father as I do,
you know his goodness and beauty
in the same way as I.
You breathe, together with me, and him too
—indeed, allow us to breathe through you,
vibrating you through and through,
thrilling your heart—
the Breath of the Spirit whom we eternally share.

I have granted you the gift of sharing, in faith,
in this mysterious communion
in the depths of the soul,
yes, in the concreteness of every moment of life,
reposing already now
in each day and each moment,
in the love for which you long
in fullness at the end.
Repose here, beloved child, this is all that I ask.
Allow yourself to be loved, cherished, embraced.

Nothing finds fullness of meaning
outside of this love,
all finds the fullness of its beauty and radiance
precisely by flowing from here and returning thus,
yes, abiding here always,
never departing from this space.

And you know, child, you feel deep within,
that this loving embrace, asking nothing else,
yet awakens in your heart a yearning,
expanding out in love:
that this same joyful embrace
will enfold every heart too.
Thus, within the very furnace of joy,
unbreakable, sure,
a fire of compassion also begins to burn.
Within the homecoming of love
into the Beloved's arms
—where you also find your deepest self,
purified, restored,
blossoming from within
by my own gratuitous gift,
enfolded within my mystery,
my most intimate embrace—
here you also find the heart's yearning awaken
to share this beautiful love with each and with all.

For this intimate embrace, dearly beloved,
is both a sanctuary of intimacy between you and I
—unspeakable solitude, ineffable encounter,
silence of love, where I gaze on you,
the only one, ravishing my Heart—
and yet also the place
where you are least solitary, alone,
for in me you find yourself drawing close, also,
to every other person, every child of God.
The fire is enkindled deep in the heart,
yes, a fire engulfing you
in its embrace through every thing,
drawing you both deeper within,
and thrusting you out
—two movements, really one and the same—
to immerse yourself
in the Abyss of the Trinity's embrace
and to give yourself in compassion
for every longing heart.

CONSUMMATION

Love inconceivable, Love divine,
Love so immense and majestic,
yet so near.
You wrap me close, dear Father,
in the most intimate of embraces,
pressing me close to you so gently,
in every moment and through every thing.

Every moment of my life,
here and now and always, God,
is a single romance of this love, so amazing,
a love beyond all other loves, yet embracing all,
a love bestowing goodness and beauty
on all there is,
and, through the mystery implanted here,
within them,
drawing them all back at last to you.

This, Father, is the joy I know,
the joy that I cling to in faith, holding me,
and to which I look in hopeful expectation
—consummation,
when the veil of this life is at last rent:
to abide, pressed close against your Heart,
enfolded, in Christ, within your loving arms.
And there also I find my brother and my sister,
my most intimate friend, each and every one,
pressed against my heart, and me, against theirs,
seeing and feeling, they in me and I in them,
your own loving presence, so deeply alive.

THE HEM OF YOUR GARMENT

What a mysterious thing...
that a simple memento left by the beloved
is enough, to the loving heart,
to make them present in a particular way.
Perhaps it is a necklace which they wore,
or a shirt that still carries their smell,
or a picture, or a note, or a song.
We experience so often this kind of encounter:

brushing the hem of the garment
of those whom we love.

But on the other hand
we experience so often the opposite:
we brush shoulders with others
without truly and deeply recognizing them.
Do we realize that we carry,
each one of us, an interior majesty,
an interior beauty and mystery,
which is deserving of reverence and awe?

This is the deep personal mystery
which is unique to me, to you, alone.
And this is in communication, without ceasing,
with the mystery of every other person,
as it were, by osmosis, by the hidden waves of love
in the ever-flowing currents of the Body of Christ.
Souls are in unceasing communication
within the Blood of the Lamb,
bound together to each other
in suffering, in joy, in love, in hope.

But it is in *him*, in him alone
that we are truly united, truly one,
for no merely human affection, no desire
can truly weave hearts together
such that they become an inseparable fabric.

But he, the Lord Jesus, our loving God,
first entered into our world of fragmentation,
bearing such a mystery within his breast.
That tiny little human Heart
bears the immensity of God!
And this presence of the Godhead—
of the Father ever-communicating,
the Son ever-receiving and reciprocating the gift,
and the Spirit of ecstatic joy binding both together— this
abides in unceasing movement,
in utter truth,
in the Heart of that Man walking Galilee's streets.

And many brush up against with him
without feeling his power,
for they neither seek nor believe.
But whenever there is desire,
when there is thirst for the Mystery in him,

is it not as with that picture
of the one whom our heart loves?
A simple glance is enough to vibrate the heart,
both healing and wounding
with the peaceful restlessness of love.

Jesus, you draw near to us
(you could not be nearer),
and you remain here always
where we can brush up against you—
no, where, again and again,
we can touch the hem of your garment,
with faith and the desire to be healed.
And the power within you
flows forth into all that we are.

The hem of your garment!
What am I saying?
You have given us your very Heart!
And yet, then again,
even in that awesome gift of your Eucharist,
and in your indwelling in the depths of the soul,
there is a veil that conceals you,
and keeps us from seeing you as we desire,
in the fullness of light.

So again and again we touch your garment,
and it is faith that grants encounter
with the awesome Mystery alive in you,
with the awesome Mystery alive in us.

ישוע

VULNERABILITY

Reaching out to touch the hem of your garment,
the faithful heart experiences
the Power within you,
the immensity of the Mystery
burning in your breast.
But you are just a man like any other!
But then again...you are much more than this.
Your own people take offense at you,
at the scandal of your humility—
I would almost say, of your ordinariness.

Yes, precisely this humility,

this closeness to each one of us,
this full and true humanity,
is your doorway into our fearful hearts.
But it is also the prime reason
that hearts shut the door to you.
A God who is far away is more comfortable,
one who speaks only to the “perfect,”
and who allows me, in my littleness,
in my brokenness, my wounds, my sin,
to side-step the call to holiness
and to keep the vulnerable places
of my inner heart hidden.
But, then again, what we desire above all
is a God who draws near lovingly,
who opens his Heart humbly to us,
even if, of this, we are also afraid.

In other words, your nearness is an invitation,
a moment of decision and of choice:
will I lay bare my heart to welcome you,
to accept the gift of love that you offer me here?
Or will I turn away, closing myself to the light,
preferring my previous isolation
and the partial lights to which I have clung?

Ah, but, dear Jesus,
this encounter is simply one of love,
giving birth to the joy for which we thirst,
and holiness itself is but intimacy with you!
You come to us, so gently, so lovingly,
an infant in the womb, a child,
a young man in the home,
a carpenter working in obscurity,
a poor itinerant preacher
walking from town to town.
A criminal crucified on a Cross...

And you open wide your arms,
you lay bare your Heart
in radical, loving vulnerability—
so that, through your vulnerability
we may gain the confidence, the trust,
to become vulnerable to you too.
For vulnerability is openness of heart,
openness to be touched, wounded,
and, yes, even pierced...
but pierced, touched, and wounded,

ultimately, by the healing arrow of Love.

Yes, vulnerability is the key to being healed...
the very foundation of loving encounter
and of the intimate joining of hearts.
For only in self-opening,
the laying bare of the wounded heart,
can we allow the healing current of Love
filling your Heart at every moment
to pour out also into our own.

Then, dear Jesus, we discover
that littleness is no obstacle,
that weakness and, yes, woundedness,
is not a hindrance to your grace,
nor to the joy and beauty of intimacy with you.
No, the opposite really is the case,
and I am utterly convinced
that the most beautiful thing in this world
is the vulnerable human heart—
the heart that, finding a safe-haven
in the heart of another,
trustingly opens itself and shares
those things it carries deep within,
that ineffable mystery and awesome beauty
that is concealed under a thin veneer.

For in this encounter,
beyond the brokenness, the wounds,
the shame, the fear, the pain,
a unique, beautiful, and sacred mystery is revealed.
Yes, the mystery of this person
—this unrepeatable, precious, beloved child!—
whom God has made in his love,
and whom he gazes on in each moment
with inexpressible tenderness...

If only each heart knew, dear Jesus,
how tenderly you love every one of us,
how much beauty you see in us,
drawing your Heart in desire
to unite yourself, forever, to us in love.
Then perhaps we would not be so afraid
of the Little One, the Wounded One
who comes so near to us,
welcoming our own littleness,
our own burdens and our wounds,

to take them into your own Heart,
there to touch, to heal, to transfigure them.

ישוע

PERFECTLY CONTAINED

I.

You hold me, Father, you shelter me,
in the tenderness of your embrace.
This—the love of Father for his child,
and the rest of the child in your arms—
this is the enduring, unchanging reality
that abides...that abides through every thing.

May I never forget this restfulness,
this embrace of Lover and beloved,
who simply rejoice in one another
and in the union that they share.
All other things, whatever they may be,
find their meaning only within this
and for the sake of this.

Each person, my God,
you have created for this love,
for the joy of simply abiding
in your all-enveloping, consoling arms.
To abide in the silent embrace
of the perfect Lover,
who simply holds his beloved,
his arms wrapped around her,
unceasingly supporting her...
this, and nothing else,
can truly satisfy the heart.

No activity or achievement,
no experience, no possession
can give rest to our restless souls,
but only your embrace, God of Love,
Father who hold us so gently,
Son who cradle and shelter us,
and Spirit, who is the vibrating intensity
—yet the restful peace—of Love,
who fill Lover and beloved
and all the space in between.

II.

Do we yearn for more than this,
as if this were not enough?
Or are we rather afraid to face,
in our inmost heart, our restless longing,
which, opened to you,
allows us to enter into your own life?
Perhaps we fear that Love, in the end,
will not be there for us,
that it will let us down.

O fearful heart, be not afraid!
Though a human person may fail you,
may not love you as you need,
as you, in your beauty, truly deserve—
God will never fail you,
he will never reject you or forget you,
or for a single moment
be far away.

Rather, his love is an overflowing torrent
pouring forth unceasingly from his tender Heart,
which, in order to truly show you,
in vulnerability,
how much he loves you—you, unrepeatably—
allows itself to be rent open, naked,
to make itself a gift for you
and to welcome you deep within,
into the abiding repose, the security,
the restfulness and joy of his eternal embrace.

Do not allow the many things around you,
nor the woundedness and fear within,
to hold you back from trusting surrender
into his loving and welcoming arms.
For he yearns for you, dear child,
he thirsts for you, beloved one.

Yes, this, and this alone does he desire:
to hold you gently in his arms,
and there to reveal to you...
to fill you completely
with the abundance of his love.

Your heart may ask:
“But how do I surrender?”
O, if only you knew,
beloved one, so precious...

Surrender is not a matter
of “gathering up” yourself
in order to make it, in some way,
a gift to him in selfless gesture.
True surrender is only this, beloved:
to relax into the arms
that are already holding you.

III.

Do you see, little one?
You may be afraid, frustrated
that the weakness within you
is a hindrance to his love.
But do you understand
that your limitation
is in no way a limitation
to his love which already enfolds you?

Even when your heart is closed
and locked tight in fear,
he simply passes through the walls
and stands in your midst,
making his dwelling in your heart.
And his voice gently echoes:
Peace be with you, my child.
Receive, beloved, my love.

Before you have even said “yes”
with all of your heart
(for how could you?)
he already gives you the gift,
the awesome gift that you desire.
And this very gift—do you see?—
already lives deep inside of you,
and even when you do not see or feel it,
it sustains and shelters you at every moment.

And not only this,
but the gift of love that you,
beloved child, have received,
and continue to receive always
—as the God of life gives you,
in each instant, the gift of life—
this gift already awakens,
deep within your inmost heart,
the “yes” that you desire to give,
but feel incapable of giving.

Yes, child, be silent and still,
and you will notice,
as his love surges deep within you,
that in the “Yes” of his love for you
your own responding “yes”
is already perfectly contained.

ישוע

DRAWING NEAR

Jesus, you draw near to us,
you lovingly and tenderly approach,
taking our hand and raising us up.
And this closeness, this proximity to us
—your drawing near in loving compassion—
makes you like a magnet, drawing hearts,
in return, to approach you in their thirst.

In this physical movement, Jesus,
of your coming close to us in love,
which awakens in return our search for you—
in this we see the inner mystery of the Incarnation.
You come, humbly and gently,
espousing yourself to our very humanity
and taking into yourself our hope and our pain.
This movement-out from yourself to us
is at the same moment an acceptance of us by you,
a welcoming of us into your inmost Heart.

And this, Jesus, is what makes you
so attractive for every one whom you encounter,
such that when you try to escape away,
in the early hours of the morning, to pray,
we seek you out, because we want you,
and thirst to be in your presence
and to feel your healing touch.

And thus you can do nothing but carry,
in yourself, this tension,
between closeness to us
and solitude with the Father.
Indeed, if we only knew
that the thing we really seek,
the reality for which our hearts thirst,
is that intimate solitude and silent intimacy

that is yours, beloved Son, in the Father's embrace.

You approach us from this place,
yet without leaving the Father's bosom,
and in all your thoughts, your acts, your words,
you radiate with the beauty of this Mystery.
Some perhaps seek only physical healing
or signs and wonders—lesser things.
But then are there not also hearts
which discern beyond all that you do
the Mystery, dear Jesus, of *who you are*?

These hearts, touched by your Beauty,
ravishing in its immensity
yet gentle in its humility and its purity,
yearn to draw near to you,
not so much for what you can do,
but for who you, Beloved, are in yourself.
They yearn simply to be in your presence,
to drink in the torrent of your love—
yes, to gaze upon that face, that figure,
and to look deep into those eyes.

Experiencing your love, Jesus,
they come to know the love of the Father,
and this love, this love, alone is life...
this love that binds together, eternally,
the three Blessed Persons in perfect unity,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
And what, then, is our deepest thirst,
and the healing of our every wound, but this?

To be immersed into the heart of that embrace,
that intimate solitude and solitary intimacy
which is the place of perfect communion
and of blessed and sacred love:
the inner sanctuary of embrace
where the Breath of the Spirit passes,
eternally, between the Father and the Son,
in that dialogue of tenderness,
where each says to the other:
Beloved, I love you and delight in you.

And what? And what!
We find ourselves caught up
right into this very place,
hearing these words echo in us too,

vibrating through our whole being
and thrilling it with joy:
Beloved, I love you and delight in you.

ישוע

PURE OF HEART (PART I)

I.

Dear Father, we have unclean hearts,
filled with so many evils and such disorder...
we feel this clearly, and it burdens us.
But is not the heaviness that we feel
in the face of our woundedness
something that you desire to dispel
with the radiant light of your Love?
You did not create us for sadness,
for the burden of abiding shame and guilt.
And yes, Father, yes...
your Mercy is greater than all.
It is strong enough to cast out all fear,
and to fill us instead with awe and gratitude
and the confident humility
of being infinitely loved.
Yes...but how, Father, is this possible?

It springs forth from a deepening encounter,
renewed each day throughout our life,
between our misery and your Mercy,
between the abyss of our poverty
and the Abyss of your Compassion.
Yes, loving Father, it leads through the heart
—the very heart—of our human limitations,
in which we assent to being little and dependent,
and more and more open this littleness to you.
Here we rely no longer
on our own strength or knowledge
but on your pure Gift given in each moment,
enfolding us in each and every thing
and yet deeper, too,
in the inmost recesses of the heart.

My heart is wounded and impure, dear Father;
it bears the marks of sin and defiance.
In the face of this, it is necessary
to acknowledge this sinfulness humbly,
to admit my responsibility, my disorder,

and to open myself and my impurity to you,
confessing in lowly yet confident contrition
that I, I myself have turned away,
and to open myself to forgiveness and mercy.

But is not this acceptance of responsibility
precisely the doorway into liberation?
Yes, for it has been so wisely said:
The slave makes excuses
(and thus remains trapped in his fear)
but the child asks for forgiveness...
and experiences the Father's tender embrace.

Asking for forgiveness,
recognizing that it is in my power
to sin and to turn away from you
or to turn to you and, by grace,
to remain faithful...
this recognition is the seed-bed of hope.
For once I realize that grace gives me,
unceasingly, the offer of healing and salvation
and the ability to walk along the way of holiness,
then I can let go of the burden of being
a "victim" of my surroundings
and my compulsions,
and I can instead place my hand in yours
and let you lead me, lovingly,
from darkness into light.

Dear and loving God, it is such a mystery
that only when I weep for my sins
do I find them being washed away.
These tears (even if only deep within the heart)
are but an expression of the Blood of the Lamb,
which has penetrated me and opened me
to welcome the gift of liberation
which can come only from the outside...
this awesome and gratuitous Gift from you.

In this light, acknowledging my poverty
and no longer resisting, denying, or fighting it,
I indeed come to realize
that you view it differently
than I have so often tended to do.
You look upon me, not with condemnation,
with eyes of harshness and rigidity,
but rather with tenderness and compassion,

as upon your beloved child, hurting in his wounds.

Yes, Father, I come to know
the most freeing truth:
it is not in self-preoccupation, in frustration,
that I come to know myself as I am,
but in the spirit of surrender,
in relaxation of heart,
in which I simply lay all bare before you
and leave it...leave it in your loving arms.

I come to recognize and to understand
that only in the enveloping radiance of your light
can I see and feel in truth who I really am.

ישוע

PURE OF HEART (PART II)

“Blessed are the pure of heart,”
Jesus said, “for they shall see God.”
God almighty, God of beauty and of love!
We too want to see you, to gaze upon your face!
But with our impure hearts,
the light is too blinding;
indeed, we do not, often, even recognize it as light.
Ah...but, loving God, I feel as if I hear you saying:

It is true, my child, that your heart is broken,
that it bears within it
so many disordered movements,
but I want you to know
that I understand your wounds.
You bear in yourself the scars of sin:
those which have been received as a burden
by all who belong to the human race,
those which are the result of your own choice,
and those, child,
which have been inflicted upon you.
But you need to know, and to understand,
that your wounds are not the deepest part of you.
They do not define you in your identity,
nor constrain you from your destiny,
if only, child, you desire me and my life.
Indeed, it is only the broken heart
which, by my grace, can be made whole.

There is a deeper place in the heart
—in the very heart that bears these wounds!—
in which I look upon you
and love you unceasingly.
And you must understand, beloved child,
that I see your wounds, your sins, your pain,
in the light of your beauty as my precious one,
and not the other way around.
Your wounds cause my heart to ache,
not because they cause me disgust,
or cause me to turn away and reject you in hate,
but because I see how they hurt you, child,
and constrain you from my gift for you,
from a gift which, by my grace,
do you not also most desire?

Lay your heart before me, my beloved.
Are you willing to be vulnerable,
to open up your interior to me,
to my own vulnerable and loving touch?
I can heal you, I can purify you,
I can touch, transform, and transfigure your heart,
so that the deepest truth I have implanted in you
—this beauty and truth that I already see—
may blossom forth in radiant beauty
and shed its light through all that you are.

Look at my beloved Son, vulnerable before you,
unveiling in love and trust his inner Heart.
Look at him who is deeply wounded,
wounded and hurt by the wounds of sin.
And yet look at One who is pure of heart!
Look at him whose wounds
are transformed by Love,
and now allow the healing Light to pass through!
And take refuge, dearest, dearest child,
in his wounds which welcome you.

ישוע

IF THE SON MAKES YOU FREE

You await me, loving God,
in the place of poverty and dependency,
in the heart of my deep powerlessness.
You touch me
in my place of deepest woundedness,

and this touch is healing and consoling.
For where before I felt I was most alone
is precisely the place where you have come to me,
come to me intimately and lovingly,
to unite me, now and eternally, to yourself.

Indeed, as I sit in the darkness,
nursing my wounds, afraid, alone,
listening to my breath in the stillness—
I suddenly hear the breathing of another,
sitting close by my side.
Another person, and yet the breath
is raspy, filled with anguish and with pain.

A flash of compassion fills my heart,
and from my own suffering I reach out
to console another in the midst of theirs.
I reach out a hand to touch the other,
and my hand feels a bare shoulder,
a shoulder that is damp with blood,
lacerated with wounds,
wounds not unlike my own.
Ah yes, like me, suffering and isolated!
But, then again, we are *alone together* now.

I run my hands up, and touch the other's face,
which is also covered in blood, torn with wounds.
But then a hand grips my own—
two hands, holding mine in their grasp.
And the other draws my hand down,
down the lacerated neck and chest,
and stops, stops at his side,
pressing my hand against his ribs.
And here there is a gaping wound,
flowing steadily with water and blood...
flowing with life and light.

A flood of feeling washes over me,
and it is as if this wound is sheltering me,
protecting me, enveloping me in itself,
in the Heart of the One who,
in this darkness, in this woundedness,
has taken me wholly into himself.
And in the same instant I feel
that the Other is penetrating into my wounds,
touching me there in my most vulnerable place...
and it is the touch of a Healer, a Consoler,

of a Friend and a Lover who understands.

In this place I experience the truth
of who I really am, deeper than my wounds,
and yet alive within them, burning purely:
I experience the love of this Other,
the love he has for me in my uniqueness,
a love that is so passionate, so full of tenderness,
that it has become one with me in my suffering,
and yet has transformed it in a mysterious joy.

And now I spontaneously live in him,
in the One who is my Center and my All,
attentive to him, loving him, seeking him,
and welcoming the gift that comes to me,
from his loving hands and Heart, unceasingly.
And this very living for and in the Other
allows him to live his own life in me.

Yes, Father, to lose myself in Christ
and for Christ,
to lose myself, in Christ,
for my brothers and sisters,
is to find myself yet again
in the embrace of your love—
this love that has first loved me,
drawing near and sheltering me
in my inmost truth,
in the embrace that already holds me unceasingly
in each and every moment of my life.

Yes, to be a little one, to be a child,
to be free and, liberated, to be always playful,
to be receptive to the gift of your love
and of each thing within your love,
becoming, in this, spontaneously, a gift in return.
To be in each moment the gift that I am from you,
broken by my sin
and the fragmentation of this world,
and yet infinitely loved,
redeemed, healed by grace,
and radiant in the light of your own eternal gaze.

This gaze which, penetrating into me
and bestowing on me unceasingly
the gratuitous gift of existence—of all things!—
opens me to see gift in all things,

the gift of each one of my brothers and sisters,
and to welcome them
with open arms and open heart...
as we are all bathed
in the radiant and healing light
of the One who has so lovingly drawn near,
who has enveloped us all
within his tender embrace.

ישוע

A COVENANT OF HEARTS

Jesus, you are so infinitely tender and meek,
gentle and compassionate with the ailing heart.
The bruised reed you do not break,
nor do you snuff out the smoldering wick—
the heart that is bruised by abuse, by wounds,
and whose hope is faltering...but a spark.
Rather, you draw near to us in our pain,
and take us by the hand
—just as the Father always holds yours
and leads you gently every step of the way.

You draw near, loving Jesus,
to open the eyes of the blind,
to bring out prisoners from confinement,
and from the dungeon,
those who live in darkness.
And how many forms of blindness,
of confinement, of darkness, are there!
But you compassionately descend into all of this,
embracing us, identifying with us, Jesus...
not accusing or condemning,
not chastising nor laying heavy burdens.
Rather, you take every burden upon yourself
and ask only one thing, one thing of us:
Come to me, all you
who are weary and heavy burdened,
and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you,
this yoke which is but letting me carry,
letting me carry your burdens with you,
and you will find rest for your souls.
For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Yes, Jesus, you enter with us into darkness,

you draw near in the vulnerability of our pain,
of our thirst, our deep desire, our insecurity,
and here you open up to us your own Heart,
a Heart that is itself vulnerable, wounded,
rent open and bleeding,
pouring out blood and water.
But these wounds, this gentle outpouring,
this is a healing mystery that, touching us,
brings forth life and health in our souls,
as we find ourselves reflected in you, Christ,
and as you come to live in us.
In all the depths of our humanity,
in the full extent of our poverty,
in the mystery of our existence, so much to bear,
you are present, loving, holding, carrying.

And we find you, Jesus,
not by fleeing from this place of need,
from the vulnerability of our woundedness,
but from abiding in this place,
and yet transcending it
(or rather finding grace within).
Yes, our healing consists in accepting,
in accepting all our burdens and our wounds,
and in trustingly opening them, Jesus,
in opening and surrendering them to you,
so that they may experience your healing touch
and be irradiated by your glorious,
transfiguring light.
For here your Heart and our own
mysteriously begin to interpenetrate...
for they have come to share all things.

This mysterious sharing, most gentle Savior,
this union in which you come to live in me,
in the places of my inmost heart and life
which you have affirmed in their hidden beauty
and have made even more sacred
by your presence...
this union is a Covenant.
Yes, you live in me, dear Jesus,
with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
and I live in you, in you who cannot be contained,
but take me up into the expansive embrace
of the love of the Most Holy Trinity.

For this is what a covenant is:

the union of hearts, of persons,
who are totally given to one another, and forever.
Weakness shot through with glory,
the redemptive Cross birthing the Resurrection.
You dwell with me in the deepest place,
so that I may, already, and for all eternity,
dwell in the inmost place of your own life,
in the bosom of the eternal Father
and in the radiant joy of the Spirit of love...
the single heartbeat that you Three share
surging all around me, and deep within my own!

ישוע

RIPPLES

*"My heart is moved with pity for the crowd,
because they have been with me now
for three days
and have nothing to eat.
If I send them away hungry to their homes,
they will collapse on the way,
and some of them have come a great distance."*
(Mark 8:2-3)

Ah, dear Jesus, what tenderness and compassion
there is present in the depths of your Heart!
You are sensitive to the needs, the weakness,
the longing, and the most humble experience
of those entrusted to you by the Father.
But what is perhaps even more amazing, Jesus,
is that you open this inner compassion to me,
making it known to me by telling me,
"My heart is moved with pity for the crowd."

And by telling me this, Jesus,
you invite me to share in your own compassion,
to welcome into my heart the waves
which are ever surging deep within your own.
And what are these waves,
these surging movements
but those of your tender and loving receptivity
to the ripples cast from the depths of every heart...
every heart crying out for love, for compassion,
for the sheltering care that gives security
in the frailty and darkness of this world?

And when I open my heart, however little,
to feel something of what you, Jesus, feel,
you continue and ask another question:
“How many loaves do you have?”
What is this, my Lord?
I have so little...
nothing in comparison with the crowd.
But you silently welcome my inadequacy,
the poverty of my empty hands,
and simply set to work.

You ask me to draw near to them,
to speak with them and to ask them,
in your name, to sit down on the grass.
And then you take what I have given,
my very flesh and blood, dear Lord,
my hopes, my desires, my fears and pains,
and you thank your Father for it,
breaking it in your tender hands
and distributing it for the crowd.

But what is feeding them, dear Jesus?
It is not me, my own frailty,
but the beauty of your own eternal love!
As long as I remain poor, humble,
and transparent with these empty hands
and this vulnerable, naked heart,
then your grace can pour forth undimmed.
My very poverty becomes a “eucharist”
for the good of my brothers and sisters,
since it is immersed in the Ocean of your Love
and conformed to your own Eucharistic Gift.

My very flesh, my heart, my acts, my words,
simply become like ripples, Jesus,
flowing forth from the center of your Heart,
where, in my weakness, my poverty,
and, yes, in my belovedness,
I abide always, unceasingly.

ישוע

OUR FATHER

Just as the rain and the snow come down,
you have said, heavenly Father and loving God,
and do not return
until they have watered the earth,
making it fruitful, giving seed to him who sows
and bread to the one who eats,
so too is your Word, descending to this earth,
who does not ascend into heaven
until he has finished his course.
He comes among us, your only-begotten One,
the Word who proceeds from your mouth,
and by his presence and his touch
he makes all things new.

His descending to us in loving compassion,
becomes for us, Father, an ascending with him
into the intimacy of your own loving embrace.
He comes and allows himself to be, as it were,
burst open in the expansiveness of love,
giving himself as the hidden seed
that is buried in this earth,
continually fructifying until the end of time.
He gives himself as Bread to those who hunger
and as the Joy of every longing heart.

And he teaches us this, Father,
through his loving actions and his words,
and through his very presence among us.
In the very prayer he gave us,
there is this twofold movement,
of descending grace
—of your holiness, your kingdom—
to penetrate our world, to satisfy our hunger,
to purify and protect us,
until it carries us home, at the end,
into the eternal shelter of your love.

He teaches us to pray: Our Father.
Ah, these inexpressible words
that we would not dare to say
unless the Son himself had told us!
For he came, Father, to us who were fallen,
in order to unite us to himself as adopted children
who belong, in him and through him, to you—
not children in name only, but in truth,

who receive in our inner being your very life,
a participation in your divine nature,
making us children in the Son
and partakers of that awesome movement
of the Trinity's inner life:
the mutual self-giving, the joyful surrender,
the abiding intimacy of Father, Son, and Spirit.

Let us, our Father, let us know this truth,
not only in our mind, but in our heart!
Let it sink deep into the recesses of our soul,
penetrating the wounded places within us,
the places where we fear we are unlovable,
the places where we grasp for escape or sin,
where the joy of childhood has not yet blossomed,
where we have not yet found, in your arms,
the playfulness and the tranquil repose
of one who knows that he or she is,
unconditionally and uniquely, loved by you.

Let us know that we are held already
within your enduring and tender embrace,
and indeed that you live deep within us,
unceasingly loving us and giving yourself to us.
And from this moment-by-moment
joy of belonging,
carry us unceasingly, in your beloved Son,
toward the consummation of intimacy
in the full light of vision, love, and understanding,
in the heart of your loving embrace,
that awaits us at the end of time.

ישוע

INSEPARABLY UNITED

*"I am the true vine,
and my Father is the vine grower...
Remain in me, as I remain in you.
Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own
unless it remains on the vine,
so neither can you unless you remain in me.
I am the vine, you are the branches.
Whoever remains in me and I in him
will bear much fruit,
because without me you can do nothing." (John 15:1, 4-5).*

The vine and the branches...
are these two separate things,
or simply parts of the same living organism?
Ah, it is clear that they are inseparably united,
the vine being the wholeness,
the encompassing truth,
and branches belonging to this vine
and drawing their life, their being,
their fruit from it.

Yes, Jesus, we were created in God's image
from the very first moment of conception,
bearing the marks of God's life written clearly
in the very nature of our personhood—
in solitude-oriented-toward-communion
and in the capacity to receive and to give
in a conscious, free, and living way.
But because of original sin that openness
of our inmost being to loving relationship
has collapsed instead into lonely isolation,
like a branch separating itself from the vine.

Yet the Father has sent you to us,
and you, dear Jesus, have willingly come.
You take us up into yourself,
wedding yourself to us in a mystical marriage,
and adopting us into the divine life once again
(and more fully that was present in the beginning).
This is that mystery portrayed
by the vine and the branches:
that we become inseparable from you,
in whom alone we can fully be who we are.
For you, Son of God, Beloved One,
are the Image and Likeness of God,
and only in conformity with you,
sharing in your liberty, your purity, your love,
can we become fully image as we are meant to be.

This gift comes to us, flowing from your Heart,
which has been opened wide for us on the Cross...
and all that is asked is that, in faith, we receive.
Our salvation—this grafting onto the living Vine—
is a pure and gratuitous gift of grace,
not based on our deserving, our merits, our effort,
but simply on you
and the amazing mystery of your love.
And yet this gift,

this pure and freely offered grace,
doesn't merely grasp us from the outside,
declaring clean and holy what,
in truth, remains impure.
No, it rather penetrates
our inner being to the core
and healed, purifies,
and transforms it from within.

In the pouring of water on the body
—what an amazing mystery,
hidden from our eyes!—
the power of grace
liberates and renews the inner heart!
This beloved person,
eternally known and loved by God,
is now irradiated by the life
of Father, Son, and Spirit,
who fully inhabit the spirit, soul, and body.
And the person is taken up to participate, freely,
in the mystery of the Triune life of love,
a life of mutual self-giving
and of intimate embrace.

Do you see, beloved heart? Do you see?
God comes to you because he loves you,
because he sees in you his image,
as fractured and obscured by sin as it may be...
and he realizes in you, concretely, fully,
what he has realized first in Christ:
the marriage of divinity and humanity,
bride and Bridegroom
made one by the bonds of grace,
and the two together abiding,
with and in one another,
within your all-enveloping paternal embrace.

This is the meaning of redemption and salvation,
and of our justification by grace through faith.
And this mystery of beauty implanted in our heart
like a seed buried deep in the soil of our soul...
this is a Life-principle
that seeks to blossom and renew.
It touches the innate mystery of our humanity,
of the unique personal mystery of each one of us—
ordered as it is by God's very design
for the divine life

of intimate, personal loving,
and interpenetration of persons.
And as this newness is accepted, we experience
the full blossoming of the truth of our being:
the truth of abiding in belovedness.

Yes, dear Father, and this belovedness unfolds
in the joy of mutual self-giving
and intimate embrace,
by which Christ comes to inhabit us,
vibrantly living,
and we in turn live in him, trustingly surrendered.
He has come, as man, to live with us our life,
and he continues to do so now in eternity,
bearing still our humanity,
redeemed and transfigured,
taken up into the very life of God.
And we, in turn, live with his very life,
the life of the Son of God and Son of man;
we live by faith in the One
who gave himself for us,
which is to share
in his very Person and being at work in us.

Thus the whole of our life, in its concreteness,
in the mystery
of our mind, our will, our affections,
in our very bodily existence in this world,
becomes a sharing in his own life and mystery,
as we become like him,
conformed to him through grace.
The bride reflects more and more
the beauty of her Lover,
who has impressed upon her
his features and his love,
and thus she indeed knows herself more fully
to be a beloved child, taken up within the Son.
He introduces her,
as their union deepens and matures,
into the mystery
of his own childhood in the Father,
which is the origin and consummation
of her childhood too.

Thus this beloved heart,
redeemed and saved by grace,
as she acquiesces to this movement

of pure gift in her
and yields her whole life
in obedience to its law of love,
becomes transformed
in the Image that she reflects,
like a mirror or a crystal lake,
receptive in contemplation.
Indeed, through her complete
and loving surrender
in the burning passion of both prayer and of act
—or rather of unceasing prayer enfolding all
and penetrating its with itself and its fullness—
she comes to live in the One who lives within her.
This Love, this Life-principle, given by the Father
in and through his beloved Son, the loving Spouse,
liberates, renews, and transfigures her from within
by the Spirit of Love that becomes her inner life.

This all-enveloping mystery of divine grace,
this ever-deepening bond of intimate love,
unfolds throughout this life
in a beautiful principle of growth,
until that Mystery that has been given
comes to fullness
in the perfect, shared belonging
of Bridegroom and bride,
which is consummated in the moment
when, through death,
the heart passes beyond
the confines of this world, purified,
into the abyss of the divine life
of communion and joy.

ישוע

SILENT CONSOLATION

It is amazing, Jesus, that you, the eternal God,
come to us in order to beg us to come to you.
You, the One who with the Father
receive our prayer,
draw near to us and ask us to ask.
Man is always a beggar before God, they say,
and this is true... But Jesus,
in you we realize that God is a beggar before us.

Ask me! You cry out unceasingly.

If humans answer us because of our persistence,
then how much more will God answer us,
not to get us to leave him alone,
but simply because he loves us
and wants us to learn to come again and again.

Yes, heavenly Father
—how blessed to call you this!—
you pour out gifts upon your children unceasingly.
You ask us to ask, encourage us to seek,
and stand at the door waiting for us to knock.
But why, then, do we often feel
that you do not answer,
that you are far from the sound of our pleading?
We cry out for you
to turn our mourning into gladness
and our sorrows into wholeness.
But so often it feels like nothing changes,
and we continue to walk
in darkness without consolation,
to grope our way without illumination.

Ah, Father, it is in part because
we have not yet learned how to listen!
You do speak; you do offer consolation
in each and every succeeding moment,
to every slightest sigh and prayer,
but you speak in silence, loving God,
and your consoling presence itself cannot be felt,
even though it sends subtle rays
throughout the soul.

But we often look
in the wrong place for an answer,
for a “solution” which will remove the struggle
and thus the process of transformation,
which is purifying us in the night of trust
and slowly causing us to burn with sacred fire
through the love that is kindled in the pain.

Your silence itself, Father, is an answer,
and often the deepest one that you can give.
In Jesus we come to understand this.
For his response to our suffering,
to our every prayer,
is not to give us a facile explanation,
or simply to remove it (which leaves

the deeper problem
of trust and surrender unsolved)
but rather to pitch his tent here with us,
and to abide in silence, holding us.

And through this, gradually, mysteriously,
we discover an abiding peace and joy
springing up in the soil of our soul,
a joy deeper than everything else surrounding us,
drawing our hearts to turn to you again and again,
and to thirst for the fullness
of your silent embrace,
which, hidden by the veil of this life,
we nonetheless already taste.

Indeed, we learn also what it means
to respond with love to the desires of others,
to their suffering, their hope, their pain.
It is not to offer facile solutions,
to fix their problem (and often “at arms’ length”),
and then to send them away.
It is rather to accept them unreservedly,
and to hold them, gently,
in the silence of the heart,
so that the loneliness of suffering of two together
gradually becomes the joy of communion,
and the divine light, shining silently,
penetrates into the heart to console and heal.

ישוע

WITHIN ME (PART I)

I.
There has been a tendency, Father,
throughout the history of human thought and life,
to radically divide the human person
into the carnal flesh and the pure spirit.
The inmost sanctuary of the heart
where each of us is lovingly invited
to the blossoming of intimacy,
to the joy of interpersonal embrace,
has been seen as radically opposed
to the emotions, to our human desires,
to what belongs to this body of ours.
(But where do we love except in the body,
and where does the thirst for communion exist

except in the concrete existence that is ours?)

Yes, the truth is that these are interconnected,
the body and the spirit, nature and grace.
And the most real, concrete human desires
that we bear within us come from you,
and provide the very groundwork
of our transformation in Jesus Christ,
and, indeed, never disappear,
but rather find their fulfillment
in being transfigured in loving communion
with the humanity of your incarnate Son.

The heart, in its true sense
as the inmost essence of the person
—of this unique individual who I am—
is not exalted in some purely spiritual realm,
and discovered through stripping off the body,
nor through estranging myself from the affections
of hope, joy, fear, and sorrow (and all the rest)
into a kind of apathy toward all things.
No, it is rather quite the opposite.

The heart is known and felt
when I no longer flee from myself,
from the concreteness of who I really am
in the humility and lowliness of this flesh.
The heart is the meeting-place of body and spirit
in the indivisible reality of my personhood:
my unique, unrepeatable, and precious “I.”

Yes, when I cease to flee from my lowliness,
from the poverty that lies deep within me
(as well as from the mysterious beauty that is mine),
when I sink back into the wellspring of experience,
as the body communicates with the soul
and the soul with the body,
the two intermingling, yet distinct,
and both unceasingly in dialogue
with the world that surrounds me always...
in this place, mysteriously,
you come to me and reveal yourself.

In true knowledge of myself
I learn that I am known and loved by you—
or, rather, in letting myself be known by you
I come to know myself as I truly am.

And thus I know what it really means
to know myself: which is to be known by you;
for I am who I am, not through what I see,
but, Father, I am what you see and know in me.

Here I can let go of the need to control
and simply sink, restfully, into your loving arms.
Here, in the silence of my flesh,
I can feel and hear my heartbeat—
the beating of this heart within my breast,
which, yes, is mine, uniquely, from you.
I feel in myself, indeed, my fears and anxieties,
my hopes, my yearnings, my wounds.
And these, too, mysteriously, give you to me.

All the affections of my nature, Father,
all the feelings of this flesh,
all the thoughts that fill my mind,
become as sacraments that communicate,
in simple grace, the fullness of your presence
so tenderly and lovingly to me.

Then I learn that I need no longer
“lift” myself up above myself
in order to discover you.
I do not need to reject who I am
nor hate and cast away my weakness.
No, Father, you gently reveal to me
that true healing in your love consists,
not in being “ideally” flawless
and without struggle,
but in living within my woundedness
with open hands, not grasping or fleeing,
but simply welcoming your presence,
within all and deeper than all,
and abiding, always, in your secret embrace.

ישוע

WITHIN ME (PART II)

If the heart truly resides
—and lives, so vividly!—
not in where I “prefer” to be,
but in the reality of my being, here and now,
then I seek you, God, and find you,
not through flight, but through surrender,

through letting myself be, as I am,
and as you love me, unceasingly.

And the mysterious thing is that,
when I let go of the frustration
which makes me continually fight myself,
I find a peace welling up deep within.
For I take refuge in the interior sanctuary
where you always dwell, holding me.
And from this inner place, your presence,
and your sure and undying love,
flows forth to suffuse and penetrate
the rest of my body, my being, my life.

And from this place of empty hands,
when I have let go of all, not to reject it,
but simply to be as I am in you,
I discover you present where I did not before.
In the weakness of my body,
in its illness, its anxiety, its struggle,
and in the frailty of my own spirit
before the great mystery of life,
before the ineffability of both good and evil...
in all of this, my loving God, I find your Love.

For I discover, when I no longer
flee from the sensitivity, the pain,
the heart-wrenching longing in the heart,
I discover that you are here, in this, speaking.
I enter into the silence and solitude,
my Father, not to estrange myself from humanity,
not to become somehow inhuman,
or superhuman,
but just to be, as vulnerably as possible,
as human as can be...
and thus to draw near to you.

Therefore I am not afraid to love people
even when, before anything,
what it does is to wound my heart.
For in wounding...it makes me more alive.
I am not afraid to give this heart away
again and again, a thousand times—
and yet each time, unique,
as if the only one.
Indeed, I am not afraid
to allow love to knit those intimate bonds

between hearts that bear together a special affinity,
that are drawn to one another in a unique way.
For what is love if not unique,
what is communion if not
the sharing of two hearts?

Indeed, Father, I thank you for this gift
that causes the heart, blessed, to bleed.
For this pain is a glimpse of heaven's joy.
Heaven's joy is alive
in the painful aching of the heart,
which, tasting love,
glimpses the beauty of the other,
and yearns for the eternity
in which alone all will be visible,
transparent in the light of your perfect Love.

ישוע

IN MY ARMS

*"My sheep hear my voice;
I know them, and they follow me.
I give them eternal life,
and they shall never perish.
No one can take them out of my hand.
My Father, who has given them to me,
is greater than all,
and no one can take them
out of the Father's hand.
The Father and I are one."* (John 10:27-30)

There are so many things in this world, dear God,
which try to separate us from you.
We feel buffeted on every side,
and from within, by attacks against our faith,
by temptations, fears, and darkness,
by affliction and misunderstanding.

But you sent your Son to us,
and he entered into the warfare,
stripped like the young David
with nothing but a sling and a stone,
to face the giant which assails us.
Indeed, his only weapon was Love,
naked, bare, and defenseless on the Cross.

But the Cross...the Cross,
we realize that it is a shepherd's crook
by which he drives away the wolves!
Indeed, it is like a sword
which strikes down the tempter,
yet not through violence,
but through the unbreakable patience
and the radiant generosity of love.

Jesus, your beloved Son, is the Shepherd,
who comes to us, lost sheep,
wandering and isolated on the hillsides.
He speaks to us our own true name,
looking at us, knowing us,
and calling us by our true identity.
Yes, he alone knows who we are,
with you, Father, and the Spirit,
for we are, in our deepest truth,
the mystery that you see and love in us.

In revealing this to us,
he reveals to us the most consoling truth:
You, dearly beloved, are a child of God.
This is your inmost truth, your identity.
You are one who is infinitely loved
and who has been created
from the womb of eternity,
from the bosom of the intimacy of the Trinity,
Father, Son, and Spirit in eternal, joyful embrace.

And you have been created
simply to share in this life,
the life of love from which you have come.
Do not worry that you have fallen,
that you have turned away in sin,
that you are broken and buffeted about...
for I have come to seek you out,
and I have, through my Cross and Resurrection,
taken you upon my gentle shoulders.

Only let me carry you,
let me bring you, my little one,
to the place from which you have strayed.
And do not fear that another will,
through malice, pull you from my grasp.
No, simply do not try to escape from my hands
—simply let me hold, shelter, and guide,

as weak as you feel yourself to be—
and I will protect and defend you,
and carry you to the place you desire to be.

For I promise you solemnly, beloved one,
that no one, nothing,
can pull you from my grasp...
for you have been given to me by my Father,
and in the nakedness of my Heart
I have welcomed you.
Here I unceasingly shelter you, secure and safe,
just as I am secure in the embrace of my Father.
Indeed, little one, I hold you as he holds me,
and both of us together, you and I,
are together, one,
held in his loving and paternal arms.

ישוע

A PURE REFLECTION

*“He who believes in me,
believes not in me but in him who sent me.
And he who sees me
sees him who sent me.
I have come as light into the world
that whoever believes in me
may not remain in darkness.”* (John 12:44-46)

Jesus, what is it that allows us,
in looking upon you, to see the Father?
What is it that makes our faith
—the surrender of our hearts to you—
a surrender to the One who sent you?
Ah, dear Jesus, it is because you are the Son,
the Beloved One, who always rests,
unceasingly, in his bosom, in his embrace.

When you come to us, when you are sent,
you do not for a moment leave your Father,
but rather bridge the gap between us,
fallen children of God, and him who loves us,
with the fullness of your filial presence.
Because your face always reflects his face,
like a crystal lake, still and clear,
in which every contour shines with purity...
because of this, Jesus, when we look at you,

we see the face of our loving Father reflected.

Because you dwell unceasingly, Christ,
in the truth of your identity
—which is identical with your belovedness,
with the Father's love and gift
reflected in your being, received from him,
and given back in the purity of love—
when you turn to us, all manifests this truth.

Your every word, your every act,
your very countenance and expression,
shines with the light of the Father's love.
We feel, we sense, we see in you, Jesus,
that you are One who knows that he is Beloved.
This is the source of your confidence,
your unshakable peace and joy,
your sovereign freedom in the face of all things.

The whole path of your saving obedience
is indeed but a manifestation of this truth
of your constant and undying
intimacy with the Father.
It is enveloped in that joy of the Trinity's life,
and does not for a moment unfold outside of this.

Rather, through this loving obedience,
this ardent and burning compassion for us,
you pierce into our waywardness and fear,
re-opening us by your love and tender presence
to the face of the Father shining for us,
to the truth of our identity—our belovedness.

Yes, by your gentle touch,
your consoling presence,
you still the tormented waters of our soul,
so that what before was restless, storm-tossed,
may again become calm and still...
and in this way reveal
the image of the Father's love,
reflected, reflected, reflected in our heart,
shining on the face of our soul.

Confidence, security, and peace,
Jesus, are to be found here...
in the all-enveloping truth of your love,
in the certainty that the light reflected in us

is but the light of tender and unconditional love,
a love utterly unique and special for each one.
And only within this truth of belovedness,
in the confident security of our identity
—which is true, already, in each moment,
a pure gift flowing from the hands of God—
can we also discern the path we are to walk,
the way of obedience in the freedom of love.

Yes, within the all-enfolding truth of love,
by abiding unceasingly in belovedness,
dear Jesus, our own countenance, our own life,
our own existence can freely reflect
the image of the Father's face, to every person,
this image which shines unceasingly in our heart.

ישוע

FREEDOM OF HEART

In the perspective of this radiant truth
of the light of your face shining in the heart
—the heart that has become still and calm
through the grace of accepting your love
and through trusting self-surrender—
in this light we begin to understand
the nature of true freedom in this world.

Freedom is not so much an external reality,
but a disposition of the inner heart,
of the hidden person who I am before you.
This is because my deepest truth is not,
in reality, my activity,
my relationships with others,
the tasks and the mission I embrace in this world.
No, I am something, someone deeper,
in the place of nakedness where I abide,
with empty hands and open heart,
before you, God, from whom I come.

But so often, insecure in my identity,
and unable to rest in this place of belovedness,
I seek an elusive freedom in external things.
What I am really doing in this, however,
is grasping for possessions, for a false security,
which cover over the emptiness within.
This is because freedom flowers

not through flight,
through flight from the tumult within
into a tumult of activity and achievement without.

Rather, it springs up
when I descend into this place
of my weakness and poverty before you,
letting go of my defenses,
my need to “measure up,”
and simply let you love me gratuitously,
your tender countenance reflecting in my heart,
which, through this poverty of self-abandonment,
has again become silent and still enough
to let the face of Love reflect on its surface.

Yes, true freedom is found in silence and solitude,
and only then can it be manifest, from this place,
in word, in act, in relationship,
in life in this world.

Only when my every day, my every moment,
is enfolded within the grace of pure acceptance,
within receptivity to your love given unceasingly,
can it unfold in truth and in authentic liberty.

The human heart, confronted with poverty,
with the sense of inadequacy and need,
and with the experience
of suffering and limitation,
has a spontaneous desire to flee,
to escape far away and seek refuge outside.
But what this frail heart does not recognize
is that freedom is to be found *within*.

Freedom is not found
in fleeing from my limitation,
but rather through abiding within it
—within the unique contours of my life,
my personality, and, above all,
within my innermost personal mystery,
that unique image you see as you look on me.

Within this self-acceptance I learn,
gradually, to abandon myself to you,
the One who loves me
tenderly and unconditionally.
And only in this true and total abandonment
can I allow the power of grace to flood me

and to draw me beyond my limitations
into what before seemed impossible.

All that is necessary, here, is that you ask.
If you reveal in this place
that you desire something,
then there is no reason to worry...
you will arrange all things.
And indeed the whole movement
of this obedience,
of the path I walk in life, in action, in word,
is only an expression
of this deeper freedom of belovedness,
and only finds its place within—never outside of—
this sacred place of being held and loved by you.

If I flee, however,
the obstacles will be insurmountable,
for I will fight with the frail weapons
to which I cling,
even if I get a sense of exhilaration
in false autonomy.
But it is indeed necessary to fight for freedom,
yet often not in the way that we imagine—
for the true fight consists in learning
to take refuge always in the Heart of Christ
and to let go of all that stirs up the soul,
so that it can be calm and still,
reflecting the light of love.

Yes, when I let go of these false weapons,
this flight into fragmentation and superficiality,
and descend into that place of utter nakedness,
opening my wounds, my desires, my hopes
to the One who gazes upon me lovingly,
then I experience the true liberation...as a gift.

My own interior vulnerability encounters yours...
the vulnerability of a God who is naked and poor,
and who has accepted the Cross to show me this.
My naked heart encounters your Heart,
a Heart that, in nakedness, is totally at peace—
and you take me up into your arms,
holding me close, unceasingly, in your embrace,
and there I learn to rest, to relax,
to fall asleep as a little child in its mother's arms.

DO NOT BE TROUBLED

You invite us, dear Jesus, to peace...
to a peace that this world cannot give
and which, indeed, nothing can take away.
This mystery of peace is your gift to us,
entrusted to us, given wholly,
in that moment in which you open your Heart,
sharing with us the intimate secrets
that are yours in the bosom of the Father,
to whom you are united
in the single kiss of the Spirit.

“You have faith in God; have faith also in me.”
The mystery of this abiding peace
is woven together inseparably to *faith*,
to the reality of loving trust and trusting love,
which welcomes the gift
that comes to us gratuitously
in each and every moment, unceasingly,
and in which we abandon ourselves,
like little children,
into the space of your welcoming embrace.

This, Jesus, is the same peace that is yours,
the unbreakable security of a Beloved One
who rests cradled always in the Father’s arms.
Before going to the agony of Gethsemane,
before entering into the darkness of your Passion,
you say to us, “You will all leave me alone,
but I am not alone...for the Father is with me.”
And then, immediately afterward:
“I have said this to you that *in me*
you may have peace.”

From the very heart of the Father’s embrace,
from the joy and peace that you receive from him,
the burning fire of compassion is conceived
deep within your Heart...
for you yearn to draw near to us,
restless, afraid, and lost in waywardness,
and to share with us the peace that is yours
within the dwelling place of the Father.

And as you enter, as you enter

into the darkness of our suffering and turmoil
the light of your love and tenderness
—yes, the flame of your undying peace and joy—
is not extinguished, is not eclipsed!
Rather, it burns like a lamp in the darkness,
like the sun illumining all with its rays.
Peace, peace, peace...to know oneself
to be infinitely loved by the Father,
and held, held, held by him at every moment.

In this, Jesus, you rest...
and this very abiding repose allows you
to open your Heart to welcome us,
in all our pain, our hope, our desire,
into the inmost place of your embrace.
And welcoming us thus you give to us
the same love that, from the Father,
you have received.
Belovedness...in this you dwell,
and in your love for us we experience the same.
“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you...
Yes, do not be troubled,
for the Father himself loves you!”

ישוע

TRULY DIVINE

*“Amen, amen, I say to you,
the Son cannot do anything on his own,
but only what he sees the Father doing;
for what he does, the Son will do also.
For the Father loves the Son
and shows him everything that he himself does.”*

It is an amazing thing, dear Jesus,
that you are God, equal with the Father,
utterly sovereign and free, Lord of the world,
able to raise the dead,
to give life to whom you will,
and yet this radical power and liberty
is possible only because of your *utter dependency*.

You reveal that you are equal with the Father,
whom you call, with joy, your *Abba*,
and then, so the people will not misunderstand,
you say: *The Son cannot do anything...*

Yes, we presume that to be divine
is to live in a self-enclosed isolation,
a sovereignty in which
there is no will but one's own,
and the license to do,
in everything, as one wants—
but you show, us, Son of God and Son of man,
that true liberty lies in dependency,
and power is born
from the openness of obedience.

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve,
deceived by the lies of the tempter,
presumed that God was jealous of his prerogatives,
withholding from them good things as his own,
and laying on them
arbitrary burdens and commands.
Their response, therefore,
in their thirst to be "divine,"
to share in the life of God, was to grasp,
to seek to possess and to control as their own.
The problem is that this is *not* who God is.
No, he is pure and total Self-donation
and tender receptivity to the Beloved.

You come among us, truly divine,
and you reveal to us again, Jesus,
the face of the Father, which,
for us, has become so obscure.
"Whoever sees me sees the Father."
And what do we see when we look at you?
We see complete openness in loving self-surrender
and the tenderness of complete, radical acceptance.

Yes, before us you are utterly vulnerable,
your Heart given to us as a gift,
and this openness is but an expression
of your even more fundamental openness
before your loving and eternal Father,
who himself is unceasingly open before you:
"All that the Father has made known to me,"
you say to us,
"I have in turn made known to you."

Yes, you reveal
that the very Ground of your Being

is rooted in the bosom of the Father,
in the purity of his unceasing Gift,
the Gift which you are from him...
and in your unceasing acceptance of this Gift,
your willingness to be Beloved, precious,
and to let yourself be a Gift, in return,
back into the welcoming embrace of the Father.

“For the Father loves the Son,” you cry,
“and shows himself all that he is doing!”
This is the origin of your entire life and existence,
in both time and in eternity.
And what is the Father doing?
He is but giving his very self in love for you!
And welcoming you into himself, intimately!
And so you do nothing but what he does,
your own reciprocal gift awakened by his:
you welcome his gift, and give yourself totally.

This is the very essence of the divine life,
this mutual acceptance and shared surrender
between Father and Son, in the one Spirit,
the Spirit who is the Gift of both,
the Bond of love that unites you together,
and the radiant fruit of this sacred life.

“I do nothing but what the Father shows me,”
and before he shows you anything external,
dear Jesus, he simply shows you Love,
the love of this mutual gift, this intimate abiding,
this dwelling in the joy of perfect embrace.
For what is Love but the union of Persons
who belong, freely and willingly, to one another?
This is Love, and nothing else finds any meaning
if it seeks to take its place outside of this.

And so when you become man,
when you come to us, dear Jesus,
it is simply to reveal this Love to us,
and, taking us up in your arms, in your Heart,
to carry us with you back to your loving Father,
so that, with you and in you,
we too may share in the very life of love...
truly divine through sharing in your sonship,
through living the life
that God lives for all eternity.

HOSPITALITY OF HEART

*“Whoever has my commandments
and observes them
is the one who loves me.
Whoever loves me will be loved by my Father,
and I will love him and reveal myself to him.
Whoever loves me will keep my word,
and my Father will love him,
and we will come to him
and make our dwelling with him.
Whoever does not love me
does not keep my words;
yet the word you hear is not mine
but that of the Father who sent me.
I have told you this while I am with you.
The Advocate, the Holy Spirit
whom the Father will send in my name—
he will teach you everything
and remind you of all that I told you.”*
(John 14:21, 23-26)

The attitude of loving obedience
is above all a mystery of “hospitality of heart,”
an open space, docile and receptive,
to welcome the beauty and truth of the Beloved.
It is not, we know, the nature of God’s will
to be imposed arbitrarily from without,
simply the constraint of a greater power.
No, rather, his will and his command
is but the expression of the harmony of his Truth,
of his very being and life as Father, Spirit, and Son.

In the Garden of Eden, before the fall,
this was the truth which Adam and Eve lived
—enveloped through and through by God’s gift
and irradiated, by obedience,
with his radiant light.
Here, indeed,
obedience was simply pure acceptance,
the childlike and trusting reception of all things,
of each moment and each reality,
ever flowing from the Father’s loving hands.

Within this gratuitous and awesome gift

—which revealed to them
the nature of God as Love
and the nature of their own being,
ordered to the full blossoming
of love and communion, too—
the whole mystery of fidelity and responsibility
was but the spontaneous manifestation
of freedom,
and, at the same moment, and for the same reason,
was unchanging constancy in the “law of love”
that was inscribed in the depths of all creation.

Now, on the night before his Passion,
Jesus speaks to his disciples of obedience.
He, too, was obedient, and would be to the end,
manifesting in this his sovereign freedom
which could remain at liberty, in peace and joy,
even in the path of suffering and pain,
free to give itself to the very end, in constancy,
and also, above all,
to remain constant in the Father,
whose embrace shelters and holds unceasingly.

Yes, Jesus’ very “powerless” dependency
before the gift of his heavenly Father
is the source and the condition of his power.
For “the Son can do nothing on his own accord,
but only what he receives from the Father...
and the Father has unveiled himself before the Son
and given himself entirely in love.”
Therefore, in unceasing acceptance of this gift
—through abiding, always,
in the truth of belovedness!—
Jesus is free, not to falter in the face of opposition
or to be submerged in darkness and fear,
but rather free “to lay down his life to the end,
and free also to take it up again.”
And this, simply because he dwells in the victory,
in the unbreakable freedom of his Father
and in their inseparable union, a Bond of Love
which nothing, nothing can ever tear apart.

Jesus, for his part, turns to us,
revealing to us everything that, from the Father,
he has so trustingly received.
“As the Father has loved me,” he says,
“so have I in turn loved you.”

And therefore "you are not called slaves,
for a slave does not know what his master does;
but as for you, I have given to you everything,
unveiling the depths of my very Heart.
And therefore you are my friends,
for I have drawn you into intimacy with me,
I have drawn you to repose, with me and in me,
in the bosom of my Father and yours."

"Only welcome, therefore, this loving gift,
open your heart in trusting hospitality to receive,
and you will find yourself enfolded in God's gift,
irradiated through and through by his life
and the authentic freedom that springs from this."
Yes, the very mystery of our obedience,
Jesus, to you who have given yourself to us,
is but the blossoming of the relationship
that you have established with us in grace.

It is the laying open of our hearts,
which have become enclosed in sin and fear,
to welcome the gratuitous love of God
and to let him, again, hold and shelter us,
to let him, indeed,
make his home within our heart.
And thus, by inhabiting us
with his living presence,
through the grace and power of the Spirit,
he perpetuates in us, in a sacred co-operation,
the mystery of his own love and life...
the life of the Father abounding in generosity,
of the Son unceasingly receiving
and giving in return,
and of the union that blossoms
between the two eternally
in the Kiss of the Spirit whom they share.

ישוע

CRADLING THE WORLD

This inner and abiding truth of silence
is a contact with
the all-enveloping Mystery of Love,
which cradles the world within itself silently.
Thus it is not in any way a flight from reality,
a descent into untruth and a realm of lies.

It is the exact opposite—liberation by the truth,
which irradiates the heart in silence
and in silence frees it from disturbance,
from the ruckus and the anxiety of lies.

Then from this place, and always within it,
all else in life can be recognized as dwelling,
unceasingly, within the mystery
of the great Silence.

Indeed, each thing can be
an expression and a form
of the deep Silence from which all things flow
and to which, in the end, they all return.

Words themselves become bearers of silence,
and a look or gesture
expresses the silence of the heart.
Activity springs from a place of deeper repose
and manifests this repose in its very fruit.
All doing and all giving
expresses a prior acceptance,
and is but acceptance
manifest in a particular way—
and is enshrouded in the primary acceptance
of your all-enveloping and sheltering Love,
this Love that silently accepts and cherishes us,
holding us in ineffable stillness
in intimate embrace.

Indeed, every experience, in both joy and sorrow,
in enjoyment and in suffering, expresses Silence,
for it not only occurs
within the mystery of Silence,
but bears its presence in a mysterious way within.
The joy that washes over the heart
when it is touched by encounter with beauty,
or that wells up secretly from its inner depths—
this is a bearer and a form of your divine Silence,
the silent ecstasy of your eternal life,
in which Father, Son, and Spirit
behold one another,
and pass into one another, mutually indwelling,
in the fullness of the unchanging
“now” of eternity.

Each moment intersects with this eternity.
Each moment is a sacrament of grace.

Each moment is open to the fullness of divinity,
which is ceaselessly pressing upon me,
hidden only by a thin and fragile veil.
To dwell fully in each moment,
not pulled away by thought of past or future,
but rather opening my heart
to eternity present now...
this is to remain in contact with the Silence,
with the abyss of divinity, this boundless Ocean,
in whose depths I am immersed,
in stillness and repose.

Even in the experience of suffering,
in the mourning of those who are called blessed
—and indeed in this in a particularly intense way—
I come into contact with the mystery of Silence,
which is not a great emptiness, but inner fullness,
a Passion of the heart that is surrendered in love,
and in love welcomes the gift given from the other.

The movement of love in the suffering heart
can become an expression of communion
when the message of Silence
is read between the lines.
Indeed, in suffering the Silence speaks very loudly,
not, of course, with voice or word or feeling,
but in the mysterious beauty of the night.

This, however, is not just any kind of suffering,
for there is a suffering which arises,
not from the fullness of the silence,
but from the disturbance of interior noise.
The tempter comes to us and stirs up our feelings,
causing our thoughts and anxieties
to churn madly.
He grasps mind and emotions
and pulls to the surface,
so that we lose ourselves, and, like agitated water,
cease to recognize the silent message
that the hidden reflection of God's face ever gives.

But in the face of such temptation,
whether it arises from the evil one
or from the disordered movement
of our own heart,
there can be a deeper movement into silence,
as the heart flees again into the Heart of Jesus,

opening its woundedness and pain to him.
When the disorder, the brokenness,
the noise within us
is laid bare in vulnerability
before the eyes of Love,
it cannot but grow silent and still once again.

And then this silence and stillness
draws us on to a stillness and silence deeper yet.
For the darkness of the tempter,
shattered against the rock of the Redeemer,
leaves in its wake an abyss of longing
in the heart that has been torn open by affliction.

This longing, this openness of heart,
yes, this mysterious experience of cruciformity,
opens the way to experience of the divine Silence,
which is indeed a mystery of spiritual darkness,
a darkness, however,
which is but a Mystery of Light.

For this mysterious darkness,
in the aching pain of the heart in love,
is not the distress of anxiety and temptation,
nor the need to comprehend and to be in control.
It is, rather, the surging movement of surrender,
springing in each instant from a prior acceptance.

This inner “passion” of the heart, abiding in you
and in contact with the mystery of your love,
passionate in self-giving to the full—
this passion indeed transforms every experience,
not only the movement of the inmost heart,
but every joy and suffering of this life.
It lights them up from within
by the deeper mystery
of this passion of acceptance and surrender,
which binds hearts together as one in love.

Yes, the silence speaks clearly,
yet with a clarity deeper and more mysterious
than our words and concepts can ever give.
Yes, the night shines with a mysterious beauty,
and we realize that speaking of “darkness”
is but an image...
for the truth is that all is light,
light, and light alone,

appearing dark only because
it exceeds our ability to grasp.
Rather, it grasps us and expands us
beyond our limits,
to be, and to abide, in contact with your Mystery,
within the silence and stillness
of your loving embrace,
dearest Father, Son, and Spirit, ever one.

ישוע

UNITED IN HIM

To enter into this silence and solitude,
this inner quietude of heart in your presence,
is not, dear God, to forget about my brethren,
about all of your children in this world,
to whom I am inseparably united
in the Body of Christ.

To think that this is the case is a temptation,
another wile of the evil spirit, who, hating me,
wants to keep me on the surface,
tossed here and there,
estranged from myself and from you,
and therefore also from the ability to encounter,
in true heart-to-heart communion,
my brothers and sisters who are your gift to me.

Rather, it is only from the depths of the heart
—yes, from the innate solitude of my life,
my unique personal mystery and existence—
that I can truly welcome others
and let myself, through self-possession,
be given away totally as a gift for them.

It is necessary, therefore, to descend, descend...
into the stillness and silence of your Love in me,
this mystery of your habitation in my inner heart.

Only in this place can I see and feel in truth
the reality of my life and of the lives of others,
and the truth of this world—
illuminated by your Love.

Indeed, not only is this inner silence,
this hidden prayer of the heart, a necessity

for true "going-out" for others,
and true welcoming,
but it is also itself the deepest meeting-place.
For in this place I realize that in solitude
I am not truly alone at all...but quite the opposite.

The place of depth where you, dear God,
touch me in the nakedness of my being,
is the place where, in you and through you,
I touch my brothers and sisters most deeply too.

Yes, we are united in the truth of belovedness,
and only within this realm
do we know one another fully...
and yet in awe before the ever-greater mystery
alive in us.

Ah, Father, in the Heart of Jesus Christ
we are united,
in the ineffable silence and solitude that is his.
He comes to us, your beloved yet fallen children,
from the intimate solitude and word-filled silence
of his intimacy with you in eternity,
in the single, ceaseless Kiss of the Spirit.
He draws near to us without leaving your bosom
and enters into the experience
of our lonely isolation.

In this way he inhabits what before was closed,
closed in upon itself in fear and shame...
and makes it the meeting place of two in love.
Yes, in the mystery of his Passion
he penetrates into isolation and breaks it open,
transforming it into authentic solitude again.

As he hangs upon the Cross he is in solitude,
the deepest solitude
there has ever been in this world...
and yet this very solitude,
through his naked self-giving,
is open in cruciformity
to the most perfect intimacy.

As he hangs, with nothing covering his body,
his arms stretched wide in a gesture of love,
and his Heart itself open unconditionally to us,
he knits back together what was estranged.

In the sinews of his own Sacred Heart,
pierced through by the needle and thread of Love,
he weaves back together God and humanity,
the Trinity and each and every human heart.

Therefore, as each one of us is taken
and held close to him in his intimate solitude,
made one with him in the nakedness of encounter,
we are knit together intimately
to one another too.

Yes, and this means that when I draw near
and stand at the foot of his Cross in silence,
in the solitude
which is but the deepest meeting-place,
I come to the place of universal convergence,
where all things become one again
in the Heart of Christ.

ישוע

CROSS AND RESURRECTION

Abiding at the foot of the Cross of Jesus,
this is to encounter God
in the depths of my heart...
for it is here, implanted in my inmost being,
that the mystery of his Passion
and Resurrection unfolds.
In me he enters into solitude,
in me he opens solitude
to vulnerable self-surrender,
and in me this self-surrender
blossoms in communion.

From the heart of my own dwelling in him,
I find him dwelling within me, and living,
perpetuating in this world his redeeming Mystery.
I remain here, silent and still, in this sacred place,
which is deep in the solitude
and hiddenness of the soul,
and yet also envelops
every moment of life within itself.
Remaining here in this way,
I touch the Heart of Jesus,
pressing myself up against him,

who gently holds me,
as Blood and water pour forth
from his opened side.

Precisely because I have let him
lead me to this place,
into the depths of solitude and silence,
which before caused in me fright and resistance,
I have found this place transformed
into deepest embrace.
And abiding in him, and he in me,
enveloped in the Spirit,
cradled in the mysterious arms of the Father,
I find my heart expanding out mysteriously.
From within the bosom of the Trinity, and in him,
my heart touches the hearts of others, near and far.

And I find myself holding them close to me,
pressing them gently to my heart
in love and compassion,
to this heart which is defenseless and open,
yet which is sheltered perfectly in God's embrace.
Yes, as I have been held close to my Beloved,
who embraces me and cradles me from the Cross,
so I learn also to embrace and to hold others,
as we are, together, held
in the encircling arms of Christ.

This intimacy that occurs
in the darkness of this life
is a promise, and indeed more than a promise,
of the fullness that awaits us in eternity.
We begin to recognize, already here and now,
that Light has penetrated the darkness
and that Love has transformed the night.
The Passion and the Cross
give way to Resurrection...
The seeds of Life beautifully blossom
in our hearts.

ישוע

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,
obedience 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 sacred 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
in tenderness and 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, and at the heart of 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, and to enjoy
gives way to the simple movement of reliance,
the trustful dependency of a child.
It gives way, indeed, to fraternal
—yes, 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 your 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 to abiding in the simplicity of Repose.

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,
in the intimacy of mutual personal 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.

ישוע

UNION AND CONSUMMATION

I.

What a beautiful mystery,
this threefold and yet single openness of love!
We see this mystery, this silence, this solitude,
which has become pure wordless communication
and the blossoming of complete self-giving,
in the Cross of Jesus, Son and Bridegroom,
and in the glory of his risen body
and his radiant life.

He is...yes, he is pure loving openness, beloved,
in the all-enveloping embrace of his Father.
And he thus knows unceasingly the joy,
the happiness of intimacy with this Father
in the unity of the one Spirit whom they share.

And as his Cross is implanted in my heart,
as he lives and perpetuates his Mystery in me,
re-opening me from within
to the openness of love,
I find my life manifesting
this beautiful cruciformity,
which is nothing but the gesture
of trusting acceptance
and of love-filled reciprocal gift.
And through the depths of this cruciformity
my heart passes over, already now,
into the glory of the Resurrection,
an existence which is pure openness in love—
which, ultimately, is nothing but the intimate,
total, inseparable, and life-giving union of persons.

This very openness of heart and life,
as a little child and as a precious, beloved spouse,
is, truly and completely,
simply knowing and living
in the certainty that I am encircled within Love,

within the arms of the One
who loves me tenderly,
and within the bosom of his Father and mine,
as the Spirit of their Unity
penetrates and fills me too.

II.

As I have been loved, I begin,
spontaneously, to love,
and my heart reaches out
to him, my God, my Life,
and I give myself utterly,
unreservedly, into his hands.
The passion of my heart mingles together with his,
as his thirst penetrates into my thirst,
and my thirst is taken up
into the mystery of his repose.
Yes, this loving openness in mutual self-giving,
in the joy of living wholly and forever
in one another,
is but the expression of that awesome Gift of Love
which is the joy of being together, one,
in the heart of the Trinity's eternal embrace.

And from within this all-enveloping embrace
my heart expands and reaches out to others,
loving them as I have been loved...
allowing you, dear God, to love in me,
while I simply reverence and accept them,
my brothers and sisters, who are radiant,
radiant, radiant with your ravishing light.

Yes, my God, I see the beauty of your face
—of your majesty as Trinity—in every person,
flashing from their face, their flesh, their life,
from the inner mystery of their heart!
And I welcome them, welcome them tenderly...
making my heart a haven of love and compassion
as your Heart has always been for me.
I hold them close to myself, this awesome gift,
as we are, together,
held in the all-encircling Gift of Yourself.

And I come to know that, in this self-giving,
as we are joined to one another within your Love,
you are weaving back together the strands
which sin has rent asunder, healing wounds,

and making hearts one again in a single embrace.
And what is this single embrace
but you, dear God,
Father and Son united in the Bond of the Spirit?

In the very humility and lowliness of this life,
while the veil of mortality still remains,
the heartbeat of the Trinity's Love surges in us,
in the currents of love passing between our hearts.
It is your presence, dear God, which unites us,
inseparable and intimately joined within you,
in the Love that has given us to one another,
and which, binding us together in this way,
carries us, carries us, carries us...

And where, dear God, do you carry us,
but into the fullness of your embrace,
which already holds us now—if hiddenly?
Yes, the unique and unrepeatable mystery
of each one of us, loved and cherished by you,
is opened anew to your Gift,
and to the gift of every other person,
as we are united in the intimacy, the embrace,
for which our hearts so deeply long.

The current of your Love, my God,
the surging movement of your heartbeat,
which in Christ and the Spirit takes us up,
carries us, until the thin veil
of this life is at last rent,
and the whole of creation is renewed, transformed,
and all of us experience, united,
the radiant vision of your eternal face
in all its splendor and glory, revealed.

Here we will rest, in ineffable peace,
in the burning fire of perfect and ceaseless joy,
within the intimacy, my God,
that is eternally your own:
in the union of the Father, Son, and Spirit.

ישוע

COMPASSION

Integrity, my God, is tried
in the crucible of suffering.
It is deepened and grows, blossoming more fully
through the experience of darkness and pain,
stretching the heart beyond its comfort and ease,
drawing it also beyond superficial contentment,
not to lead it to a place
of desolation and emptiness,
but to a truer peace, a deeper joy,
a more profound abiding
in the depths of the heart, hidden,
yet embracing all things.

When we encounter our own weakness, Father,
and our poverty,
the failure or futility
of our own efforts and resolutions,
or find ourselves unable to grasp
what we once held,
to lay hold of the clarity and peace we once knew,
it is not the time to grasp more feverishly,
to try all we can to rediscover what we lost,
but to immerse ourselves anew in filial trust,
in the simplicity of a little child,
hand in hand with you,
yes, surrendered in love and hopefulness,
into your loving arms.

When we find ourselves, Father,
in times of darkness like this,
it is very difficult to keep our gaze upon beauty
rather than on brokenness and all that is obscure.
But this, precisely, is all that you ask.
Even if it seems to be
the thing that is most difficult,
it is also the thing that is most simple:
to keep our eyes open, heart vigilant,
for the beauty of you love,
for the light of your face ever shining,
even in the darkest place,
and your hands ever at work, guiding,
fashioning, caressing,
here and now,
in every moment and every thing.

Christ knew this, Father, more than we do,

both the anguish of darkness
and suffering, suffocating,
and the expansion of the heart in love, deeper still,
the eyes that penetrate
through the thickest of clouds
to reconnect with you in a more profound way,
embracing your love given here mysteriously,
and allowing his life's gift to flow back to you,
springing from a Child's Heart,
the Heart of a Bridegroom,
the Heart of a Brother, bearing us all in himself,
Father, back into the light and joy
of your embrace.

Grant us to see and to understand, Father,
that the times of suffering we experience
are not signs of your absence, your withdrawal,
but of your inviting us deeper,
into more profound love.
They are the trusting and vulnerable invitation
of Christ,
who opens up to us his own pain and weakness,
"Stay awake and keep watch with me,"
and therefore draws close to us
to console us in our own,
making the place of loneliness and sorrow
the place of deepest communion...
by making it a place of compassionate embrace.

Vigilance in love, fidelity to you, Father,
not so much in the performance
of works or heroic deeds
(though fidelity to the call of love each day
is simply a part),
but above all in the simple acceptance of the heart
of the reality that it experiences here and now.
Not fleeing as the disciples did,
leaving Christ alone,
nor sleeping for sorrow and exhaustion,
in all the many ways that this can be done,
but remaining, simply, alive and alert,
abiding in the truth of *being*, of childhood,
a bond that promises to be stronger
than everything else.

Christ wants brothers and sisters
who remain awake with him here,

brothers and sisters
who are not merely external, now,
but who allow themselves to be taken up
into his own mystery, his own life,
to find their place within his suffering and joy,
in the awesome reality
of his Passion and Resurrection,
sheltered, therefore, in both darkness and light,
or, rather, in darkness enfolded within
and transformed by light,
within the Bridegroom's embrace...yes,
within the Father's loving and cherishing arms.

ישוע

ABYSS

Heavenly Father, encountering the call,
so immense, so unfathomable, so tender,
of your beloved Son, as he opens up to us
the abyss of his own Heart, thirsting for us,
thirsting, Father, for you,
this meeting-place between the abyss of humanity
and the Abyss of the Trinity's Love...
we feel so inadequate,
burdened by so many things,
unable to live as we would like, falling, precisely,
into the things that we do not truly desire.

We fall asleep in the garden of Christ's anguish,
we flee in time of persecution,
even denying his Name.
Yet Mercy unceasing, Father,
continues to seek us out,
as if oblivious to our failures and sins,
yet full of sorrow and compassion at the infidelity
that keeps us bound, unbinding us from you.
And yet, Father,
the bonds of your Love are stronger,
unbroken even by our sin, grasping us tightly,
holding us in your arms even when we turn away.
And in all our fumbling efforts,
as blind as they be,
you always ensure that, through everything,
we are truly walking towards you,
yes, walking hand in hand.

This is true even of Peter as he denies the Lord,

not in that his denial is good,
but in that it becomes,
through the provident hand of your grace,
a stepping-stone to purer love,
and humility, enfolding the heart,
yes, to the loving witness unto martyrdom
that he desired to give for his Lord.

The beloved disciple too
—and in him, each one of us—
can follow your Son,
each day and each moment anew,
along the way of his Cross,
carried forward
not by the strength of our own trust,
by our own willpower, discipline, or resolve
(for these, as good as they are, cannot be enough,
for the call goes deeper,
awakening something else).
We are be carried, in compassion,
by the compassion of Christ.

If only we rest against his breast
at the Supper of Love,
allowing him to pour into us
his immense, enduring joy,
letting him give us
a taste of the bliss that he shares,
Father, with you,
in the most perfect, filial embrace...
then we can find this same love, still giving,
still bearing in itself unbreakable joy,
even as it walks the path of the Cross,
the Passion of Love,
Joy's passion penetrating the passion of our pain,
the passionate, illumining Light, radiating out
in order to transform our darkness into light.

Faltering every step, often overwhelmed
and unable to do anything
but to cling in blind trust,
or even to cling no longer,
only letting ourselves be held
by these impalpable, invisible arms,
Father of Love...
In this way, our suffering, our thirst,
our hope is transformed,

by the truth of childhood alive in it,
and enfolding all,
to be a sharing in the Passion of Christ,
the beloved Son who descends compassionately
into our very darkest place, yet never leaving,
for a moment, Father,
your Heart's welcoming embrace.

In this way the bond of Love
reveals its unbreakable strength,
and knits together again, on our side,
the bonds that were broken,
drawing us, in the outstretched arms
of the Crucified One,
yes, in the outstretched arms
of the One risen from the dead,
into the embrace of perfect intimacy, light, and joy
when the darkness of this life is past, the veil rent,
and the fullness of communion, in your embrace,
Father, is at last ours.

ישוע

THE GARDEN OF INNOCENCE

I.

Eyes blinking in the sunlight,
lungs expanding as they draw in breath,
sensitive skin, new, innocent, like a child,
delighting at the gentle breeze.
Adam gazes into the sky,
brilliant with celestial radiance,
and penetrating everything below,
the two, heaven and earth, united.
Hands raised up, he looks, in wonder,
on the being that he is:
these palms, these fingers,
ah, and these legs, this body!
A garden of immense beauty, surrounding,
everything blossoming, alive.
Walking about on the grass,
he is full of awe and delight,
yet with a single glance he knows,
immediately and spontaneously,
the meaning of each and every thing, its name.

But he is not walking, gazing alone,
for at his side is the Father,

seen and known, and yet not visible
in the same way as all else is.
He is present even more, more deeply,
more visible in, and yet greater than everything,
closer too, at Adam's side,
yet also within, dwelling.
The Father gently presents, to his beloved son,
everything that there is,
plants, animals, birds of the sky.
And Adam drinks in, unceasingly,
the pure joy of gift.

*All these things, dear Father,
did not have to be, but are!
And I, too, this child of yours,
did not have to be, but am,
with all these things freely given to me,
yet possessing, Father, more than all the rest,
the joy of being near you, upon your breast.*

*I reach out to these things, enjoying,
and yet in so doing I never depart,
for the slightest moment,
from the warmth and shelter of your embrace.
In you, dear Father, I have found all my good,
the perfect bliss of being what I am,
before you, with you, in you,
in the innate solitude in my heart, my flesh,
transcending all the things around me,
reaching out to you, above all things.*

*Yet within my heart's solitude, also,
there is another space,
or, rather, the same space
open in a different direction.
I find, dear Father, utter joy in You,
but I feel also a thirst for another "you,"
one who can dwell here with me, in this place,
rejoicing, both of us together, sharing,
in your one, all-enfolding embrace.*

*How beautiful, Father,
to be completely full in you,
and yet from this very fullness
to yearn for someone to share in this,
incarnating it together in our life,
and catapulting us, anew, my God, to you,*

from whom, certainly, we have never left.

II.

Naked without shame, this beautiful truth,
that there is complete transparency
of the man before the woman
and the woman before the man,
in the openness of acceptance and reciprocal gift,
an openness that reaches out to enfold all creation,
welcoming it into the purity of this embrace.

Purity of heart, this beautiful truth,
that eyes gaze only within the realm of gift,
looking at the other
in the light of their deepest truth,
indeed, within the light of God enfolding them.
Openness before you, Father, this alone allows
openness also to exist between each created thing,
between the persons made
to live with one another,
enfolded in the embrace of all-enfolding Love.

This openness of mutual gift, in our human life,
is but a reflection and a share, in pure grace,
in the mystery of your own life, God,
in the blissful joy of your perfect embrace,
Father and Son, one in the Spirit whom you share.

Sonship and daughterhood: Adam and Eve
abiding before their loving Father
in pure reception of the gift
ever flowing from your gracious hands.
Nuptial love: above all their thirst for you,
the joy of being wholly yours above all things,
yet allowing also the thirst for created beauty,
refraction of your glorious light, to blossom,
and the making present of your own love, here,
opening out to share, only more deeply,
in the life that is yours, alive in us.
And the purity of this love, your own love,
inundating our lives, transfiguring them,
flows out freely in the beauty of fruitfulness,
an expression of your own paternity,
in which you beget for all eternity
the Son of your eternal Love,
and are one with him in endless joy,
in the sheltering womb of the Spirit.

III.

Yes, this is a beautiful image of your life, my God,
in its unity and distinctness,
Persons united in love,
one completely, inseparable,
dwelling with one another,
and abiding, indeed,
within the very mystery of the Beloved,
and yet rejoicing always to be "You" and "I,"
"Us" in the blissful intimacy of endless Embrace.
As a woman sheltering a child in her womb,
who is wholly within her, coming from her flesh,
and yet wholly other,
a source of contemplation and joy,
so too, my Father, you bear the Son
entirely in your bosom,
rejoicing that he is so close,
one heartbeat alone, one blood,
and yet the blood of two, surging together,
a harmony of love.
This harmony, this indwelling joy,
this very bond of intimacy,
this is nothing but the Spirit whom you share,
the enfolding tenderness
and sheltering womb of Love's embrace.

Adam and Eve glimpse this, Father, in the garden,
in which all things are transparent to this light.
The whole creation is enfolded
in the realm of gift,
the pure gift flowing from you loving hands.
A garden...the whole of creation you have made,
unreservedly offered to those whom you love,
just as, for all eternity you offer all to your Son.
Thus, they are gifted and invited simply to receive,
to welcome the gift of your fatherhood, creating,
dwelling thus within the mystery of the Son,
vibrating at the Spirit's slightest breath and touch.
In the sheltering womb of your abiding presence,
they find such joy and bliss in childhood,
and in the intimacy forged by this primary truth,
mutual dwelling with one another, yet distinct,
in spousal embrace and transparent fruitfulness.

The Son, for all eternity, receives your gift,
the gift which is nothing, Father, but you yourself,

and in receiving surrenders all back to you,
being completely, simply, the beloved Son.
Beloved and loving in return, One who is held,
caressed, cherished, delighted in and delights,
this is who the Son is, my God,
and who you are also, Father, before him,
and, yes, who the Spirit is as well.
This also is our own life in its deepest truth,
our origin, our destiny, and the truth alive,
already now, in every moment.
Adam and Eve knew this by your gift,
and yet were asked to share, precisely as gift,
in the free and loving acceptance of the Son,
by consenting to this free donation,
giving back again.

For love is not love unless it is free,
and love is not fully mature unless it can see,
but seeing springs from trusting surrender,
just as surrender springs from the gift of sight.
They were asked, and offered,
both of these at once:
seeing the beauty that is yours, to surrender all,
little children in the Father's arms,
thus possessed by you, to possess all things.
But the tempter comes
and insinuates something else.
You do not truly see these things.
Don't you see that your filial surrender
is actually the surrender of a slave,
letting go of true possessing, true freedom,
as well as true understanding of every thing?
God is withholding himself from you,
keeping for himself what is best...
but it can be yours if you want it,
only grasp for it to possess,
and you will see, have, and enjoy.

Ah, but this is a terrible deception!
To think that we can have anything
apart from you, my God!
All is ours, nothing at all is withheld,
with only one condition...and one not arbitrary,
but simply inscribed in the very nature of gift:
that we dwell within the arms of the Giver,
enjoying all things as your gift,
yes, as the expression of your paternal Heart.

But when we turn away, grasping,
seeking to understand apart from your light,
our seeing of your inner mystery, awesome,
is fractured and obscured.

No longer do we see God
as a Community of Love,
pure giving of Lover to Beloved
and the Beloved's reciprocal gift,
and the dwelling of two in a single Embrace.
Now we see you, God, as a Taskmaster,
jealous of your prerogatives,
lording over us power,
authority, and might, arbitrary, for your own gain.
Ah, we do not understand that, for you,
there is no gain but the gain of love,
there is no glory but the glory of embrace,
and you neither seek, desire, nor have,
any joy, gladness, or indeed anything,
that is not enfolded in this all-enfolding Circle
of mutual giving, mutual acceptance,
and the blessed togetherness that you are:
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit...Love.

ישוע

THE GARDEN OF THE COVENANT

I.

When open and empty hands, receptive,
turn away from the ever-flowing gift,
grasping for possession and control,
they find themselves lacking what, before,
they had in such great abundance, pure.
Little children, infinitely loved, were our parents,
Adam and Eve...and like them we are too.
Yet to know this truth, to feel it,
yes, to allow it to flow in, penetrate,
and transform every aspect of my life,
this, loving Father, can only be your gift,
reawakening the broken and sinful heart
to the gift from which it was first born,
and to which, with every fiber of its being,
it unceasingly thirsts to return.

Nakedness of transparency in love,
children before the loving Father,
siblings, spouses, friends before each other...

now gives way, through this sinful grasping,
to the shame which covers over heart and flesh.
I cover over myself because I am afraid,
who was created for perfect confidence,
the simplicity of a beloved child,
unreserved in openness, joyful trust,
like an infant in his mother's arms,
nursed lovingly on her milk,
nursed, even more deeply,
on her tender gaze, her kisses,
her smile which awakens his in return.

I am afraid now because I experience,
no longer only the cherishing of true love,
but the vulnerability of being abused,
disregarded, and even, yes, profaned.
It is true, my heart so deep within
is sheltered for you, God, alone,
but what violence can be done by others,
hurting me almost to this sacred place,
cloaking it over thus by woundedness and fear.

And I am also ashamed, not only of others' eyes,
which can gaze to possess, control, dominate,
but of my own eyes,
in which I feel this same disorder,
something I renounce and surrender to you,
Father, to be purified in your own vision,
your own light
this is the gift I desire, I seek,
that shame may give way to trust,
that shame may, indeed,
give way to the reverent awe
which both looks and looks away,
in each particular moment, according to truth.
But our first parents are now,
at the moment of their fall,
overcome by the newness of this shame,
the burden of guilt and alienation that is theirs,
and which we, their children, receive from them.
The garden of innocence and purity,
the fullness of loving gift and blissful embrace,
becomes a memory of the past, and then less,
as humanity experiences for the first time
what it will experience
in so many ways through time:
the pain and loneliness of exile,

far from the blessed land.

The heart's nostalgia,
yearning for something more,
this can never die, however dull it becomes,
for you, Father, have yourself
implanted it within us,
and never cease to foster it in so many ways.
From the very moment of our first infidelity
you reaffirm again
your fidelity to us, wayward children,
promising in veiled images and words
the seed of a woman
(though woman does not bear seed)
crushing the head of the serpent.
Yet this woman's seed, this man,
is also wounded by the serpent's strike,
with the wound of sin that we bear,
and yet he is the one that is victorious,
at last, within this fight.
Ah, but how many years yet need to pass
until this obscure promise comes to light!

First, man experiences the burden of bitter work,
the earth giving forth thorns and thistles,
and woman experiences pain in childbirth...
the fragmented and obscured radiance
of the paternity and maternity, my God,
which you have intended to shine through us.
And the priestly offering that is ours,
carrying the whole creation back,
in purity, to you,
now becomes the slavery of bitter work,
backs bent and weighed down by hard labor,
and desert wandering with frail hope,
struggling to avoid worshipping other gods.
And brother turns against brother, sword in hand;
brother turns against brother, land dividing,
separating so as to avoid conflict,
what was once had in perfect abundance
because fully shared.
Yes...what heavy bonds we bear,
hearts afflicted by the disorder of our sin,
the pain, the suffering, the death,
which it has brought in its wake.
But these hearts, nonetheless, are still awake,
however numb and blinded they may be,

yearning for something they have lost,
yearning, indeed, for the fullness
surpassing all.

II.

The pain and loneliness of slavery,
burdened with bitter work,
unable to celebrate in freedom
the deepest yearnings of the heart,
at rest within the arms of God, reposing.
In the first garden there was a sacred sabbath,
indeed, all work itself was enfolded
in the sabbath joy and rest of childhood,
enfolding in itself
the spousal love of man and woman,
and their pro-creative fruitfulness
before your love.

As the result of sin, yes—sin's very essence—
this ordered harmony and beautiful unity
is broken asunder, fragmented,
as the cord of sonship and daughterhood
is torn and frayed,
estranging our hearts from yours.

Then the radiant beauty of spousal love
is infiltrated by possessive grasping, domination,
and the purity of all relationships among us,
and between us and your whole creation,
experience the anguish of discord.
Fruitfulness too, therefore,
is no longer transparent,
radiating purely with your holy light,
but giving-birth occurs in pain and difficulty,
and the ground yields thorns and thistles.

Our forefathers experienced this keenly,
in both truth and symbol, in their slavery,
bound by the burdens of the Egyptians.
Yet the burning furnace, Father,
of your compassion,
is never exhausted, never spent.
From the first moment of our parents' sin
you have already promised
the hope of reconciliation,
and you show yourself, again and again,
the God of faithfulness and love,
the God of the covenant,
reestablishing again and again

the bonds of love and belonging that we have rent.

But it is yet a long time
until the covenant is perfected,
as the divine pedagogy progresses over time.
Touching the heart of Moses, away from home,
you reveal yourself in the burning bush,
and then send him home again,
so that he may lead your people, at last,
away from slavery and into the true homeland.

*I have heard my people's crying
under the burden of their taskmasters,
and I know well what they are suffering,*
you say, and ignite in Moses this same flame,
burning so ardently: compassion for the people.
You show signs and wonders in Egypt,
your hatred for the sin which enslaves us,
and your immense love for us,
deeper than all that holds us bound.

And the climax of all these works
is also the greatest promise of what will come:
the Passover sacrifice of the spotless lamb,
redeeming blood on the cross-beams of wood,
and a communion feast shared together,
dressed as pilgrims, yet foretaste of the future.
The angel of death passes over
sparing, through this blood, enslaved hearts,
and then the pillar of fire and guiding cloud
leads your children out of slavery,
across the waters of rebirth, into the desert.

The desert of testing and purification,
yet so much more, also, of covenant-love,
the espousal between Bride-Israel and Bridegroom-God.
The gifts that you give in the solitary wasteland,
in the immense silence of sandy expanse,
begin to hint that this place is not empty,
but that precisely here, in the desert,
hearts are initiated into the garden of love.
They know this too, our fathers,
when you at last lead them
into the promised land,
there setting up your temple,
though your tabernacled presence
was already there
with your chosen ones in the desert journey.
Yet they are unfaithful, wayward children,

an adulterous Bride,
to the God of love and unending fidelity.
Their sins and infidelities
bring upon them their effects,
and they find themselves exiled from this land,
back in the desert of estrangement and slavery.
But here again the desert
becomes something more,
as your prophets slowly begin to reveal,
a place where the heart is cleansed, renewed,
to open again to you as in the beginning,
in the nakedness of trusting love and simple hope,
in the poverty and dependency of "little ones,"
so great that in them you find a dwelling place.

III.

The garden-love becomes a central theme,
the hope that barren heights will flow with water
and the barren steppe will sprout and bloom,
that, indeed, you will lead your beloved ones
back to the land of their hope, and yet renewed.
Thus a deeper hope awakens:
for a definitive, final exodus,
passing-over from the greatest slavery
and being enfolded, at last, forever,
in your tender Bridegroom-arms.
In that greatest Song of love,
the garden is the place of everything,
looking back to what once was,
for Adam and Eve,
yet forward to what could be, and is now,
finding this garden present in you, God,
and in your unending covenant-love.

The Bride calls out, yearning,
wounded by your beauty,
for the Bridegroom in whom alone she can rest,
and her very longing expands her heart,
opening it to receive and to give.
Indeed, in the desert of her searching
she is led back to the inmost place: her very heart.
And here she finds the Beloved dwelling,
among the flowers and perfumes of the garden,
this fallen and yet healed body and soul,
made a garden precisely because you are here.
And a most beautiful prophecy is given
at the end of this Song of Songs,

pointing to the garden of redemption
and, yes, the garden of consummation.
Who is this coming up from the desert,
the nations say, *leaning upon her Beloved?*
Ah, it is the chosen Bride,
led from the slavery of Egypt,
from the exile of Babylon.

Yet it is something more, too: it is us,
the beloved Bride whom we are,
the spouse that each and every one of us is.

Then the Bridegroom speaks:

There under the tree I awakened you,
there where your mother first was corrupted.
Garden of paradise becoming garden of sin,
after centuries of longing and of hope,
is now beginning to give way, at last,
to the garden of true, unbreakable union.

As a tree was the place of our downfall,
so a Tree will be the place of our restoration,
a man and a woman there, too...
yet not turning away in sinful pride and fear,
but open unreservedly, with hands upraised,
accepting the gift, my God, from you,
and giving all, trustingly, in return.
Set me as a seal upon your heart,
as a seal upon your arm,
Bridegroom and Bride say together.
And this, too, will be the case
as the lance pierces the inmost Heart,
and Love etches itself, enduringly,
on the heart of the woman who stands below.
Ah yes, for *Love is stronger than death,*
and devotion deeper than the netherworld.
Its flashes are flames of fire,
the very fire of God himself.

ישוע

HOLY THURSDAY: THE GARDEN OF COMPASSION

I.

Mutual gift and mutual acceptance,
ever flowing from heart to heart, and back,
passing through the body as a vessel,
and enfolding it,
one flesh, on body, one family in a single embrace,

abiding through time in covenant-fidelity
and the love that reaches out to endure,
even beyond death.

This is our heart's longing, dear Father,
yet precisely that which is most broken
in this sinful and estranged world of ours.
How can you restore what we have broken,
gathering together these scattered pieces,
something we cannot ourselves do,
however hard we may try?

Living in this world, bumping shoulders,
yet only occasionally tasting a deeper love,
we yearn for more, and seek it,
yet so often in partial and obscure ways.
But you enter into our lives, our history,
engaging us in dialogue,
a beautiful, loving exchange,
teaching us anew to trust, to love,
to open to a deeper mystery alive within,
yet penetrating from without, Love divine,
a torrential Ocean,
like a river flowing into our world.
Jesus Christ, the beloved Son always dwelling,
in perfect childhood, upon your loving breast,
comes to us without leaving you,
and rests upon a woman's breast,
drinking of her milk, her love, her smile.
He gazes out with Child's eyes as an infant,
but, yes, also as a young man, growing,
and as a fully grown man, mature,
rejoicing in the world you have made, and given,
seeing beyond its brokenness,
the darkness of fragmentation.
And seeing thus, he loves, taking it all back again
into the welcoming embrace of his Heart,
so as to carry it, anew, Father, back to you.

He is a Magnet in this world of isolation.
Our hearts, inverted upon self
in fear and compensating pride,
push others away, creating a gaping space within...
a space that yearns for intimacy,
yet this precisely fears.
But he comes and dwells among us,
polarized, Father, wholly unto you,
and in this way draws to himself all of us,

redirecting us in the right direction,
to the One for whom he yearns,
and for whom we yearn with him.
Ah, what a beautiful mystery,
transcending all expression in words!
Beloved Son dwelling among wayward children,
teaching them again what it means to be a child...
Bridegroom, aflame with ardent love,
seeking out his unfaithful Bride,
to wash her in pure water, cleansing her,
and preparing her for marriage's consummation...
Image of your fatherhood, my God,
transparent through pure sonship, to you,
radiating out into our world this light,
and enfolding us within, to draw us back,
so that, at last, in your light we may dwell.

As his life draws to its ending, Father,
your beloved Son enters the city of your covenant,
there, your covenant
to bring to its consummation.
All through his life he has dwelt among us,
loving with the love that we,
in the beginning, lost.
He has walked in nakedness and transparency,
reaching out through even the tassel of his cloak
to heal the hearts that flock to him, trusting.
He has taken us unto himself, welcoming,
with the loving acceptance that was given to us,
yet which we failed to truly accept.
And he has given himself to us tirelessly,
flowing from restful reception of your gift,
awakening in us, again, both acceptance and gift,
though still so immature,
burdened by fear and sin.
This fear, this sin, this brokenness, Father,
he also receives and welcomes unto himself,
but only because it is joined to us, enslaving.
He accepts us, and thus all that we, also, bear,
receiving it into his tender Heart and virgin flesh.

Sitting down at the supper table with his friends,
who are becoming, also, his Bride,
he opens now in the deepest possible way
this Body to receive us into itself,
and this Blood to mingle with our own,
pouring himself out completely,

broken and given, and yet whole,
to enter into all that we are, abiding.
This is my Body. This is my Blood.
What ineffable exchange, what marriage-bond,
what gift and consecration here!
Yet his Bride is still slumbering, unalert,
incognizant of this wondrous gift.
But the deepest truth lies in him,
shared out, and drawing back, in this way,
into the unity for which we were made.
The mystery of Eucharist,
perfect gift and intimacy,
this is the inner reality,
realized in sacramental truth,
that will be expressed outwardly in sacrificial love:
in anguish, scourges, thorns, and nails,
in loneliness and pain, embraced in embracing us..
so as to liberate us and bring us home again.

II.

Supper's intimacy gives way to garden isolation.
He invites us, indeed, Father, to be there with him,
but we are still so sleepy, in the night of sin.
He drinks a cup of communion, sacramental life,
and then proceeds to accept the final cup
from your loving hands.
This cup too, is one of intimacy and communion,
yet wrought in the most solitary
and isolated place.
He has to drink precisely here,
in suffering and pain,
in the darkness of our experience
of abandonment in sin,
so that here, in the most lonely of all places,
we may find the embracing arms of God.

Anguish at the prospect of suffering,
but so much more than this,
at the reality of estrangement from God,
the bitterness of isolation
experienced by the sinful heart,
the dark night through which we walk, each of us,
in our most difficult times, grasping for God
whom it feels has forgotten us
and left us alone, groping in the dark.
In such situations the human heart often recoils,
turning back in upon itself in fear,

in shame or doubt,
despair and hatred of self and life...
and yet, my Jesus, this is not what you do.
Encountering the very burden of sin
that keeps us estranged from true childhood,
the sin which is our turning away...
you take this, lovingly, upon your shoulders,
a crushing weight,
but by which you are not crushed,
but which you break asunder by your own love,
by the filial trust and childlike simplicity,
radiant eyes and burning Heart,
penetrating through all things: to see the Father,
and, from within the Father's sheltering arms,
to embrace all things, redeeming, saving.

III.

Ah yes...like Adam and Eve in the beginning,
in the garden of Eden, naked and pure,
you enter, in your purity and vulnerability,
into the garden of our sin,
there to renew it from within,
making it again the garden of intimacy and love.
This mystery here alive in Gethsemane,
Father, is so often deeply misunderstood.
We interpret it from our own brokenness,
from our own fractured image of your fatherhood,
the result of our sin and our fear.

But what you seek to teach us here,
and through the whole
Paschal Mystery of your Son,
is the rediscovery of your fatherhood
and of the truth of childhood before you.
The pain that the Son here endures
we think means that your paternal will is "harsh,"
that he must submit himself in resignation
to a painful and bitter fate,
as if this were some kind of game
in which you, Father, hide your face,
and leave the Son to suffer in desolation.
But this is not what here occurs, my God.

The darkness of the garden's anguish
and the loneliness of the Cross
is not the result, Father, of your withdrawal,
but of the taking up of our sin and our pain

in order to be penetrated and transformed,
from within, by your paternal light
and by the filial trust of your beloved Son.
The union between your Son and you, Father,
is the reality which endures
in and through all things,
and alone gives meaning to everything else,
giving each moment of the Passion its value:
the Light of Love shining in our darkest place,
illuminating it from deep within.

Yes, it is the loving Shepherd
seeking out his lost sheep in wayward ways,
and even more, the Bridegroom
bringing his adulterous Bride back home.
As we turn away toward the darkness,
collapsing in through fear and shame
into isolation in bitter pain and regret,
estrangement from the Father in sin,
you descend down here to meet us, Christ,
so that, as we are turned away from God,
fleeing, we find ourselves fleeing...
into the welcoming arms of God.

ישוע

GOOD FRIDAY: THE GARDEN OF CONSUMMATION

I.

To see beauty in all things...
even in the midst of brokenness,
in the darkest place,
this is the most profound meaning
of love, my God.
To love is to have eyes, contemplating,
and because contemplating, receiving, truly,
the other as they are,
and therefore also giving, in response,
the gift that is most needed, most right,
to the one who is loved in this way.

This, dear Jesus, is what you do
all throughout your life, in every moment,
and in Gethsemane too, with blazing eyes of love
penetrating through the obscurity of our darkness,
gazing even when the mists close tightly in.
This is the vigilance to which you call us

when you say, *Stay awake and keep watch.*
It is an invitation to the alertness
which never turns its eyes from beauty,
beauty which sometimes radiates out clearly,
but at other times
is hidden and buried deep within,
clung to in trusting faith and hopeful love,
yet born even more deeply
from the birth-pangs of suffering.

From the garden of your anguish,
lovingly clinging to the Father,
you are led along the way
of suffering unto the Cross,
yet in all things you are bound,
Jesus, not by chains,
nor affixed by nails and bitter wood,
but rather held firmly in the Father's hand,
pressed close unto his Heart.
Yet here you take up into yourself, unreservedly,
our very experience of estrangement from his face,
our bitterest pain and anguished loneliness,
thereby breaking these chains by a deeper bond,
the bond of love, unbreakable,
between he and you...
that ineffable gazing of eternal love
and endless delight,
in which the embrace of Father and Son, together,
is the ecstasy of perfect joy,
bound together, unceasingly,
in the ravishing beauty
of the Spirit whom you share.

II.

From the very midst of loneliness, Jesus,
you re-establish the blessed communion of love,
in complete acceptance and reciprocal surrender
before the Father of heaven and earth,
spreading out to embrace every person,
and drawing us, in you, to him.

But first you press us to your loving Heart,
tender, defenseless, and full of compassion,
so that, by the encounter of Love and sin,
the encounter of Goodness and evil,
the encounter of Beauty and ugliness,
the latter may be canceled out, destroyed,

by the immeasurable Power of the first.

This is what you, do, my Jesus,
naked and defenseless upon the Cross,
mocked, rejected, condemned by men,
yet accepting all of this wretchedness
into the burning furnace of your Heart,
there to consume it in these ardent flames,
offering it, purged, cleansed, and transformed,
to the Father who yearns for us
and for whom you so deeply yearn.

So too, the wounds that our sin cause you
reveal the depth of the immense compassion
that burns forever in the Father's breast.
When we pierce your side with a lance,
the Blood and water that flow out
are the infinite Ocean of the Trinity's Love,
flooding into our dry and arid world,
and giving all of us your life anew.
You take our feelings of abandonment,
of being rejected by God in sin and shame,
and you break through this too,
through your certainty
in the Father's undying love,
through the intimacy unbroken
between he and you...
turning it into a prayer of trust and hope,
into the discovery of Love stronger than all.

The Heart of God aches, indeed,
condemning the sin that consumes the sinner,
wounded by our infidelity
that wounds both him and us.
But you take this wound of broken relationship
and, through the unbreakable cord of intimacy
that is ever alive between you and your Father,
in the Spirit of Love whom you share,
you bind up together again what was broken,
turning our prayer of anguish and abandonment
into a prayer of filial love,
through which the poor, at last, are fed,
and those who once were so far away
are drawn close, falling down in worship,
raised up, thus, into the joy of God's embrace.

III.

The mystery of Gethsemane,
Jesus, and of the Cross,
continues to this day in every life,
in the depths of every human heart.
The encounter between our fallen nature,
fragmented and broken away from paternal love,
and the Father's descending compassion
giving to the very end, unreservedly,
until he has penetrated out darkness with his light,
the Light, my Lord, that you are for us.

The human heart, will, mind, and body,
deceived by the ancient tempter
to turn away from the realm of gift,
are fractured from the unity of love
and, frayed like a piece of torn rope,
stretch out in every direction
in aimless desire and broken fear.
Yet they conceal a deeper hope,
the image, Father, of your love in us,
calling out for the fullness of your likeness.
But there are so many obstacles, Father,
that keep us from returning to you,
from surmounting the weight of the flesh,
dragging us apart, and isolating us
in the whirlpool of the fallen world.

Dear Jesus, you enter into this isolation,
this anguished loneliness that is ours,
experiencing the distress that was born
in the garden of Eden, through our parents' sin.
But in a garden you break the chain
that binds us so tightly in this shame.
You allow yourself to be stripped naked here,
experienced this shame,
yet transfiguring it by your gift.
So too, there is a woman here, open before you,
the new Eve before the new Adam,
both completely given to one another,
both receiving unreservedly the other's gift.
The garden of innocence, lost,
and after many years of covenant-love
blossoming in the wilderness,
at last gives way to the garden of consummation,
marriage bond bound together
in the gift of heart and flesh.

And the fruit of this union is already evident
in the young man who stands here at her side,
(and like him, each one of us, called to share,
in pure grace, in this same mystery enfolding all)
bound together to her by the compassion
that he shares, lovingly, for you.

Woman, behold, your son.

Behold, your Mother.

Christ, your spousal gift is so beautiful,
bursting forth in the darkest place,
and the virginal reception of your Mother,
who is now also your Spouse,
an open and receptive womb like in her youth
when the angel appeared to her.
United, you tie together the knot
that was rent asunder by the sin of Adam and Eve.
At the foot of a Tree, like you promised,
you have reawakened your beloved one,
reversing the disorder of the first garden sin...
and you carry your spouse, leaning upon you,
from the wilderness
back into the land of promise.

IV.

Dearest Father, the mystery
that has accompanied us
all along this journey is the mystery of the desert
transformed into the garden, blossoming in love,
and giving forth streams of healing water, pure.
Yet both exist side by side,
or rather one within the other,
within this life of ours, pilgrimage yet foretaste
of the heavenly banquet of perfect joy yet to come.
The desert journey purifies the heart
for the banquet,
as the Israelites journeyed in the desert,
where you, Father, prepared a table for them,
and poured out water from the barren rock.
Yet this too, this exodus of love and fidelity,
was the time of testing, your drawing them out
in order to espouse them to yourself in the desert,
carrying them into the promised land of joy.
Yet when they sinned against you,
embracing other gods,
you allowed them again to be taken into exile,
but promised another exodus,
greater than the first,

by which they would be gathered from the nations
and drawn back, through the desert,
into your embrace.

But the greater desert, my God, in the new exodus,
fulfilling all the images and types of the first,
is the desert of the Cross and Passion of your Son.
But here the desert is one with the garden,
for in a garden his Passion is accepted,
and in a garden his Cross is planted, Tree of Life,
and in a garden, again, he rises from the tomb,
revealing himself as the true Bridegroom,
drawing his people through the waters
and into the desert of transformation,
into the garden of espousal,
of perfect intimacy and joy.

He passes, Father, finally, bearing us, his Bride,
within his loving arms, in the final exodus of all,
into the perfect joy of your eternal embrace.

As in a garden we sinned, exiled,
then, into the desert,
Adam and Eve experiencing fragmentation,
the shame of nakedness and vulnerability,
the burden of toil among thorns and thistles,
the anguish of childbearing in difficulty and pain,
so too we all sin against the garden of pure Love,
the gratuitous Gift that you,
Father, freely give to us.

Yet the very desert of our alienation,
the painful loneliness and isolation of our hearts,
becomes a path of healing and transformation,
as we walk, more and more,
with the One who walks with us:
the Crucified and Risen Bridegroom and Friend
who is always at our side.

The desert is therefore not only an exile,
but itself an invitation...not a place of emptiness,
but a space where the dry land blooms
and gives forth fruit,
and the dry and arid steppe
flows with water abundantly.

The Garden lives, in this life,
in the midst of the desert,
just as the desert has always been
enfolded in the Garden,
and when we taste the desert, let us look deeper,

for the wellspring of childhood,
the blossoming of love.

ישוע

HOLY SATURDAY. VIGIL OF EASTER: THE GARDEN OF RESURRECTION

I.

The seed of Love has fallen, God,
into the silent womb of our earth,
and it too is silent, gestating,
yet in this way awakening and purifying hope.
The heart aches from the trauma of his pain,
hollowed out by compassion and sorrow.
A mother's heart, empty and full of anguish,
and yet, more than any other who ever knew him,
clinging to the Love that clings to her.
The fibers of the heart, stretched thin by pain,
allow the light of Love to filter through...
yes, unfelt and unseen in this moment,
but pouring out nonetheless in a deeper way.

The beloved disciple too, clinging to her,
consoling her in whom is his consolation,
awaits together with her for something more...
He feels it in her, a flame in the midst of chill,
a lamp in the darkness, burning,
seemingly extinguished in her departed Son
and yet alive still within her.
What is this? Is he still alive in her,
an inextinguishable flame within the heart?

The tomb, my God, is not only in the earth,
cold and lifeless rock, bare stone.
The tomb is also every heart,
lifeless in death...but more,
awakened by Love's gift,
keeping vigil for the rising of life.
The seed of Love has fallen into the earth,
dying for the sake of the beloved;
yet did he not promise that,
if a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies,
it bears fruit in abundance?
The tomb is thus, in this way, a womb,
in which we allow Christ to die in us,
and in us also to rise.

Through all the mystery of these ages,
until the end,
this reality is ever being played out:
the movement from Holy Thursday,
through the anguish of Good Friday
and Saturday's mysterious silence,
into the radiant light of Easter morning.
Paschal Love, eternal Father, is the deepest truth,
alive in the heart of every person, hidden,
the heartbeat of mystery giving meaning to all
and enfolding all within itself.
Let us abide here in this place, unceasing,
close to the Virgin Mother, embracing,
sheltering in the womb of our life
this wondrous gift:
Eucharistic presence, Crucified Love, buried Seed,
blossoming Flower and radiant Light, dawning.

II.

Mary Magdalene comes,
distraught and weeping,
to anoint your body in the tomb.
She walks through the garden
to the place where you are laid.
She is like the Bride in the Song of Songs
yearning for her lost Beloved.
But she does not yet know
that *Love is stronger than death,*
and devotion more powerful than the grave.
Its flashes are flashes of fire, a vehement flame,
yes, the very fire of God himself.

She seeks to anoint the body of a dead man,
to set her love there as a seal,
as she did in Bethany before your Passion,
upon your flesh and upon your heart.
But she does not yet know
that she has already been impressed there
—as each one of us has, my God—
by the hand of your own tender love.
Nor does she yet recognize
that you are impressed as a seal
deep upon her own heart and soul,
not only by the longing within her,
but as the Risen One, alive and radiant, pure.

Yet she begins to sense something,
though unaware at first, as she comes to the tomb.
It is empty and the stone is rolled away.
The gardener comes, and, seeing him,
she asks him if she has seen her Love.
The tree upon which her Savior died, in a garden,
has almost robbed her of her hope.
Now, among the trees, she asks the gardener
if perhaps she can have the hope
of seeing his corpse one last time.
But a single word from him
reveals to her that the tree
at the foot of which she stood,
with his Virgin Mother and the beloved John,
was not the tree of death, but the Tree of Life.

Mary, is the single word he says,
and her eyes are opened to truly see.
A single word: her name,
and he penetrates her heart.
*The Shepherd knows his sheep
and he calls each of them by name.*
He calls out to her as the true God,
awakening his beloved child and his spouse
in her shame and fear, within the garden.
Yet now, unlike our first parents,
she is not fleeing in shameful nakedness,
but seeking in ardent haste for the Beloved.
What has caused this beautiful reversal,
my beloved God,
which has at last opened our eyes?

Beauty has been unveiled, fully, at last.
The realm of your pure and gratuitous gift
has poured forth to penetrate our darkness
and to enfold us again in its embrace.
Mary Magdalene does not know at first
what has transpired, and what is occurring now,
but she has witnessed Love giving himself,
to the end, to save us from our death.
And now she only needs to witness
the radiant victory of Love, stronger than death,
the bonds of intimacy, woven in compassion,
blossoming in the joy of perfect communion.

Rabboni! She cries out, grabbing your feet,
like the Bride so much in love.

*I held him fast, and would not let him go.
And you reach down, Jesus,
to touch her hair,
which wiped your feet so long ago.
Looking up, she begins to understand,
though the mystery, surpassing, enfolds her more.
There under the Tree I awakened you,
there where your mother was first corrupted.
Now, leaning on me, you have come up
from the wilderness...into the Garden of Paradise,
the place of intimate love which was once lost.
It has now, my beloved, been restored.*

ישוע

EASTER:

THE GARDEN OF UNION

*Arise, my love, my dove, my fair one,
and come away,
for behold, the winter is past,
the rains are over and gone,
and the flowers appear in our land.
The cooing of the turtledove is heard;
the fig tree puts forth its figs,
and the vines, blossoming, give forth fragrance.
Arise, my love, my dove, my fair one,
and come away;
let me see your face, let me hear your voice,
for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely.*

What is this, my God, my Love, my Life?
I have dwelt for so long in this life of dying,
my heart living, nonetheless, in another place.
I have loved the things of this creation
because in them I have glimpsed your face.
But, my God, I have yearned for you,
heart aching and calling out for the fullness
that, in all of these things, is only glimpsed.
There is something special
about the dove, my God,
that is different than all the other birds.
This is why you have chosen it to be a symbol,
not only of the Spirit's gift and presence,
but of the love-wounded heart's longing for you.

If I sit for a while in the gardens of this world,
listening to the sounds of the birds,

I notice that the cooing of the dove is different.
So many others shriek or call out loudly,
almost deafening the ears,
but the dove, meek, humble, innocent,
has a voice that is almost drowned out by the rest.
Father, God of Love, Son, Beloved, Friend,
and Spirit of intimacy and joy...
does not my heart long for you like this,
not with the loud cries of other birds,
but with that gentle cooing of a dove?

Ah, the heart is wounded by your gentle touch,
and gentleness cannot but awaken
gentleness is return.
It is a beautiful wound,
aching it is true, but healing,
bestowing the true health as nothing else can do.
Now my heart, broken by its sin
like a bird with broken wing,
yet yearning to fly away to be with you, my God,
calls out in gentle voice, incessantly,
cooes with a soft yet ardent call
for the One in whom this heart is at rest, alone.
Draw me, God, my one Beloved and my rest,
to never cease to call out with this voice to you,
yet to call out not for me alone,
but with a voice bearing in itself the voice of all,
their thirst, their crying, their pain, their hope.

For I know the One in whom the Spirit dwells,
the perfect Dove bearing the olive branch of peace,
the One who opens wide his arms, like wings,
enfolding under his pinions all our longing hearts.
He welcomes us there, in all we are,
and cries out gently, *Abba! Father!*
with a voice like a gentle dove, cooing,
bearing all our anguish of loneliness and pain,
yet at last breathing out again this Spirit-breath,
Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.
Yes, the cooing of the dove is heard in our land,
heralding the dawning springtime of redemption,
the end-times in which consummation is at work,
carrying us forward from imperfect life
into the fullness
of your wondrous, Trinitarian embrace.
Like a flower stretching out petals, bearing fruit,
a Cross rooted in compassion deep into our earth,

yet stretching out to heaven, yearning,
and awakening the thirst that sleeps deep in us,
Christ, my God, my Life, my All,
you dwell here in our midst, yet carry us,
in your loving and tender arms,
to the place that we long to be.

You have come down to our lowest place,
abiding with us in our loneliness and pain,
yet as One who is wholly united
in love with the Father,
beloved Son of such a God
and Bridegroom of each heart.
Calling out, you awaken every voice with yours,
through the silence of the tomb, slumbering earth,
yet from which flowers blossom anew
and silent voice calls out in hope and love.
Resurrection joy, like blossoming spring,
the warmth of sun bathing the earth
with light and health,
everything reaching out to heaven, alive and well,
and the dove cooing now a peaceful song,
a song of dwelling in the garden-bliss.

Your own Resurrection, my dear Jesus,
is the pouring forth of God's own life
into our world,
the dwelling of his Fullness in lowly things,
transforming each moment,
each reality, however small,
into a bearer of heaven's grace and glory.
And it is also the enfolding of all creation
within heaven's encompassing arms,
the arms which are simply, my God, your own.
Lowly flesh, transfigured and transformed,
not to be no longer a body,
but to be completely new,
yet bearing in itself what it always was.
Divine life in that human form, reaching out,
in love, with those welcoming hands,
bearing in them holes from the nails,
yet now made glorious, free from pain,
as a place of receptivity, only more.
And above all, dear Jesus, that open Heart,
a space in which we dwell, already now,
yet which beckons us
into the fullness of its embrace,

where one day, when this earthly life is past,
we are enfolded in your embrace in radiant light,
seeing and knowing as we are known,
and rejoicing with the very joy that is yours.
Here there shall be no more crying, no more tears,
no more pain, anguish, or loneliness any more.
The dove's song shall be, at last, one of perfect joy.

Our own flesh and body completely new,
enfolded in the mystery for which we were made,
will dwell in the most perfect
and blessed joy, dear Jesus,
in your embrace, and penetrated by the Spirit,
welcoming, in you, each and every person,
given, also, entirely, in you, to them.
All of us together,
in this awesome embrace and blessed love,
the unimaginable bliss of intimacy, indwelling,
where each of us is ourself, unique,
yet abiding with and in one another,
in that closeness for which our hearts,
in this life, can only long,
will share, fully and completely,
in the very life that is always yours.
Yes, we shall dwell, in risen body
and earth made wholly new,
in the very bosom of the Father of us all,
where you, our Jesus, our Life, our Joy,
dwell forever, unceasingly, in perfect rest.

ישוע

FRAGILE AND BEAUTIFUL

I.
Life, my dear Father, is so beautiful,
a gift precious, inexpressible.
And yet it is so fragile,
like a flower's tender bloom,
blossoming in the morning
and reaching out to the sun,
opening its petals to drink in
the light and the warmth of day,
and to surrender its beauty
to the beautiful rays poured into it.
And yet in the evening chill
it curves inward upon itself in fright,

in flight from the pain of the cold,
and its petals become withered,
constrained.
Ah, Father, and in a single moment
life can end,
this treasure in earthen vessels—
a single slip, and the vessel breaks.

How can I carry these two realities
as one within my heart?
Beauty and fragility...
Preciousness and vulnerability...
Filled with gratitude for the gift of life,
overflowing,
I drive home late into the night,
reflecting.
My eyes are tired, strained,
and I think:
in a single moment, the blink of an eye,
my life could end.
I could simply lose my concentration,
or even doze for a moment,
and life is gone.

What is this?
The more I love life
—or, rather, love those whom,
in this life, you have allowed me to encounter,
whom you have entrusted to me—
the more I yearn to remain alive for their sake,
the more I yearn to love them
and to know them more deeply in this life.
My heart feels its vulnerability,
that what you have given into my hands
is a sacred trust to be protected, sheltered.

And yet, in the same moment,
I still know the freedom that you have
fashioned within me over the years:
that I welcome this gift, this trust
of those whose beauty has touched my heart,
and the gift that you have given to me
for their sake, and for the sake of the Church...
and yet I carry it, not as my own possession,
but with open, empty, and upraised hands.

I welcome deeply, so deeply that the gift
pierces and wounds my heart—
and such a beautiful wound it is!
And I carry within me this sacred mystery,
the unrepeatable, unique mystery
of those whom you love,
and whom you have, in your love,
entrusted also to me.

And the gift of those whom I encounter,
your beloved children,
intersects in my heart
with the gift of love poured into me by you—
and my heart becomes, as it were,
a single wound of loving encounter:
between the thirst of their aching hearts,
yearning, my God, for you,
and your own thirst,
ardently seeking and pursuing them.

I want to stand here, to stand here
throughout every moment of my life—
to abide in being given,
and to be given in abiding
at the mysterious place in the depth of every heart
which you have so lovingly made:
the Cross of Christ implanted
deep in human flesh,
the place where thirst and thirst encounter,
where the loneliness of the human heart
is pierced by the love of God in Jesus,
and solitude becomes encounter,
and encounter, the truth of mutual self-giving,
and self-giving, the joy of intimacy
where Lover and beloved live,
truly, in one another, forever.

II.

Our eyes can only see
the beauty...
when we learn that Beauty looks on us.
Our hearts can only know themselves
to be beloved...
when we feel his gaze permeating into us.

Yes, this is where the heart of the mystery lies.
Beauty is fragile, and love easily wounded,

and yet both are, really, unbreakable,
stronger than all pain, all darkness,
and enduring beyond the boundary of death.
Love, the love of God given in Jesus,
is a cord that touches every heart
and, enveloping it, weaves it together,
intimately and inseparably,
to the Heart of God who is Love.

The heart still feels afraid,
does it not?
For this gift of love is so mysterious
and hidden from our eyes.
Human beings fail to love
as we thirst to be loved...
and even when they do love,
we still thirst for something more.
But God's love is such that
it can never reject, abandon,
or turn away from us when we fail,
and it is so great that it is
inexhaustible in the gentle beauty
with which it gives itself.
Our God, he is an overflowing torrent,
whose passionate desire for us
must restrain itself,
so as not to overwhelm our hearts.

But if we open the doors of the soul,
if we welcome the gift of his light—
if we become vulnerable before him,
we shall find that the woundedness
of our being is transformed by his gentle touch.

Vulnerability.
To be vulnerable means to be woundable
—but also...but also
to be open to the touch of love—
to have a heart open, defenseless,
to be touched by what comes from without,
to receive and give in radical trust and surrender.
And thus in vulnerability alone
can intimacy flower,
this single truth which alone can bring rest,
rest and peace, peace and joy
to the thirsting heart,
made for this alone.

Ah, but why be vulnerable
when so often one has been rejected,
when one's hope and desire has been
betrayed?

But when the heart withdraws
from this openness,
from vulnerable nakedness in trust,
it turns in upon itself
like a rose refusing to open its petals
to the warm rays of the sun.
And then it forgets the joy of living,
the happiness of looking in another's eyes,
and of allowing oneself
to be gazed upon in return.
It forgets the inexpressible gift
that is a simple embrace,
a word of love and affirmation,
the abiding presence of one who loves.

But who, who can teach us vulnerability—
to bear the fragility of life in its beauty,
and to bear the beauty in its fragility?
It is the One who transforms vulnerability
into the security of openness,
the confidence of love,
and the joy of loving encounter...
and who, in the vulnerability
of his own naked and wounded Heart,
shows that Love is stronger than death,
and is always there for us,
never failing, and greater than we can desire,
satisfying every thirst.

III.

Yes, Jesus, you enter into our vulnerability,
our openness to be wounded
—and our openness to love—
and you lay your Heart bare,
taking our wounds as your own.
And in doing this you transform our wounds...
into the wound of love.
In doing this you suffuse our fragility
with the surety of undying Love...
a Love which will hold us, shelter us,
even through the darkest nights,

and works all for the best,
giving itself to us tenderly, unceasingly,
in each moment and each thing.

And even in the fragility of death
—if life, in the blink of an eye, ceases—
life, really, never ends.

For even such a moment,
and perhaps more than all the rest,
is sheltered safely in your hands.

Yes, two vulnerable hearts encounter:
the human heart, wounded with fear,
with insecurity and doubt,
with the inability to welcome love
in the fear that it will be hurt again...
and your Heart, Jesus,
wounded with longing and ardent desire,
restlessly thirsting for the one whom you love.

You see in this one such beauty,
more than can be expressed or felt,
and this beauty ravishes your Heart
and draws it to the one you love.
*"You are all beautiful, my beloved,
you are all beautiful,"* you say unceasingly
deep within the beloved's heart.
*"You are precious in my eyes,
and beautiful, and I love you."*

But the human heart, broken,
struggles to accept this truth.
So then you draw nearer, nearer...
and take into yourself this fear,
the loneliness of your beloved,
who, for you, is not a burden,
but simply a precious gift.

On the other hand,
even in its fear, the heart yearns for this love,
and this yearning tears at it,
drawing it restlessly to more...
and this, too, you take, Jesus,
sheltering its yearning within your own.
And in this way, gradually, gradually,
you transform the wound of fear
into the wound of love, longing, and confident trust.

Then the heart is no longer afraid
to be vulnerable, to be fragile,
for it has come to know that,
in such fragility, it cannot truly break.
This is because it is sheltered
by the tenderness, the strength,
of those hands that are yours,
that Heart that carries it gently within itself...
and will never cease to carry it forever,
all the way into the fullness of God's embrace.

ישוע

GAZE INTO THE EYES

I.

I am continually convinced, loving Father,
that love is, in its inmost heart,
a matter of seeing.
Eyes that truly see will learn to love,
and love springs up in the heart that sees.
And yet, on the other hand,
love alone can truly see:
that receptive willingness to behold.

In our world—I feel so much, Father,
and see it in my brethren too—
we have lost this ability to see the truth
of your radiant light inundating all.
This is the source of our sadness and anxiety,
that we no longer see each moment, each event,
each joy and suffering, all darkness and all light,
as finding its meaning only in your loving plan,
as an expression of your Love deeper than all,
present and at work in each and every thing.

Yes, Father, you do not will the darkness,
nor cause, in us, our suffering and pain—
but Love is like water, descending, descending,
always, in order to fill the lowest place.
Eyes that are transfigured by love
truly come to see all things irradiated,
shining in the light of your redeeming Love.
And yet for this transfiguration to occur
there must be a deep encounter,
yes, a total interpenetration.

For the searching human gaze is not enough
to pierce through the darkness of the night
—a night which, in this life, is vividly real—
unless it encounters the gaze of Love
directed at us in return,
unless, indeed, Love's gaze awakens,
in us, our own seeing first.

*To have eyes to see such beauty
because we gaze into the eyes of Christ,
who sees the heart...*

This, this is the encounter and interpenetration
for which each heart longs,
and in which, alone,
is found rest.

In all true and deep love
is there not this mutual penetration of gazes?
I gaze upon the Beloved,
and what so deeply strikes my heart
is to experience him gazing back at me.
For in those sacred eyes is an abyss
of tenderness, compassion, and mercy,
an overflowing fountain (of both tears and light!)
of that ardent willingness to see beauty
in the midst of the darkness and brokenness.

Indeed, this seeing is not in any way false,
as if he, the dear Jesus, ignores what is really there.
No, for his gaze is the gaze of Truth,
piercing and illuminating my inmost heart.
And as I allow him to gaze on me—
yes, as I gaze into those eyes
which look, unceasingly, into me—
I too learn to see as he sees,
to love as he, my Beloved, loves.
For in all things, great and small,
through his own gaze alive in me,
I see redeeming and healing Love
—I see the Beloved for whom I long—
penetrating and transforming all in himself.

II.

I mentioned, Father, depression and anxiety,
and said that they come from an inability,
in the midst of darkness, to truly see.
And I recognize that this is true for so many,
your beloved children who, in this world,

have lost the sense of what really matters,
of your abiding and saving presence,
and of the hope that redemption brings.

Yes, for in our world we live
as if the Incarnation never happened,
as if your beloved Son never gave his life,
as if the Light of Love never penetrated
into the depths of our darkness, illumining it.
Thus we seek meaning, or simply “solutions,”
in activism, in flight from the depth,
in sedating medication or sedating experience.
But the only true solution lies deeper
in that interpenetration of gazes,
in that interpenetration of hearts.

Abide in me, and I in you,
Jesus said, *and you will bear much fruit.*
Now, here is a mystery...
that through the darkness of suffering
the heart learns to discern your loving closeness,
for you have entered, in Christ, into all we are.
Never are we alone, never without hope.
Rather our eyes, joining to the eyes of Christ,
can deliberately seek—and find!--
the beauty in every person and in every thing.

Yet this finding, it is true,
can at times occur only (and most deeply)
in the nakedness of faith,
in the subtle intuition of the heart, inexpressible,
in the burning fire of hope that clings
and surrenders, through ardent trust and desire,
and in the love that draws the heart
beyond itself into the strong
and gentle arms of Love.
Yet here things have, really, been transformed,
for the heart, penetrated by you,
by the gaze, the light, the compassion of your Son,
walks through every darkness, now,
in a radically different way.

The heart shares, through the presence of grace,
in the redeeming compassion of Jesus Christ,
who, from the bosom of eternal Light
--and without leaving Light's embrace
(for how could he, since he is Light from Light,

begotten eternally, Father, by you?)--
who from the bosom of eternal Light
entered into our darkness, our loneliness,
and there illumined it by his presence,
by the consoling tenderness of his love.
Then loneliness is no longer alone,
but loneliness is transformed into solitude,
the space of loving encounter
and, in this encounter of two together,
of the mutual self-giving, the passion of love,
that blossoms in the joy of intimacy
and of loving interpenetration.

Thus the inmost experience of the heart
penetrated by the presence of the beloved Christ
is no longer the same, but is radiant with grace.
Yet this does not mean that all darkness,
in our experience, is dispelled.
Rather, it means that all darkness, all suffering,
is radically and interiorly transformed,
for, since this heart's suffering
has been redeemed from deep within,
it helps to extend redemption to others too.

The redeemed heart bears,
in the frailty of its own humanity,
the frailty, the longing, the pain
of its brothers and sisters,
and in this way, through faith, hope, and love,
helps to carry them closer, through everything,
into the unbreakable Light of eternal Love,
and, in turn, to create a space within this world
for this Light to pour forth undimmed.

III.

The heart that comes to know your Light
penetrating and transforming every darkness,
that comes to taste, in mystery,
the mystery of undying Joy—
this heart then begins to experience,
deep within, the wellspring of compassion too.

For Joy, when it encounters suffering,
becomes compassion.
The tenderness of the heart,
when it comes face to face with misery,
becomes mercy.

Therefore the heart begins to sense more keenly,
to feel, the longing and pain of others.
And the thirst within the heart, too,
simply deepens, for Love's touch awakens it,
this thirst that what in love is glimpsed
may one day, at the end, be possessed,
or, rather, come completely to possess the heart.

But in this deepening of sensitivity,
in the vulnerability of the heart,
there is something radically different
than the suffering of being lost and in despair.
For the aching now is from a yearning
for full immersion in the Reality that is glimpsed,
or rather that this Reality, already enfolding us,
may no longer remain hidden from our sight.
It comes, too, and perhaps even more,
from the sorrow that others, not seeing,
lose the ability to remain united
to the Truth that alone gives solace,
strength, and peace to the heart.

In the suffering of the transfigured heart
all is bathed in a mysterious peace,
yes, in a pure and holy joy.
And this peaceful joy and joyful love
becomes sorrowful compassion
at seeing that others lose peace and joy
in the midst of the real, but conquered and fading,
darkness of this earthly life.

This heartfelt pain is thus a blessed pain,
and even that suffering coming from without
—whether from physical or mental illness,
from misunderstanding, loneliness, or hurt—
is a pain that simply reverberates
with the echoing sound of your compassion
and of humanity crying out for you.

Thus the wounded and healed heart,
still bearing wounds, yet still transfigured,
becomes a meeting-place, dear God,
between you and your beloved children.
The very passion of its suffering,
and the passion also of its joy,
is a place of com-passion,

the confluence of streams.

Here the ardent love of the Trinity
descends to touch the human heart,
and the yearning of the human heart
is carried into the furnace of Triune Love.

ישוע

RESTING IN HIS DIVINE COMPASSION

From within the eternity of the divine playfulness,
from the heart of the blessedness of divine repose,
shared by the Father and the Son, together,
in the embrace of their single Spirit,
the whole of our creation is conceived and born.

It is a free and unnecessary overflow
of your fullness,
infinite God, surging
over the boundaries of divine life,
creating “outside” of you
a beloved to whom you relate
in a dialogue of love and tenderness,
yet only so that,
receiving and reciprocating your gift,
she may surrender to you in return,
and thus return “inside,” taken up, freely,
into the innermost intimacy of your own life.

But, dear and loving God, she turns away,
disconnecting herself from your gift,
thinking that she will be free apart from it,
rather than within its all-enveloping embrace.
The fruit of this choice for independence
is the pain of insecurity, the sufferings of this life,
and exile and alienation from the inner truth
of her belovedness before you,
her unique beauty within your ceaseless gaze.

Loving God, what then is your response?
Your eternal joy
is transfused into divine compassion,
your eternal playfulness
into the creativity of pursuit,
your eternal rest
into restless longing for her return.
Throughout the ages you seek her without ceasing,

and in every moment you draw near,
enveloping in your arms, your sheltering Love,
she who has separated herself from this Love.
She does not feel, she does not know, this Love,
this tenderness ever enveloping and holding her...
but that does not, in any way, mean that it is not.

She only needs to be reopened,
her enclosed heart made vulnerable in trust again,
and her wounds
 will be healed by your tender touch.
Thus, loving Father and gentle God,
you and your Son decide, in the bosom of eternity,
that he is to become a man, a Brother,
in order to teach her again
 what it means to be a child.

He comes to her and takes her very flesh,
living in the midst of her frailty, her life,
the truth of childhood before you, Father,
the joy of perfect dependency—of perfect freedom.
He abides in enclosed humanity
 with an open Heart,
his being wide open to receive and to give,
and thus he gradually reopens her to Love again.
Indeed, he penetrates into her lonely isolation,
into the darkness and pain of her sin and sorrow
—yet without for a moment leaving,
 Father, your bosom,
nor the rest and playfulness of eternal Love!

Rather, he takes her up, tenderly, into this,
in the ardor and purity of his love
in which he is not only Brother,
but becomes for her the perfect Spouse,
uniting her to himself in intimate love.
There in the place of greatest dependency,
there in the place of greatest solitude,
there in the place of greatest nakedness,
he weaves together again the strands
that were rent asunder
by the infidelity of her sin.

She finds herself, therefore, cradled anew in Love,
in the Love that has never ceased to cradle her...
but which has now entered into her isolation
and reopened it from within by its presence.

Yes, the beloved Son and tender Bridegroom
rests and plays even in this darkest place,
for he is still in the Father's sheltering presence,
and sheltering his beloved
as he himself is sheltered.

It is thus, with the Love
that is stronger than death,
that he liberates her from her false independence
so that she can be free in dependency again.
It is thus that the light of Resurrection
breaks forth like a radiant dawn,
signaling, at the heart of creation,
the coming eternal Day.

In the dawning light of this life,
broken but redeemed,
this beloved child, this precious spouse,
of the Father, Son, and Spirit, together loving,
can find herself resting and playing
in the tender compassion that envelops her...
in the delight that God has in her.
She can abide in his presence,
in the all-enveloping arms of his Love,
which cradle her and shelter her unceasingly,
as they carry her forward
toward the consummation.
Here the veil of this life will at last be rent
and she will be united to her Lover
in perfect vision,
in an intimacy that is complete and total—
as she is immersed in the inmost embrace
of the Father, Son, and Spirit, in an eternity of joy.

ישוע

THE HEROISM OF PLAY

There is a profound connection
between playfulness and courage,
between childlike receptivity to the gift
and the heroism that gives one's life as a gift
to protect the sacredness of what is given
and the hearts of others, entrusted to one's care.

It is the healthy child who slays dragons,
who in imagination
fights for goodness, beauty, truth,
taking up the weapons of love

against a torrent of evil—
because he knows that reality
is a gift worth fighting for.

It is the healthy child who mothers little children,
communicating to them, in play,
that they are loved,
and sheltering them in the truth of the gift—
knowing that a mother's love
passes into her children
and that her life is poured out for their own.

But it is a trait of our contemporary world
that the drama is drained from reality,
and no longer is the conflict
between good and evil seen,
nor the beauty of heroism and self-sacrifice
that stands on behalf of what need defending.

Play is no longer what is once was,
but is seen as a mere rehearsal
for the mature responsibilities of life,
rather than the spirit that
enfolds in itself every responsibility,
and indeed the deepest truth of all:
that *task* flows from the wellspring of the *gift*
and remains always enfolded in gift,
and, indeed, is nothing but gift itself.
And only in childlike receptivity
can one be strong
to abide in the gift that one receives—that one is—
and to become a gift for others in this gift.

Play, today, is often no longer
that deep intuition of the heart
that *being* itself
—radiating with beauty and goodness
and filling the heart with awe,
reverence, and wonder—
that being is simply an expression
of Love, pure Gift,
and is to be received
with open hands and open heart,
and from this receptivity
communicated, outpoured,
for others, in order to flow back again, one.

No, play is now a kind of flight to the periphery,
a dull fragmentation, no longer thrilling the heart,
no longer tugging on mind and imagination
with the beauty of love and wonder and delight
and the flower of tender acceptance
and reciprocal self-gift;
it is instead the bored heart's pursuit
of continual stimulation,
to fill the void left by a great divorce.

This is the divorce of existence from beauty,
from the wellspring of Gift awakening awe.
For in a healthy child the heart thrills at *truth*,
at the greatness of existence, of enduring fidelity,
knowing that every "ought"
springs from a prior "awe"
as simply a form of receptivity to gift,
and taking one's stand
on behalf of this gift,
and for its sake.

Now, rather than receiving,
we devour possessively,
rather than abiding, we flit from here to there,
restless and aimless, without a compass
guiding us on the expansive path of truth.

When we lose the sense of the preciousness of life
we lose the truth of responsibility,
and when we lose responsibility
we lose the vigorous excitement of true play.

This playfulness—in its true and deep meaning—
can reawaken our responsiveness
to the task entrusted to us.
The pulsing of a heart that, filled with gratitude,
carries something precious, the beauty of life,
worth even the sacrifice of one's life—
which is not loss,
but being found in love, by Love.

The drama, the romance, the thrill
must not be drained from reality.
Let it rather be seen as what it is—
an immense mystery flowing from Love,
yet standing before an abyss of evil
that threatens it, requiring a choice,

a life, a heart's complete devotion:
as the child must crush the serpent's head
in order that his people may be free
to dance and sing, to marry and rejoice.

ישוע

TEACH ME, LITTLE ONE

Little one, will you teach me to pray?
I bow down before you, humble child,
and humbly acknowledge my need
to be taught by you, whom so many
see only the need to teach.

You have a gift, a treasure,
which we who are "mature"
so easily forget about, and lose—
because for us it becomes so easy
to stand tall, to keep aloof in fear,
and therefore to see our God
as so great and far away, inaccessible.

But if only we could bend our knees
and lower our head and heart to you,
then we could hear from you your wisdom,
and let you, in your docile simplicity,
teach us how to be teachable for God,
docile to his slightest touch and gentle grace.

For you, dear child, show us
that God is not far away,
as if someone—an "expert" perhaps—
needed to throw a bridge for us,
in order for us to speak to him
and to feel his silent voice
echoing deep within the heart.

No, the Bridge is already there,
implanted in the depths of every heart;
and the thirst is there, the possibility,
of opening wide the doors of the soul
to receive the gift that gives us life
and to abandon ourselves, in childlike trust,
into the arms that welcome us.

Yes, little one, you are ready and receptive,
for you know already the deep truth,

and do not fret at it in the least:
that indeed, at every moment, *all is gift*.
And so you welcome unreservedly
that which can only come as a Gift:
the radiant light of the Gospel,
bringing us the experience of the Father's love.

He who praised the little children knew this,
he who draw us all together,
in the sinews of his own childlike Heart;
he knew the wisdom of the little ones
and said that we must become as them
if we are to welcome to gift of the kingdom.

For he is the Bridge, who as a Child
lets us experience the tenderness of the Father,
and who takes up every little child
—and those who will become as children—
and educates them in beauty, goodness, and truth.

Yes, it is you, child, who understand
the words and deeds of this Child,
and who share in his relationship with God.
We may dismiss your prayer as immature, infantile,
and then we go to prayer and rack our heads
trying to figure out why things are so complicated
and why we can't let down our defenses
and our feverish need to be enough, to perform,
simply resting in the Father's loving arms.

Yes, it is the child who understands, and feels,
that every moment is not a burdensome task,
a heavy demand placed on our back,
but a gift, so pure and undeserved,
yet offered to us by our loving Father...
the gift of pure Love awakening love,
a Love seeking only our acceptance
and our trust-filled reciprocal gift,
the childlike act of letting ourselves
be cradled in the arms of Love.

It is the child who understands
the meaning of the little seed, buried in the earth,
which, as tiny as a speck,
bears the kingdom's mystery,
full and rich, and overflowing with beauty.
It is the child who knows the Shepherd's voice,

so tender, so loving, sounding unceasingly,
calling each, uniquely, by name.

We think, perhaps, that we need to teach you,
and, sure, in certain things this is true.
But above all we need you to teach us.

And how can we teach you anything
unless we first listen to this lesson
that you have for us,
learning to speak, as a grown-up child,
to every child whom we want to help?

Above all, child, what you need is our tender love,
so that you may grow
and blossom in this relationship
that you already bear as a seed in your heart...
this relationship with such a loving Father.
You need our reverent desire to understand you
and to shelter, with all that we are,
the sacred mystery entrusted to you by God.

Let us listen, then, and speak only from listening,
our head pressed up close to you, little one,
to hear the beating of your child's heart...
and our head pressed up, simultaneously,
to the breast of the One who teaches us all,
and whose heartbeat fills all of creation.
Only then can we help, in some small way,
to bring these two hearts together, yours and his,
in childlike simplicity and surrender,
into a mature and enduring union of love.

For there is an interior Teacher,
who speaks—not from some inaccessible height,
pontificating to the little ones
whom he does not really know or understand—
but who speaks as a Little One,
a Child among children.

It is he who reveals to us
the unique gift of childhood,
and the gift of each unique child.
But we, with our complex reasoning,
argue about so many things
that we forget the simple truth
which shines from those eyes,

and from that tender smile...
that smile which is a child's smile,
and is also the smile of Christ.

ישוע

TRANSCENDENTALS

The human heart is like a garden
in need of cultivation;
the mind, the affections, and the will
open radically to truth, beauty, goodness.

For these we have been made and fashioned,
like a puzzle-piece seeking
to be fitted in the whole,
not in a kind of anonymity
submerging the person,
but expanding the heart
to the dimensions of the real.

And what...what really is real?
Not the narrowness of a world to our own liking,
self-fashioned to be in our control,
the loneliness of a self closed in upon itself.

But neither is this self false
and narrow in its being,
however narrow, in ignorance, sin,
and selfishness it may be,
for it has been created for greatness, for nobility,
and bears such greatness
as a burning flame within.

Truth lies in the openness of the heart to reality
which envelops us ceaselessly on every side,
in the communication of being with being,
sensitive to the Being upholding and present in all.

Indeed, the Truth is Goodness,
the tenderness of mutual self-communication
between one and another, heart and heart,
and devotion to the preciousness of every thing.

Truth and Goodness, also, are Beauty,
radiant with harmony, proportion, clarity,
manifesting in transparency the inner form,
which, striking the heart,

wounds it with love and longing
—and in this wound alone brings it true health.

This holy “trinity”
of Beauty, Goodness, and Truth
is like an arrow piercing the soul with radiant life,
tearing open what was closed in sin and fear,
and drawing the heart out in an exodus of love.

More, indeed, it is than this alone,
for this trinity of Being, shining in everything,
is indeed but a single Thing, in the end,
and a single Thing in the beginning
(and all between).

For Being is, in the last analysis, simply *Love*.
It is the Gift of mutual communication
and the Communion of Persons in intimacy,
in enduring, eternal, and self-giving embrace.

To open the heart to Truth, therefore,
so good, so beautiful, filling one with wonder,
is to recognize, like a little child,
that all is a pure and freely given gift
—and therefore it is nothing but Love.

Ah...it is the Lover and Beloved, together,
Father and Son, one, in the kiss of their Spirit,
loving us from the fullness of their eternal life,
and giving themselves to us in utter generosity.

And they give themselves thus so that we,
responding and giving ourselves in love in return,
may enter into
this divine communication, this union,
of the one, eternal, indivisible Trinity.

ישוע

NASCANTUR IN ADMIRATIONE (TO LET THINGS BE BORN IN WONDER)

I.

To let things be born in wonder:
this is the foundation of rich human life,
in which creativity is itself first a “conceiving”
before it is a “bringing-forth” into this world.

Is not a little child herself conceived and born...
and not a project
of human planning and invention,
the “making” of an autonomous human will
and a possessive human mind, fabricating?

Yes, for a child to be welcomed into this world
requires that she is conceived
and born of childlikeness,
for only the spirit of childhood
can welcome children,
recognizing them as an undeserved, pure gift.

A world that is grown old and “mature”
in autonomy,
sees self-determination and the ability to produce
as the true perfection of human life...
and therefore has no place for children,
who are powerless and dependent,
and can give only what they first receive.

What such a world has forgotten
is that anything worthwhile in this world
must first be received before it is given,
and conceived before it is made.

Indeed, it lives in an artificial “technocracy,”
an alter-world that cannot stand receptivity,
for this means that we do not belong to ourselves,
but must receive, unceasingly, from Another.

“Adult” autonomy sees receptivity as a burden,
a sign of infantile dependence on external truths,
but because of this it loses the ability to go deeply
into the depths of reality—
speaking beauty, goodness, and truth.

The childlike heart
(which thus becomes truly mature)
recognizes freedom precisely in receptivity,
in the ability to welcome all things as gift
and to live according to their radiant, inner truth.

II.

A child is conceived, and not “made,”
and grows organically in the womb,
in utter dependency—

and thereby grows, precisely,
into the freedom of communion with others,
and communion with the gift-ness of reality,
always sustaining
as a gratuitous expression of Love.

The child thus knows how to receive, to welcome,
in trusting simplicity of heart before the truth.
The child knows how to play, to rejoice,
in the beauty of each succeeding moment.

There is no need to grasp, to control,
to utilize every moment for some other end,
and to possess space and time
for the sake of making things of it.

Rather, the childlike heart *abides*
in the heart of time and space
—in the sacred meaning of each moment—
allowing them to unfold their inner secret,
the hidden heartbeat of Eternity alive in them.

And this filial receptivity *conceives*
and bears the meaning deep within the heart,
rejoicing in it, resting in it, playing in its truth,
nurturing it in communion, as it, in turn, nurtures.

Thus the childlike can *give birth*
to truly beautiful, good, and holy things,
for it simply gives what it has first received,
and creates only what it has first conceived.

For it shelters and cherishes in the womb
the gift that comes ceaselessly from without,
and in this way learns
the true inventiveness of love,
the creativity that springs from playful receptivity.

III.

The Son can do nothing of his own accord,
but only what he sees his Father doing;
for whatever the Father does,
that the Son does likewise.

For the Father loves the Son tenderly
and shows him all that he himself is doing—
he unveils his very being before the Son

as a complete and total gift, gratuitous.

And the Son, as the eternal Child of God,
receives this gift in the freedom of dependency
and the maturity of childlike receptivity,
and thus can give himself back to the Father
in the liberty and strength of adult love.

The whole of the “maturity” of the Trinity
—what a mysterious, and unexpected truth!—
is contained within the childlike playfulness
which marks the very nature of the divine life.

This is because, for God, to act is to play;
and his work is identical with his rest.
The mystery of playfulness, of repose,
and the wonder in which the Son is eternally born,
is the eternal life of the Father,
and of his Beloved, whom he loves in the Spirit.

For the whole movement of self-giving
that surges forever as the very heartbeat of God,
is that movement of wonder and awe,
that cries out:
How good and beautiful you are, my love!

Therefore, the Son is not the only childlike one
who lives in the bosom of the Trinity.
No, the Father also is like a child,
in the spirit of his humble joy before the Son.

Even as the eternal Origin of the Son himself,
he is also the One whose self-outpouring
(the very eternal begetting of his Fatherhood!)
is a responsive love to the beauty of his Child.

What a mystery is this!
That the Father’s eternal begetting of the Son
is itself both the first movement, and a response
to the One whom he begets in love.

For eternity does not divide these up,
but bears them together harmoniously
in the fullness of the life of God...
as the Father and the Son behold one another,
and ceaselessly cry out with joy:
I love you!

They give themselves to one another
in a movement of receptivity to the other's gift.
They receive in giving and give in receiving,
a Gift that communicates all that they are...
and thus binds them together eternally
in an ecstasy of joy,
and in perfect mutual indwelling.

But this very movement of mutual giving,
the very space of their encounter and their love...
who is this but the Womb of the Spirit,
the vibrant Joy of the Trinity, shared by all?

For the Spirit is the Gift of the Father and the Son,
and the Kiss in which they are united.
He, too, thus, is childlike, rejoicing to be gift,
and letting himself be given, giving himself too.

These three Persons in ceaseless relationship...
this Family of Love,
filled with the vividness of Life!
Such tenderness, such sensitivity...
in which every gift is a reception,
and every reception a loving gift.

Holy Trinity, the source of all Beauty,
the heart of all Goodness, and the eternal Truth...
draw us, your beloved children,
into your embrace,
and shelter us there eternally.

Take us up, dear and loving God,
into the movement of mutual self-giving
for which we have been created by you,
so that, receiving and responding,
we may experience the joyful intimacy
in which our hearts, alone, are at rest.

ישוע

THE FULLNESS OF SILENCE

Your silence is full...
a vibration of noiseless sound.
Your stillness is abundant...
this eternal movement of Love.
We speak with eyes, with glance...

you looking at me, and I looking back at you,
as your gaze enfolds me on every side,
cradling gently,
awakening and sheltering me
as who I am in you...
as who I am for you, great Lover of souls...
and Beloved of my heart.

To look into those eyes ever looking upon me...
what else is there, my God, but this?
Ah, there is one more thing...
which springs forth spontaneously from this:
to look with your eyes upon your children.
Yet this very gaze on them
is not a turning away from you,
for only in the reflection of your eyes
can I see them,
and I can only see you reflected clearly in them
when I look first into that gaze of yours
which reveals all.

Breathe into me, my Love,
the Breath of your Love.
Exhale into me the song
of your Eternal Jubilation.
Through my inhalation,
fill my lungs, my life, with you,
with the reverberations of your Divine Love
and your endless Joy and Playfulness...
blossoming forth in the tenderness
of compassion, embracing all,
so I may carry them, in the Heart of your Son
into your embrace.
And exhale them forth
in the love and prayer of my heart
into your own most open
and vulnerable Being...
the only true Home
of every thirsting child of God.

ישוע

KECHARITOMENE (FULL OF GRACE)

In you, Mother of Jesus, pure Virgin,
we see shining in its fullness the holiness of love—
this reality of intimacy and deep sharing-of-life
which God thirsts to have with each one of us.

How are you able to live this, Mary,
as your deepest truth?

Because it is something
that you have wholly received,
a grace freely given,
which bears in itself the response:
the loving “Yes” of God
which awakens your own “Yes.”

This is because you are, for him, Mary,
simply one whose inmost being
he sees and knows,
one to whom he pronounces the name
revealing your identity:

Kecharitomene—

She who has been, is, and will forever
be loved by God.

May we, each one of us, receive this gaze of God,
and welcome this word spoken in our depths
as it reveals the unique name that God has given:
the name that, truly, is nothing other than *Beloved*.

ישוע

DIVINE BEAUTY

Ineffable touch of the Divine Beauty,
reaching out your gentle hand into the inner heart
and impressing your seal upon the soul—
you come to us through letting yourself be seen
in the many rays of your light
refracting within creation:

In the ravishing colors of the setting sun,
in the innocent smile of a little child;
in the beauty of the human body,
made for communion,
in the revelation of the heart
glistening through the eyes;
in the harmony of music,
tugging of the longing heart-strings,

in the voice of one who is loved,
a sound bringing joy and hope.

And yet, and yet, Divine Beauty,
these are only glimpses
of the unspeakable, ungraspable depth
of who you are in yourself.
Source and Consummation
of all that is good, all that is true,
you are the deepest longing of every human heart:

The Beauty that we glimpse in every beauty,
the Goodness that we seek in all that is good,
the Truth bestowing reality to all that is true,
the Love that we long for in every love.

Ah, but there is a deeper encounter yet than this.
Not only do our eyes look incessantly
to discover you,
but you come to us and meet our longing gaze.
Yes, Divine Beauty, you are the Beautiful One
whose eyes of love are ever gazing, unceasingly,
trying to meet the glance of your beautiful one...
your beautiful one, infinitely precious, who I am.

You come, you come, ineffable Beauty,
infinite Sweetness,
inviting me through each and every thing,
unveiling a glimpse of your majesty and mystery—
and yet above all seeking to catch my gaze
so that, through a deep mutual beholding,
you may pour forth into me
the immensity of your Love.

Ah, Divine Beauty, God of infinite Love
looking upon me!
You are the Source of all beauty
and its only Resting-place!
Draw me then, Beautiful One,
who have made me beautiful
by bestowing upon me your own Beauty.
Draw me to be immersed in you,
in the immensity
of your own all-enfolding Embrace.

Yes, may my beauty repose within your Beauty
and your Beauty irradiate me entirely,

through and through,
shining forth in every fiber
of my being, my heart, my life...
for I have been created for union with your Beauty
in the most unspeakably profound
intimacy of love:

In an ecstasy of eternal communication
between beauty and Beauty,
in which I am cradled within
the arms of your Beautiful Love,
and you live in me,
your home of beauty in my heart...
all beauty contained
within this bond of love, unbreakable.

ישוע

A FACE IN THE DARKNESS

The arms of Beauty cradle the world.
Love gently holds and caresses every heart...
Why then is there so much suffering,
so much pain,
which casts hearts into darkness and despair—
feeling that they are totally alone, isolated,
rejected by God and man, cast into an abyss?

Father, you see this...you see this!
And many people cry out in anguish:
Why, O God, why are you silent?
Why do you hide your face from us?
They blame you for their pain,
or at least for not being there—not being there!—
when they need you, God, the most.

What is your answer to this, my God?
Why don't you make yourself more visible
if what you are doing
does not seem to be working?
If hearts that cry out to you don't receive,
and then turn away to seek help,
or just escape and diversion, somewhere else,
or even giving up on life,
which is no longer worth living
—not in their eyes, which can no longer see.

Ah...there is an answer, there is an answer!

It is not that you do not speak,
do not show yourself,
but that you cannot be seen as we ordinarily see,
or be heard with the bodily ears.
But then...have you not, Father,
have you not both spoken
and shown yourself before?
Then why don't you do it for everyone?

Here lies the mystery of the Divine Tenderness...
of these flames of Compassion
which burn your heart,
causing you to ache
with the sorrow of every person
and mourn for the evil and darkness in this world.
Your Tenderness cannot be any closer,
any more intimate,
holding, sheltering,
and carrying us at every moment.

But Tenderness must respect
the freedom of the beloved,
and to show yourself in the way
that we wish or demand
is to do violence to the sacred mystery
given to us by you.
Suffering makes us irrational,
and we want freedom at any cost,
but you, loving God, want to walk with us
at every step,
from woundedness in sin to the fullness of health.

In our pain we are blind and confused,
sitting outside fuming with rage,
a can of beer in our hand
as we try to drown out the pain and ache within;
or we are hidden in the bathroom
cutting our wrists,
hating who we are or what has been done to us.
And where are you, God, where are you?

You are in the pain and sorrow, coming to us;
you are in our longing for health and wholeness;
you are in the air reverberating around us,
in the slightest beating of our sorrowing hearts...
your voice repeating with every continuous beat:
I love you... I love you... I love you...

But we want, instead, to stop this heart,
since we can no longer hear
the sound of Love within.
Life is no longer
the manifestation of love, your gift,
but an unbearable burden, a wretched curse.
No... No... No... this is not true!
Loving God, show your love
to your beloved children!
You are close, so close at every moment...
but they do not know this closeness,
unable to see, to feel, to hear in their despair.

A glimmer... a glimmer... a glimmer...
There is a glimmer of light in the darkness,
and something approaches us through the pain,
a figure beginning to make itself known,
the contours of its form becoming clear before us:
a Man who bore every darkness
and every suffering,
who knew and carried
every pain and every sorrow.

But this Man was not just any man, but God,
the Son in whom the Father himself gives all he is,
unleashing at the heart of our world,
of our suffering,
the torrents
of divine Tenderness and Compassion...
to flood our word, touching, accompanying,
and working ceaselessly to cradle and to heal.

Suffering is a mystery, a mystery of iniquity,
fruit of the abyss of evil brought by sin,
by the rejection of you, God, who alone are good.
But suffering is also a mystery of love,
the crucible of atoning fire where the broken heart
is again made whole through Love's divine touch.

You do not will our suffering, nor cause it, God,
but you enter into it and take it as your own,
illuminating the deepest darkness from within,
and transforming it from the inside
by healing grace.

Now what before was a path, because of sin,

into the abyss of separation from you,
from your face,
has become a path back into the unity of love:
for you come to us
in loving and tender compassion,
touching us profoundly precisely in the place
where our anguish makes us sensitive to the touch
which in our ordinary life we cannot feel or know.

But you do not want us to stay here,
God, in darkness.
No, you yearn to pour forth the Light of Love
which is deeper than every darkness,
and the consolation of your touch
which brings a peace stronger than every pain.
Love has shown itself stronger than death,
breaking the bonds of suffering and the grave,
and shattering even the shackles of sin and guilt.

And you carry us, you carry us, you carry us...
if only we allow ourselves to be held,
to be tenderly loved by you, most loving God,
through everything, with unceasing tenderness...

You carry us,
moment by moment throughout this life,
into the consummation of intimacy
that awaits us, Father,
in the fullness of your life-giving
and eternal embrace.
Here every sorrow will vanish,
and every tear be wiped away;
and here there will be unending gladness in you
and in the newness that you bring
to all things, restored...
through the Passion and Resurrection of your Son
who pierced our darkness,
took it into his embrace,
and destroyed it through
the power of Eternal Love.

ישוע

UNSPEAKABLE

Unspeakable Love...why do you touch me so?
Inconceivable Beauty...you gently ravish my heart.
You come in the darkness of night,
your eyes cast down,
but still the light from them illumines my life.
What will it be like
when we share that gaze of love,
face to face, at the consummation of all things,
in the radiant light of the eternal Day?

Unspeakable Tenderness...

what is this band of love
wrapped so tightly yet so freely around my heart?
You have come to encompass me
in your encircling Love,
and made yourself known in the place
I need you the most.
You touch the constricted, fearful heart
and break its bonds by binding it
with your gentle yoke.

How could I wish to hide in shame from you
whose gaze is the very Light
in which, alone, all is seen,
whose eyes look only to love, to touch, to draw?
Yes, a look that enfolds me in its rays
and draws me out from myself to live in you,
a loss which is no loss, but the finding of all
in letting myself, my Love, be found by you.

ישוע

INDEBTEDNESS

We live, dear Father, in a world without roots,
in a world in which we have forgotten
where we come from and where we are going.
Thus we have forgotten, also, who we are.
In the individualism of our culture, indeed,
we have lost sight of what it means
to truly be individual and unique.

I have encountered this so many times,
in people who face anxiety and despair,
unsure of who they are, the meaning of their life.
There is a disconnect, here, from two things,
and these two things themselves

are disconnected from one another.
I don't know, really, who I am,
and am alienated from myself, estranged,
and yet, on the other hand,
I also feel so lonely, isolated,
like I have no home,
no place where I am welcomed and understood.

I, You, and We: in these things I find life.
And these things are deeply related,
and, yet, I cannot harmonize them,
for I have lost sight of their unity;
they seem at odds, broken asunder,
because divorced from the One, the true Thou,
in whom they are all sheltered and held fast.

We each bear deep within us
a longing that cannot be effaced:
to really be recognized as unique, unrepeatable,
and to be loved and embraced precisely as such.
And yet the profound mystery is that
such uniqueness is sheltered and blossoms
precisely through
the enfolding arms of community,
through the living reality that goes before
and remains alive and present even now.

A child in the arms of his mother
understands this spontaneously,
without need for words or explanation.
I am, unique, precious, and beloved;
I see it in my mother's loving eyes.
And yet I am only because of her,
not closed and isolated within myself.
For my life is gift, pure, gratuitous,
flowing from her love
—yes, from a deeper love than hers alone—
a gift sheltered by her, welcomed,
and brought to life precisely through relationship.

For only through receiving her glance, her smile,
do I come to know, indeed, that I am.
I am one in relationship, one beloved,
indebted thus, always, to what goes before me.
And receiving, freely, this indebtedness,
I learn over time to exist more and more
in communion of heart, mind, and will

with those who enfold my daily life,
reaching out, above all, to the One
who enfolds all of us within himself.

Yes, my uniqueness is not threatened
by true relationship and communion,
but precisely fostered and thus brought to light.
Nonetheless, it is also something deeper,
alive within the many-faceted tradition,
the home-hearth surrounding me,
yet reaching out beyond all of this,
to discover the fullness for which it yearns,
a seed of hope for a yet deeper home.

This is the beauty, the gift, of baptismal grace;
that the gaze of mother looking on me,
the first awakening to the gift of life,
is yet renewed, indeed surpassed,
through the reception of a greater gift,
adoption into a greater family,
and welcoming into a tradition, a home-hearth,
that has existed since born from the Savior's side.

Indeed, here I find myself
 enfolded in a Mother's arms,
I find myself again nursing at her tender breast,
I find myself fostered in the uniqueness of my life
as a precious, beloved child of God.
I am a child, for this I was created,
not a gift super-added to natural childhood;
no, for I was born, indeed, to be baptized,
born to be born again into this family,
family of Mother Church, Body of Christ,
family of the Holy Trinity, indeed,
embrace between Father, Spirit, and Son.

It is such a mystery: when I forget my origin,
my origin in the womb of my natural mother,
in the roots of family, humanity, love,
I forget who I am, losing myself.
And yet I am not only these surrounding things;
for there is a mystery deeper than all of this,
known only to God and willed by him,
and yet present precisely in the midst of all of this.

There is a union of the two together,

beautifully inseparable yet beautifully distinct:
my own uniqueness,
and my existence in community.
Yes, my indebtedness to every one, to every thing,
as a little child, simply receiving anew,
even into old age, the gift of life,
and the blossoming, within all of this,
of the unique gift that I am,
welcomed, embraced, accepted,
as mine from God, yet not mine alone,
but given anew in return, in gratitude,
to the community whom I love,
for brother, sister, friend, for world and culture,
and given, above all, as a gift back to God.

Yes, my life is from beginning to end
a kind of sacred eucharist,
from gestation in the tabernacle
of my mother's womb,
to the womb of baptismal water's,
Mother Church,
to the first moment of intimacy
with the Eucharistic Christ,
the One who, through death and Resurrection,
is completely open as space of gift and acceptance,
to the reinsertion into the family
from which I have fallen
through the re-opening of my heart
in Confession's act,
to my life, my work, my prayer, my being itself,
in which my existence becomes a gift for others,
to the last breath leaving my lungs, as I go,
surrounded by those to whom I am indebted,
into the arms of the One
who has given me myself,
and given me, also, all persons and all things.

In this final letting go, the gift that is my life
becomes now a definitive, final gift,
and I am embraced, at last,
by what during life I could never entirely
tie back together: my uniqueness in myself,
alone in unutterable solitude before God,
and yet my inseparability from community.
As the bounds of fallen flesh are released
I can at last return to my own deepest mystery,
enfolded in the arms of the welcoming God,

the heavenly Jerusalem who is Mother Church,
and yet I also find this openness,
barriers falling away,
allowing me to be present, fully, to every one,
and to welcome every one into who I am.

This is so because, home-coming at last
into the home of the Trinity's embrace,
I find myself and I also find all things,
here in the One who already, always,
embraces and penetrates each and all,
who is always close, always embracing,
nursing us at his gentle, loving breast,
and smiling upon us thus to teach us
both who we are and, beautifully, who he is.

ישוע

ICONOGRAPHY OF THE EVERYDAY

An icon is a window, or, better, a door,
through which we pass to eternal realms,
glimpsing and tasting, in this life,
the homeland that is inviting us.

Some say that this occurs
through a kind of frustration,
the crippling of our natural way of seeing,
so that the spirit may reach out further,
seeing in a way we are not accustomed to see.
There is a certain truth in this:
that it is necessary
to unlearn base and sinful seeing,
which sees only in fear or possessiveness,
so as to learn to see with eyes of love and faith,
burning with the hope that yearns for fullness.
And yet there is also a misunderstanding,
as if we could see better, automatically,
through the process of seeing less.

Fasting of the eyes and heart, indeed,
is a part of the process of gaining sight,
but the end result of such purification
is not dwelling, exclusively, in a celestial realm,
living divorced from
the concreteness of life and thought.
And certainly it is not simply "letting-go" itself,

for this could not possibly be the end,
finding meaning only as part of the process of receiving.

Rather, the fruit of this loving purification
is a dwelling, beautifully, in two places at once:
in the realm of eternal love and mystery,
inner sanctuary,
and in the simple reality of the everyday,
apparently profane.

Indeed, it is the discovery that the two
are not separated and divorced, but interpenetrate,
living in one another through the purity of grace.

And the two are to be espoused together
in the inmost sanctuary of the heart,
a meeting-place of body and spirit, God and man,
beating unceasingly here and now,
yet reaching out, longingly, to heaven.

Yes, there is a kind of iconography
alive in the very concreteness of everyday life.
Eyes weaned from sinful seeing
through love's longing
learn to see and rejoice in this way anew,
touched by the truth and beauty ever present here.

Something as small as melting snow
dripping from the roof,
or the way that a tiny piece of wood
can prop open a door fifty times its size,
or the way that people come into church,
taking their "usual" seats, hinting to a thirst,
perhaps hidden, for the comfort of true belonging,
yet also their joy in having found it.

An iconography of the everyday, yes...
and the icon invites us above all to pure rejoicing.
For whose eyes gaze more purely, deeply,
than the eyes of a little child,
filled with wonder and awe at the slightest thing?

Perhaps we have forgotten the amazingness
of something so simple as a falling stone,
something so beautiful as a sunrise,
or the pure, awesome gift
of dull and long hours of the day.
Why does a stone not, instead, rise into the air,

and why does the sun continue to rise
as the harbinger of another day of life?

I think this is why we write fairy-stories, isn't it?
...To rediscover the fairy-story in the everyday,
the miracles wrought every moment, Father,
by your loving and gentle hand.
This is why trees bear golden apples
and why a woman must kiss a frog:
so that we may learn to see anew
that trees bear apples that are red and green
and a woman has the chance of kissing a man,
things so awesome, unimaginable.

Pure, loving, undeserved gift...
yet ever flowing from you tender arms.
Dearest Father, this is the burning heart of it all,
of everything, everything that there is.
Draw us only beyond the veil
that falls over our eyes as we grow old,
old through years, old through sin,
old through woundedness,
old through forgetfulness
of the miracle that we are,
the miracle that each and every thing is.

My God, touch and heal us with your love,
making us thus young again,
little children who can see and rejoice,
receiving the gift given in every moment,
silent in awe and reverence,
yet crying out in gladness.
And let us know, deep within the heart,
that the ultimate Gift given in every gift
is you, my God, yourself.

And how, God, do you approach us?
...Rejoicing in awe and delight, like a child,
at the beauty of what you have made

ישוע

ALL-ENFOLDING PLAYFULNESS

The law is written, in this New Covenant,
upon the inmost depths of our hearts,
so that we do what you desire, dear God,
not from external compulsion,
or even from your gently leading hand,
but from our own interior desire
and the creativity your love awakens in us.
So many persons fear, in a paralyzing way,
that they are going to “miss your will”
and go astray in empty and aimless paths;
they feel as if, however much they search,
they cannot discover what you want for them.
For is it not true that you are silent?

In this way their desire for obedience
degenerates into a burdensome task and demand,
which narrows the heart and the perspective
and makes each moment seem heavy
and devoid of the life
and spontaneity of childhood.
But this, loving Father, Son, and Spirit,
is the very opposite of what your gift,
given so freely to us, is meant to be.

For you do not have some
“unchanging” and “immutable” will
for each person in each unbending moment,
to which we need only conform ourselves,
and in which alone we find freedom.
There is an important distinction here
which we often tend to miss, to our detriment.
Your *will* is not the same as your *presence*,
and your *love*, before it asks for *obedience*,
simply seeks our *receptivity to your gift*,
the gift of your very self, given to us,
indeed, the simplicity of your loving embrace.

You did not create us primarily to do, to act,
but to repose within
the happiness of your embrace
and in the shelter of your loving arms,
to delight in the playfulness of childlike surrender.
A little child, knowing that she is infinitely loved,
and recognizing each moment as a gratuitous gift,
surrenders herself in reckless abandon
to the inner beauty present in each instant.

Her action, her movement, her desire
is entirely enfolded in the greater circle of repose,
in the pure gratuity of life and existence
flowing unceasingly
from your loving hands and heart,
indeed, encircled totally in your intimate presence.

And in this experience of utter gratuity,
her hands and heart are not shackled,
but rather liberated to act, to desire, to do,
not in a burdened “measuring up,”
but in a kind of mirror-image reflection
—in her heart and in the depths of her life—
of the gratuitous gift first given to her,
and given again and again, unceasingly.
Yes, the whole of life on this earth
(and in eternity!) is enfolded within gratuity,
and is but our own creativity
awakened by this gift,
and responding to it in each instant.

All responsibility,
all “mature” doing and achieving,
finds its ultimate meaning, not in itself,
nor even in the “ends” that it seeks to bring about,
but in the playfulness of love that it expresses,
in the beauty that envelops it and gives it radiance.
This is the whole meaning of play, is it not?
And we were created to play, to rejoice, to dance,
without ceasing and with reckless abandon,
in the childlike simplicity that is true maturity...
to dance in gratitude for the love that we receive
and in praise of the Lover who fills us with joy
and whom our movements, in turn, delight.

Yes, you write the intimate story of my life,
not with a rigid and unbending will,
which, for all practical purposes,
constricts and narrows my life in fear,
in the need to continually
search, discover, and accomplish.
What then?

Are you not close, continually guiding,
giving meaning and life to each succeeding instant,
and directing my steps in your love, back to you,
and out to my brothers and sisters in charity?
Oh, yes, you are!

Dear God, you are intimately close,
not like a law or taskmaster hovering over me,
but as a mother or father
sheltering and protecting.
Yes, my life, in each instant and in its entirety,
is like a story being written with creativity,
with the inventiveness
that blossoms only in freedom,
with the creativity
that is born of the awareness of gift,
with the playfulness that is awakened by gratuity.

But I do not write alone—no, dear God,
you are the One who direct all
and bring forth its radiant beauty,
but in a way more gentle, more tender,
and more liberating than we can imagine.
An image which perhaps helps in this
is that of a little child, writing with pencil in hand,
yet with her hand within that of her mother.
The mother is intimately close,
the child on her lap,
her arm pressed up against her child's arm,
her hand enveloping the child's within her own.
And yet she allows the child to write freely,
in a mysterious way working each movement,
each gesture, each line for the best.
At certain times, yes, she tightens her grip,
and guides the child more directly,
revealing that this line, this word, or that,
should be written.
Indeed, she helps the child to understand
why this particular movement is the best,
and helps the child to make it
on the parchment of her unfolding life.

Thus, my God,
your loving presence is intimately close,
enshrouding us, holding us, sheltering us,
like a swathe
of perfectly woven and seamless cloth,
which never for a moment departs from us—
yes, like the presence
of a tender mother overseeing all.
And yet indeed, the image falls infinitely short,
since you not only enshroud us personally,
but reside, mysteriously,

in the reality of each moment
in such a way that it communicates you to us,
giving to us, unceasingly, the gratuity of your love.
Yes, I need only open the doors of my heart
to welcome the gift of this abiding love,
pouring itself forth for me without ceasing,
pouring itself forth
uniquely, unrepeatably, for me,
in my own uniqueness and precious beauty.

This is the encircling playfulness,
the abiding intimacy
which alone gives meaning to all else,
to each particular thing,
to every word and every act:
the free gift of your love, loving and tender God,
and the response of love
awakened within my heart.
And what does your gratuitous gift seek, ultimately,
but that I accept it in all its gratuity,
letting it bring forth in me joy, gratitude,
and the playful relaxation of being loved and held.
When I do this, accepting the gift given to me,
my own being is spontaneously
given to you in return,
and this acceptance and reciprocal surrender
allows you to unite me intimately to yourself.
Yes, this intimacy,
this tender and abiding embrace,
beyond all partial and passing things,
is what you want,
the truth of your loving and holy will,
which enfolds me gently in each instant,
and makes my heart blossom out from this place
to embrace, in your all-enfolding mystery,
the beauty and uniqueness
of every other person too.

ישוע

A LIVING THEOLOGY OF THE BODY

I.

Father, Father...
what amazing love, what goodness!
What tremendous beauty
in all that you have done!
Yes, the lines converge,

not by only drawing hearts together
into intimacy and unity within your embrace,
within the sheltering Heart of your beloved Son,
but also by drawing the lines
 of my own heart and life,
of the very sinews of my heart and flesh,
into unity with your Mystery and your Love.

For I have been made your own
by grace and sacrament,
by the washing of the water and the word,
by the activity of your Love in silence and prayer
and the ravished encounter with beauty
ever pouring itself out, so tenderly, into me,
and in particular by the Eucharist
—a living perpetuation,
in the inner heartbeat of the bridal Church,
of the Paschal Mystery until the end of time,
of the Bridegroom's undying and total gift.

Yes, my whole existence, my body and spirit,
touched and grasped by Christ in tender love,
possessed by him
 in mutual belonging and intimacy
—bridal in my inner core in his pure embrace—
is simply becoming so ever more deeply
in the abiding disposition of contemplative repose
and ardent virginal receptivity.
And yet here, too, in this very place,
as a man grasped by the Man Christ,
my heart and body and spirit
 are opened, harnessed,
extended, to be a gift as he is a gift,
 for the good of all.

Yes, and this is flowering ever more deeply
and ever more totally,
as the Paschal Mystery
 of Eucharist, Passion, and Resurrection,
living within the Body of the Church
until the end of time,
is also perpetuating itself within me
for the good of this same Body,
letting me live both the bride's receptivity and,
within this acceptance, the total gift
of the Bridegroom's love.

In other words, I am becoming...
yes, I dare to say it,
because I know, without a doubt,
that it is a pure grace, gratuitous, given by you
into the receptive openness
of the littlest one of all:
I am becoming, as it were,
a living theology of the body.

II.

For the body speaks a language,
not only of the person,
of beauty, of love, of intimacy,
but precisely in this way, a word of God himself;
and indeed only because it speaks of God
can it speak of any of these other things at all.
And yet the body is so rich, so full a mystery,
that it is contained not merely within the confines
of my temporal flesh, so limited, so weak,
but spreads out
into the place of ceaseless communication,
the living permeability of love and self-gift
made possible
within the Crucified, Risen, and Eucharistic
Body of Jesus Christ, Son and Bridegroom.

The theology of the body, therefore, is threefold,
and all three are being realized
within my existence...
and I am continually in awe at such a mystery...

First, it is the theology of the body of human love,
of how the body in its very orientation
is meant for encounter, meeting, and communion,
the opening of one's self in vulnerability
to welcome the other
and to give oneself to them totally in return:
solitude meeting solitude in the nakedness of love,
and the two made one together
in mutual permeation
through complete reciprocal self-donation
in loving trust.

Yes, and this theology
of human love and intimacy has,
so mysteriously yet so beautifully,
come to flower in me,

not through living the temporal meaning
of sexuality,
but precisely through the grace of virginity:
the insertion of my very corporeality
and masculinity
into the living space opened up
within the Body of Christ,
into the Virgin Flesh of the One
who is the Bridegroom of all,
whose very Body is,
to its inmost core and in every way,
both a filial Body and a nuptial Body,
and in this very way a paternal Body too.

Yes, precisely by returning to its source
and letting itself be drawn into its highest apex,
human love itself is healed,
purified, and transfigured
to anticipate, in a real way already now,
the virginal intimacy that awaits us at the end,
and which has already been consummated
in the intimate union between Man and Woman
at the heart of the Mystery
of Passion and Resurrection,
in the perfect intimacy of Jesus and Mary
in the Love that is stronger than death,
cradling the whole world, permeating it,
and making all things
—and the human body itself—
radiantly new within the very beauty
of the Trinity's embrace.

III.

Thus there is the second theology of the body,
which fulfills the first while surpassing it,
integrating it, healing it,
and carrying it to its full consummation:
it is the theology
of the Body of the Incarnate Christ,
the eternal Son who espoused our flesh as his own
and lived the very life of the Trinity
—of being the beloved Son of the heavenly Father,
united to him
in the kiss and embrace of the Spirit!—
at the heart of our humanity, of space and time.

This is the Body of God himself,

a human body yet belonging to the Eternal One,
and made the very space
of ceaseless communication,
the place in which solitude, through vulnerability,
flowers in the deepest and most perfect intimacy.
And such it becomes in the Paschal Mystery,
in the words of Jesus at the Last Supper,
sealing his gift and giving it meaning:
“This is my Body, given for you...
This is my Blood, poured out for you...”
and in the very offering of this Body on the Cross,
naked and exposed
and extended before the eyes of all,
but in particular, and in the fullest way,
as a gift for the Woman who stands before him,
and who, seeing him so exposed,
and so ardently giving himself,
simply opens herself to enfold and shelter him,
and in this way both to care for
and to hold his gift,
as well as, through it,
to conceive, bear, and bring forth.

Yet this intimacy of the incarnate Body of Christ
with the body of our humanity,
present fully in Mary,
reaches its full radiance and transparency
only in the glorious light of the Resurrection,
in which his corporeality is now utterly divinized,
utterly pervaded, through and through,
with the light and love of the Trinity,
a dwelling-place of love and ceaseless interchange
in which all human hearts and bodies
throughout history
can be healed and brought together
into true unity.

And he ascends, ascends into heaven,
and brings his bride with him, even in the flesh,
where the Bridegroom and bride
now live, eternally,
in the consummation of their union
in the House of the Father.
For this each one of us has been created,
and in this, too, we are destined to share,
to rejoice and play and dance, forevermore,
in an eternity of perfect and everlasting joy.

And yet as he goes to heaven he does not leave,
but lets the mystery of his presence,
his Body and Blood,
live with us until the end of time,
his own gift alive unceasingly in the heart of his Bride, the
Church.

And being made one flesh
with him through this gift
—the living presence of Eucharist,
which is the Paschal Mystery,
as a living force from the heart of eternity,
made present anew in every succeeding
moment of time—
the Bride becomes his living Body,
his own presence and life,
alive in this world and making him visible
in the fullness of his Mystery, alive in her.

IV.

Yes, and this is the third theology of the body:
the living mystery of the Body of the Church,
who is the Bride espoused
to her heavenly Bridegroom,
in which each one of us
is bride too, tenderly sheltered.
This is the theology of the Body of the Church,
of the ecclesial mystery that is taking up, already,
all the disparate strands
of humanity and of history,
and weaving them together
in a single communion,
in a single Body, in a single loving participation
in the intimacy of the eternal Trinity.

The theology of the body,
three facets of a single Mystery alive in me,
alive in the Church and in every human life:
first, the theology of the human body,
of human love and interpersonal intimacy;
second, the theology
of the individual Body of Christ,
Incarnate, Crucified, and Risen out of love for us,
and present to us unceasingly in the Eucharist;
third, the theology
of the universal Body of the Church,

this Body which is that of both Bride and Bridegroom,
inseparably.

And where do these three lines meet,
but...ah...but in the very living flesh,
in the body and the existence
of your children, my God?
And so it is with me, and so it is to be for all of us.
Human and divine, nature and grace,
intermingle and unite,
as human intimacy
is taken up into divine intimacy,
and as the aspirations and capacities of humanity
are healed and restored, and indeed super-fulfilled
beyond anything we could have imagined,
in our living participation in the perfect intimacy
of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

And this participation
in the inner life of the Trinity,
irradiating our world with its beautiful light
and taking the world up into itself,
occurs within the intersection-point,
the place of universal convergence,
which is the Body and Heart of Jesus Christ,
living in the Body of his Bride, lovingly given,
and tenderly sheltering and holding her,
drawing us all together into himself,
making us one with him,
and drawing us, in this very movement,
into the very bosom of the Father,
into the innermost recesses of the Trinity,
where we shall live forever,
all of creation restored and renewed,
in the everlasting consummation
at the end of time.

ישוע

TO WONDER AND TO PLAY

To let the heart be touched by beauty,
to wonder, moved by the mystery of reality,
and in the throbbing of the heart
awakened by this touch,
to dance and play and sing
in the ceaseless movement
of vulnerable self-giving—reception and donation,

inhalation and exhalation, acceptance and gift—
and through this to let love and intimacy flower,
coming to full blossom
 between two hearts in God,
between hearts and the beauty of all creation,
and between God and those whom he loves,
whom he has created, so lovingly,
to be his playmates, in this life and eternally.

Yes, for childlike wonder
 and lighthearted playfulness
is the atmosphere in which
 love and intimacy flower.
Even in suffering,
 and indeed in suffering especially,
playfulness unseals a deep mystery,
 a special beauty,
as the heart,
 rather than pulling back to the surface
—taking refuge in a “flippancy” on the periphery,
thus refusing to “read”
 the word that suffering speaks—
draws even nearer,
 fascinated by the beauty hidden here,
and learns, precisely by this proximity,
to move to the mysterious dance of love
written by God himself into the fabric of pain.

In other words,
 childlike playfulness enfolds all else,
the primal attitude born within the heart
through the simple acceptance
of the Father’s gratuitous gift,
through the certainty
 of knowing myself to be beloved,
to be nothing but
 one precious and desired by God
for my own sake, out of the abundance of his love;
and in this very abiding belovedness
it is also to recognize
 the seal of God’s creative love
in the hearts and lives
 of my brothers and sisters too,
and, indeed, refracting
throughout the whole of creation.

When I rest in this place,

in the security of God's embrace
which cradles me beyond all things,
in the innermost sanctuary of the heart
and in the innermost embrace
of Father, Son, and Spirit,
I find my being also dilating
to "read" the mystery of love,
in childlike wonder and playfulness,
in each and every person, thing, and moment,
moved by God's presence in them
and letting myself be liberated
into the joyful dance of love.

Thus wonder and playfulness and gratitude
enfolds all else, like an all-encompassing circle,
the circle of pure love and intimacy,
gratuitously given,
within the encircling embrace of the Trinity.
And yet this same experience,
this same movement,
also lies at the inner essence of all things,
springing forth as a word of invitation and a gift
from the heart of every created thing
and every experience,
seeking to unseal itself before me,
inviting me to wonder at its mystery,
and in this living contact, to play,
that is, simply to let my heart
receive and reverberate back
in responsiveness,
with wonder, awe, and gratitude,
to the "word" of God that is spoken within it.

ישוע

TO REVERENCE AND TO PLAY

I.

Childlike play is not a matter
of flitting across the surface of reality,
being pulled here and there by appearances
and the fragmentation that occurs,
in our fallen world, on the periphery,
where things appear so fractured and obscure.

Rather, it is a descent down, in humility,
into the joyful acceptance of one's littleness,
yet not a littleness closed upon itself, but open,

awed by the majestic beauty of God in himself
and in the beauty
of his visible and invisible creation.
It is a descent down
into the center-point, the heart,
where the veil is pulled back
before true sacredness,
and one encounters
the divine incarnate in the world
and yet also ravishingly surpassing it.

Yes, and thus playfulness is prayerfulness;
it is reverence, tenderness of heart, sensitivity,
the spirit of silence and recollection,
a love both for solitude and for true togetherness.
It knows, not only with the mind,
but deep within,
what it means that “heart speaks to heart,”
and this, this alone it desires to do,
in true vulnerable receptivity and surrender,
that hearts may be drawn closer together
in the Beauty that lives in them, enfolds them,
unites them, and makes them one.

And it is the longing, and the ability,
to abide in the fullness of the present moment,
as this moment unveils its deep meaning
in the eyes of God, who wills it,
lovingly, as a gift for me
from the heart of his own Eternity.

It is the capacity to wonder and question,
not in troublesome doubts and paralyzing fears,
nor in a burdensome sense of obligation
and the acceptance of a heavy, inevitable task,
but rather in the spirit of true curiosity,
a curiosity that springs from a primal encounter
with beauty, goodness, and truth,
and which, precisely in this way,
awakens the longing for so much more
until the Fullness is known in heaven.

II.

If true playfulness is not a superficial matter
—a matter of flitting aimlessly across the surface,
pulled here and there by the periphery
and the pull of the flesh, the senses, the imagination—

but rather a deep and living contact
with the throbbing heart,
then play is also profoundly reverent,
full of humility and awe,
and precisely in this way
 akin to prayer and worship,
and is perhaps, indeed, their inner form.

For play springs forth,
not from the outer layers of my being,
but rather wells up from deep, deep within,
like the laughter that bursts forth,
not because I am distracted and dismissive,
but because I sense and feel and see
the inner beauty of reality, its mysterious paradox
which also contains in itself a greater harmony.

My heart simply cries out,
“It is so good that things are this way!”
And in this awe, this gratitude, this wonder,
I simply welcome the gift of each moment
from the hands of the One who gives it,
and live it in simplicity of heart and mind,
abiding in his presence, cradled in his Love
(which is the only place I desire to be,
and the place in which, indeed,
 alone I can truly play).

Yes, play is nothing but the spontaneous response
that is born in me,
 that is given from me to another,
through the attitude
 of trusting and loving attunement,
by which I simply let myself
 be touched and moved
by what comes to me from the outside,
giving it entrance into my heart.
Indeed, in letting myself be touched in this way
I let the beauty outside of me enter in,
fructifying, enriching, and dilating
 my own inner heart,
just as, in the same moment,
my heart is drawn out of itself
in an ecstasy to live, in some way,
in that which I behold.

III.

This current of beholding,
even before the impersonal creation,
speaks to me a personal word
from the personal God,
just as it also dilates me from my isolation
to live more freely from the heart
of my own personhood,
from my identity as God's uniquely beloved,
cradled unceasingly in his arms, and open,
from this place,
to receive and to give without ceasing
before each one of his children
and the whole creation.

Yes, and this is where playfulness
flowers the most,
not in my contact with impersonal realities,
however much they speak a word about a Person,
but in my contact with another person,
whose unique beauty and preciousness
ravishes my heart.
Playfulness is nothing but
living the magnetism of love,
which harnesses my heart in deep attunement
to the slightest stirrings
in the heart of another person,
stilling and silencing my being in tender listening,
in heartfelt reverence,
that I may love them as they deserve,
drawing closer to them
to give myself and to receive,
and to be joined together to their beauty
in the sheltering Beauty
of the One who cradles us.

For play and wonder and gratitude and awe
are nothing but the living atmosphere of love,
the space of sacred attunement and presence
by which persons draw closer and closer together,
dancing in deep listening,
beholding, and surrender
in the single movement
that interlaces hearts together
in ever more profound and total intimacy
within the intimacy of the Three who,
in their eternal life of ceaseless playfulness and joy,
simply delight to be together in openness and gift,

united in the single embrace
of the perfect life of love!

ישוע

RAVISHED

I.

It is late, past midnight, and I cannot sleep,
both because I am sick
and a cough keeps me awake,
and also, much more, because my heart is so alive
that it does not want to miss a single moment
of this life that you have given, my God,
and which is so ravishingly beautiful, so good...
even as, from this very living contact with beauty,
you have also allowed me
to feel so deeply its pain,
to absorb in myself in loving compassion
the darkness and disorder and ugliness of sin,
not to be overcome by it, but to bear it,
lovingly, in intercession and surrender,
into your embrace
which so profoundly cradles me
and seeks to cradle them,
your hurting children, too,
that we may all together know
the fullness of your Love.

And so I rest in this moment,
with my restless heart,
and in my resting
I reach out anew to them and to you.
I love you, my God, and I thank you...
I thank you for your love,
for the gift of my existence,
so deeply impressed with your creative touch,
not only in my body, my spirit, my life's story,
but also in the gift of grace,
of ravishing encounter,
and of the flowering
of ever deepening intimacy with you.
I thank you for this pure gift of love and intimacy
which throbs as the heartbeat
giving meaning to all else.

And I thank you that in my very vocation,
in the very "prophetic" word entrusted to me,

my God, for the good of your Church,
it is precisely this central, all-enfolding Mystery
that you desire me to live, incarnate, and serve
with everything that I am, at every moment,
with every breath, every sigh,
every beat of my heart,
every desire, every movement of body or spirit,
received from you, my God, and to you given,
spreading out,
like ceaseless ripples from the center,
like the pulsation of blood from the heart,
to touch other hearts throughout the world,
to open them to your goodness and your desire,
and to draw them, to draw us together,
into the innermost space
of your welcoming embrace.

Yes, there is nothing else, anymore,
that I could do,
not because of some partial reason or other,
but simply because,
when the heart has been touched
and ravished by such an encounter,
it is impossible to ever again be the same.
When one beholds your inestimable Beauty,
and the beauty of your precious children,
the veil is pulled back and eternity is glimpsed
—the eternity in which love
and intimacy alone remain—
and one can thus do nothing
but live for this love and intimacy
throughout every moment of life until the end.

II.

Yes, my Father, there is something so mysterious
about this movement of love's ardent longing,
about the gratitude and playfulness and wonder
that spring up in the place of tender attunement
to the beauty of your precious children
and to the beauty of your whole creation,
manifesting you and yet pointing
to the fullness that is known only at the end.

Ah, and yet for me it is almost impossible
to speak in the same breath
about the "whole creation"
and about the beauty of the human person,

for the person so far surpasses impersonal creation
that my thirst remains for the person alone:
for interpersonal communion, for intimate love,
for the interlacing of hearts and lives and being
within the unifying space of your grace.
And in this space of grace, at the end of time,
nothing will remain

but person and intimacy alone,
and yet in this very mystery the whole creation
will be lifted up, healed, restored, transfigured,
to be nothing
but the living space of our encounter
and the expression of the single Home of our hearts:
the everlasting embrace and kiss
of Father, Son, and Spirit.

Yes, and this is why, in my very wonder,
in the deep gift of playfulness and joy,
there is also the heartfelt longing,
dilating and stretching me more and more,
to pass through the veil
separating temporal creation
from the eternity in which all is consummated
in the face to face vision of your Beauty,
and my consciousness will be utterly permeated
by your own loving self-communication,
and harnessed simultaneously
as a gift back to you,
beholding, in turn, the beauty of all things
only from within the radiance
of your undimmed Light.

Yes, my God—Father, Son, and Spirit—
my heart is torn, torn in longing for your Fullness,
while resting in this Fullness already now in faith.
And stretched in this way
between heaven and earth,
I see the beautiful glimmers
of your glory in creation,
not primarily as pointers to your presence,
which is hidden,
but rather from within
the very place of your Light,
seen and known and loved with the eyes
that understand all things as a pure expression
of the Mystery of the Trinity itself:
of the encounter of persons

in vulnerable self-giving,
in the movement of reception and donation,
in which they are made one in perfect surrender
and the shared belonging
by which a single life is theirs.

III.

Yes, and there is a further dilation here too,
which is particularly painful for me.
The longing for heaven, my God, is peaceful,
and indeed so is the deep intuition
that I shall die at a young age, coming thus to you.
But this further dilation is particularly painful,
and tears at me in an entirely different way:
it is the pain of compassion with this sinful world.

For since I see and am ravished
so deeply by beauty
—by your own Beauty, my God,
and by the beauty of your precious children,
in all the concreteness of life, spirit, and body,
and the inner “word”
that you speak in everything—
so too my heart sees the disorder,
and aches so keenly
at the ways in which such beauty is threatened,
and is indeed distorted
by power, possessiveness, and lust.

From the place of deep, ravished seeing,
in which my heart is drawn out
in contemplative beholding
of the ineffable beauty of your own Love
alive in human hearts and bodies,
and alive in the very fabric of our world,
my heart is also ravaged by a deep seeing
of the many, many ways in which this beauty
is hurt, wounded, or desecrated
by the horror of sin.

And this is done, so often, in the name of love!
How prone this beauty is to desecration,
not because of what it is in itself,
but because of how vulnerable and intimate it is,
and because of how wounded is the human heart.

What, then—shall I accuse the sinful heart,

and condemn it?

No, I want rather to bear the suffering heart
close to myself,
to suffer with and for my brothers and sisters,
knowing that I, too,
am where I am through sheer grace.

My God, my God...thank you for your beauty,
and thank you for the gift of Redemption
by which you restore this beauty, which,
through human sin, was so deeply fractured,
and make possible the path
into the fullness of love again.

Through the grace flowing
from the open Heart of Christ,
from the living intimacy between Jesus and Mary
—pouring from the inmost recesses
of the Trinity itself—
the capacity has been opened once again
to see and love the human person,
and in him or her the whole creation,
not on the surface or the periphery,
not caught up in the sway of the flesh and passion,
nor fractured and estranged
through disordered repression,
but rather integrated
in the movement toward fullness,
in which the very human person in their fullness
—and the union between persons
in true intimacy—
manifests and shares in innermost life and love
of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
eternally united.

ישוע

ETERNITY TASTED

When we have tasted together
the beauty of eternity,
everything else pales in comparison with this,
and the heart simply cries out without ceasing:
This is the most important thing of all!

To enter ever deeper into living contact
with the Mystery,
with the ravishing beauty of love and intimacy

present at the heart of creation,
in the beautiful union of our hearts,
and in the Three who unite us together,
and who have given us totally to one another,
to be one in them already in this life,
and in the perfect consummation
at the end of time...

How the heart aches to live this without ceasing,
and how it presses against
the limitations of time and space!
But I reach across, reach across to you, my friend,
just as I reach across the veil of mortality
to touch the Face of our loving God,
yearning for the day when I shall see this Face
that I have touched in faith, hope, and love,
and which has so ravished me
throughout this life...
and in which I will also
at last behold you, my friend,
in the full radiance of your beauty,
and will be united to you
in the perfect intimacy for which we both long.

And already in the frailty and beauty of this life,
in the intermingling of beauty and of pain,
of glory and of brokenness, of joy and of sorrow,
and in the suffering that is held by playfulness
and is permeated fully by the spirit of play...
let us live this loving beholding,
this mutual self-giving,
and this intimacy to which he calls us,
as deeply and totally as we can...

ישוע

THE TOTAL AND DEFINITIVE GIFT

I.

The spousal meaning of the body,
in the limitation and frailty of this life,
is most deeply fulfilled and brought to flower,
not in the pleasurable union of bodies
but in the harnessing of oneself as a total gift
in the life of virginity, and, in a special way,
in the mystery of suffering and death.

The symbolism of sexuality written by you, God,

into the body of man and woman
is something so beautiful, so transparent in itself
—even if, through sin, its meaning is obscured
by the tendency to power, possessiveness, and lust,
and to the submerging of the person
in the passion of the flesh.

And this meaning, thus, can be read,
and needs to be read and understood,
not from the “bottom up” as mere biology,
but as an expression of the personal mystery
of our orientation to intimacy
through vulnerability
and mutual acceptance and self-giving.

But even thus, the symbolism only goes so far
and a threshold is reached which,
no matter how ardent the desire of the heart
to give itself to another totally
and to take the other wholly into oneself,
cannot be crossed in the ordinary way
of sexuality and gender in this world.

What then? Are we irretrievably constricted,
unable to say to another the word we wish to say?
No, it can indeed be said, if imperfectly,
in the living life of love and mutual belonging
between a man and a woman, bound by God
in the Sacrament of Marriage, in enduring fidelity,
in which the sexual sphere itself
is lifted up, healed, and made transparent
to the mystery of personal love and intimacy
that it symbolizes, and thus, indeed,
reveals the union of Christ and the Church
and the union of Father, Son, and Spirit
in the way that you, my God, intend.

But there is another step, another movement,
which is even more radical and total,
and which effects a transparency more complete.
This is the movement beyond temporal sexuality
and into a living anticipation
of the virginity of eternity.
This is the loving self-donation
of my very sexuality,
in all of its physical, affective,
and spiritual concreteness,

into the welcoming embrace
of the Bridegroom Christ,
and, from this place,
grasped by him and harnessed,
my becoming in him a gift of love for all.

Yes, virginity is a eucharistization of my existence,
the choice to live the spousal meaning of the body,
not in the temporal way that we now know it,
but in an anticipation of the eternal transparency
which, while knowing its fullness
only in the new creation,
is already a living reality, already fully possible,
by the light of Redemption and re-creation
that pours out into our world
from the open Heart of Christ
and from the heart of the Woman
who is inseparably united to him in virginal love.

II.

Virginity is the super-fulfillment
of the spousal meaning of the body,
in which intactness and the gift of self
are not opposed or incompatible,
but simply two aspects of the same mystery
of vulnerability oriented towards intimacy
through mutual self-donation
and shared belonging.

This is because it is a return to that space
that was present in the Garden of Eden before sin,
and which was made in some way possible anew
in the Garden of the Cross and Resurrection:
the space in which the naked human body
is seen as nothing but the manifestation
of the inner person,
not exposed to attraction, or use, or, indeed,
in this case, to the sexual desire at all,
but rather clothed over both with the garment
of the loving reverence of the virgin heart
and with the sheltering love of the virgin God.

And this does not mean
the leaving behind of humanity,
the castration of nature and its desire for closeness,
but rather the purification
of this desire and capacity

by its lifting up into the realm of the inner heart,
which does not cut off
the capacity for communication
that is manifest through the body,
but rather dilates it
into a greater expansiveness,
a greater transparency,
that allows a yet deeper intimacy to flower
in the soil of the supernatural, in the soil of grace,
in the very living space of Redemption opened up
in the bond of undying love
between Jesus and Mary
into which our hearts and bodies
have been incorporated,
and, in them and through them and with them,
into the ceaseless dance of self-giving
and the perfect and everlasting intimacy
of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In other words, it could be said
that in temporal sexuality
grace is incarnate in nature,
limited, but also beautifully manifest in this way,
even while pressing on beyond itself
to something both deeper and more expansive;
but in virginity nature is incarnate in grace,
as the very mystery of our sexuality, our bodies,
in all of their corporeality and concreteness,
are lifted up into the space of redeeming grace
and integrated, harmonized, and made transparent
to a deeper light, a deeper love, a deeper union
precisely in this way.

Yes, for the meeting-place, here,
is not nature and the capacity of man and woman
to come together and be united
for life in marriage,
or any of the other ways
that we can relate in this world
—even as all of this is not left behind,
but mysteriously taken up in a deeper affirmation
of the complementarity of man and woman
as a reflection of the life of the Trinity itself.
The meeting-place, instead,
is the very “word” of God
that is spoken from the heart of eternity into time,
the word of his love and his tender entrustment

of persons to one another,
in a love not less personal,
not less intimate, not less total,
but rather more so, since founded wholly in grace
and in the gift of the Redemption.

Yes, for where, in the life of virginity,
do hearts meet,
but in the open Heart of Jesus,
become our dwelling-place?
In the Eucharistic Flesh of the Risen One
who lives on in his Church until the end of time
and makes us capable of seeing, knowing,
and loving one another in him?

We discover one another standing together
at the foot of the Cross, where Man is naked,
exposed as a gift seeking acceptance,
and Woman is standing near,
freely opening herself,
in the virginity which is pure vulnerability to gift,
to welcome and shelter him in her embrace
and to give herself back totally in response,
the two persons thus united together totally
in an intimacy that is complete and undying,
stronger than all evil, suffering, and death.

This is the living space of virginity,
born through the birth-pangs of the Passion
but unveiled in its full beauty in the Resurrection,
in which the Risen Flesh of Christ is revealed
as pure and transparent relationship,
pure intimacy,
in the radiant light of the Father, Son, and Spirit,
taking us up to be united to him
and to encounter one another
in this space of grace.

For here the very body is made permeable,
in total reception and reciprocal donation,
to the living of loving relationship
in the likeness of the Persons of the Trinity,
pure acceptance of the other and pure gift of self,
blossoming in the mutual indwelling
of "I" in "You"
and "You" in "Me" in the "We"
of shared belonging,

in the "Thou" of Father, Son, and Spirit
in whom, alone,
all intimacy comes to its perfection.

III.

This flowering of virginal love and intimacy,
even within the limitations of this temporal life,
is something so beautiful, so precious,
and so transparent to the light of eternity.
This is true, both in the expansiveness
that shares in the universal love of Christ
cradling the entire world, and every heart,
and holding them lovingly to itself,
and in the singularity of unique relationships
in which hearts are given to one another
to incarnate this universal mystery
in the living space
between two irreplaceable persons.

But indeed this second is even fuller,
for all love, all love
is inherently singular and unique,
and not a general or anonymous
reaching out to "humanity."
For when God loves his precious children,
he does not love an impersonal mass,
but each unrepeatable beloved, saying to them,
"You are precious in my eyes, and beautiful,
and I love you," and yet never repeating himself,
for each time that God says "I love you,"
he simply cannot repeat himself.

Thus even the universal love that reaches out,
dilating the heart to touch the children of God
and to take them to myself, cradling them
in my prayer, my compassion, my intercession,
is founded on the certainty
of God's unique love for each,
and the insertion of my own heart, my own vision,
into the loving gaze of God upon each
of his uniquely and incomparably beloved.

But here, in both of these cases
—in the singular encounter of two unique hearts
and in the reaching out
of the heart to universal love—
a certain limit is reached,

dissolved only in eternity:
this is the limit of totality
and the limit of expansiveness.
For I cannot love as widely as I desire,
I cannot dilate my heart
to the wideness of the world,
touching, seeing, reverencing, and loving,
with the full gift
of my consciousness, my presence,
each one of the persons whom God has made.
Neither can I, indeed, give my whole self
to the very end, with nothing held back,
into the welcoming heart of another person,
unless, of course,
it is within Christ that this gift occurs,
and it is he who enables, protects,
and safeguards this love
and the intimacy that it brings to flower,
unto the consummation that he wills.

But this consummation, in both cases,
can come only when the veil of life is torn
and I pass over into eternity,
and indeed, only in the new creation
in which my body itself will be re-made
as a pure gift, in Christ, for each and all,
and a living space of welcome and love for them.

But even this, through faith and hope and love,
can be anticipated in this life,
both through the grace of virginity
in mystical conformity with the virgin Christ,
and, in this very space of union with him,
in the experience of suffering and death,
which harnesses my being, body and spirit,
and begins, as it were, to dissolve the limitations
that hinder love in its full expression,
and to allow another, deeper communication
to flower in the light of eternity.

Yes, the very painful experience of limitation
opens up a surpassing of limitation,
a movement beyond the confines of temporal flesh
—while harnessing and sanctifying it—
into a participation in the intimacy of eternity.
And this is the insertion of my whole being,
gripped by pain and longing and desire,

into the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ,
in which the mystery of the Trinity's love
becomes incarnate within the world most fully,
and opens the way for the world to participate,
in the intimate love of human hearts,
in the very love and intimacy
of the Father, Son, and Spirit.

And such a movement reaches its climax
in the final surrender, the final breath,
in the last and definitive gift of my life,
poured out to the very end in love,
in which the eucharist of my own existence,
united to the Eucharist of Christ himself,
is totally and finally given,
beyond the very veil of death,
and passes over, in this way,
into the space of limitless self-communication
within the heart of the Trinity,
made thus more present, more intimately close,
from within the consummating
intimacy of God's embrace,
to each person whom,
in him, I love, and always will.

ישוע

I MISS YOU

My God, I miss you...
and yet I cannot feel how much I miss you,
for this would be too much for me to bear.

This is why a heavy veil of darkness has descended
over my mind and heart, and for many years
I have been unable to draw near to you,
to pray in words or thought or aspiration,
except in that silent surging of the inmost heart
which pines for you with aching longing
deeper than my own faculties can feel or see.

Why is this, my God, why is this?
You ravished my heart
with your unspeakable Beauty
and drew me beyond all things
to be immersed in you,
but then when I entered into solitude for you,
to be united to you in most intimate love,

and here to love, in you,
all of my brothers and sisters,
you turned me inside-out and hollowed me
such that I feel your absence so deeply
that I cannot even feel your absence,
cannot even feel the depths of my longing for you,
but simply cling in pure faith to the presence that,
if I were unable to believe in it for even a moment,
I would die of agonizing confusion and aloneness.

And yet this ineffable darkness
where you are veiled,
and in being veiled, I trust, unveiling yourself
in ways that I simply do not know...
in this darkness you have cast your light
upon the creation that you have made,
upon your precious and beloved children,
and allowed me to glimpse their sweet beauty,
to receive them, hold them,
and bear them in your name.

What is this, my God, what is this?
To have lost the Reality for which my heart lives
and yet to be ravished by the beauty
of the partial image?
Is this not an unhealthy displacement,
is this not a compromise, a compensation?
But, my God, my God, I want only you...
and yet you place into my hands, not yourself,
but the beauty of your children,
entrusted into my care,
and the beauty of human love, fractured by sin
but crying out to be revered anew, lived,
and lifted up to be
what it was always meant to be, in you.

I yearn for you, my God, I miss you...
and in moments of particular heaviness
I fear, doubting that something is seriously wrong.
For how can a gaping abyss of emptiness,
a heavy stone that cannot even begin to raise itself
to communicate with heaven,
but remains mute and dead...
how can this possibly be a safe haven
for your children's hearts?
How can this possibly mediate to them
the security of your love and your tenderness?

How can my darkness, dear God,
how can my darkness mediate to them
your undying light?

Only...only if it is not absolute darkness,
but if this darkness is cradled in a greater Light,
and by this Light is illumined and permeated.

And this I trust, I hope...
and trusting and hoping in this way,
I will love, love, and love until the end,
when the veil is at last torn, and darkness flees,
giving way, for me, and for all of us,
to the consummation of the eternal Day
of perfect and everlasting intimacy.

This will be a Day of perfect communion
without a shadow to obscure the eyes or heart,
or a sorrow or doubt or fear to hold one back
from the blessed embrace of ceaseless belonging
between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
the fulfillment of the longing of our hearts
(the One for whom I have thirsted for so long!)
and in whom every human heart, too,
will be made one, eternally...

ישוע

IN THE REALM OF DEATH

I.

How sweet it is to live unceasingly
in the realm of death,
in the place of ceaseless dying,
longing for eternity.

How blessed to remain in every moment
with my whole being pressed against the veil
which by love is stretched thin,
with every breath, every beat of my heart,
throbbing with ardent longing,
inhaling the air of eternity
and glimpsing a mysterious light
filtering through the threads of the fabric.

Yet how painful to be stretched so thin,
and yet with such immensity present but hidden,
in the empty-fullness

that is proper to faith in this life,
while also bearing the darkness of this world
in the aching of heartfelt compassion.

Yes, here my whole being
is harnessed in crying out,
in the birth-pangs of life
in a world marked by death,
until the veil is finally torn
by love's sweet encounter,
and every shadow at last flees
before the undying Light,
making way for the eternal Day that awaits
in which every longing of the heart
is perfectly fulfilled.

Already light and darkness
intermingle in this place,
as do joy and sorrow,
interlaced and mingled together,
simply two movements in the single dance of love.
And yet sorrow is cradled in the arms of joy,
and darkness is enfolded and irradiated
by a deeper light.

Yes, for to live in the realm of death simply means
to live always in the light of eternity,
and in this light to let every moment unfold,
every moment, indeed, to be a simple intersection
with the fullness of the eternal Now,
already touching time.

It is, in other words, to live in the realm
where all external, impersonal things,
all striving and achievement,
all goals and competition,
all clinging for things
which are blown away like dust,
all things that will not last into heaven,
simply fade away,
and nothing, nothing remains
but love and intimacy:
nothing but the beauty
of God, Father, Son, and Spirit,
and the beauty
of each one of God's precious children,
eternally beloved and called

into the eternal joy of his embrace.

II.

But how agonizing it is to live
unceasingly in the realm of death.
For the world flees from death like poison,
cloaking it over and ignoring it
until, once it can no longer be ignored,
it is manufactured
as quickly and painlessly as possible,
brushed under the rug from the eyes of all.
Thus we imagine that, liberated,
we can go on living with our eyes
fixed only on the earth,
which gives us security by the closeness
which dazzles the eyes by its dull brightness
and intoxicates us with its bitter perfume,
even while leaving the heart empty and dry
for want of the true nourishment of love,
for want of the true intimacy which
can only be truly tasted in this life
when it is tasted with eyes and heart
raised to heaven.

What, what does anything matter in the end,
except love and intimacy, love and intimacy alone?
No tasks or achievements can reside in my heart,
no ideals, no plans, no resolutions to achieve,
as if they were left to me to protect,
to realize, to bring to fruition by my efforts.
No, when standing face to face with eternity,
and with the infinity of Love blazing brilliantly,
before which all is like the fading grass,
it is impossible to care for anything
except the unique person who sits before me,
unspeakably precious and beautiful in your eyes,
and you yourself, my God, the Beauty of all things
and the Desire of every heart, alone satisfying all.

For what remains in eternity but this?
Nothing, nothing will endure there
but *person* and *intimacy* alone...

ישוע

I DANCE AND SING

It is so beautiful to play, my Father,
in the orbit of your loving presence.
It is so beautiful to simply be your beloved,
uniquely cherished and held and desired by you,
at every moment gazed upon,
at every moment cradled,
and in this love to dance the dance of childhood,
to dance the dance of spousal ardor
and loving surrender,
to dance the dance of paternity,
too, transparent to you.

The whole of creation is a wonderful mystery
reflecting the mystery that is yours, my God,
bearing the imprint, the seal, the image
of your own inner life as Trinity,
the dance of everlasting love and communion
between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
in the joy of an ecstasy without end
in total mutual belonging and sweetest embrace.

I thank you for the gift of my existence,
unfolding so secure within your loving hands,
and for the gift of every thing that you have made,
especially for each one of your singular children,
immeasurably precious in your eyes and in mine.
I simply let my heart surge with wonder,
with the song of gratitude and awe
that sounds sweetly in the silence.
I simply let my heart expand and widen
with the dance of joy and playfulness
that stirs in the stillness and quietude
in which repose and movement are one.

I thank you, my God, for all the beauty,
for all the ravishing goodness of your care
manifested in the simplest of things each day:
in the air that fills my lungs
in ceaseless respiration,
a symbol of the respiration of love on which I live,
participating in the respiration
of your own eternal life
in which there is no breath,
no inhalation or exhalation,
except the very love that circulates unceasingly
between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

without end.

I thank you for the morning, returning ever anew,
giving me another day of life to belong to you
as you, by the very gift of my existence,
give yourself ever anew
 in ceaseless self-communication
to belong to me as a pure gift never taken back.
This is a gift, your own self, my God,
hidden yet revealed,
filtered through every created thing
 that you have made,
given through the sacrament
 of each unique moment,
as well as in the sacred inner sanctuary of my heart
where I abide alone before you, and, in you,
am never alone, because held by you unceasingly.

I thank you, Father, for the very gift of suffering,
for the weakness of my body, for my frailty,
for the illness of my flesh and its pain,
for in all of this you remind me ever anew
that I depend wholly upon you at every instant,
and that my whole being is crying out
for the gift of the healing and restoration
which will be known fully only in your Love,
when the evening of life will give way,
fully, to the perfect morning of the eternal Day,
which will embrace me, re-create me,
and make all things new at the end of my life.

Yes, there is a mysterious sweetness here,
a secret kind of playfulness and joy,
hidden in the very experience
 of pain and suffering,
like a sweet kernel present within a hard shell.
All that is necessary
 is to trust, desire, and surrender,
to descend into the fullness of the present moment
which is always bigger on the inside
than it appears on the outside.

Indeed, it always carries the very eternity of Joy
present within, veiled and yet totally given,
received and experienced in faith, hope, and love,
even as, when the veil of life is at last torn,
it will be received and experienced face to face

and in the perfect embrace
of total mutual indwelling
by which I live in you, God, and you live in me,
and all persons
are made one within your embrace.

And I thank you even, and especially, my Father,
for the pain of suffering compassion
which permeates my consciousness so deeply,
as it allows my being to dilate and widen,
in the expansiveness of the Crucified One,
to hold and embrace and carry others,
my precious brothers and sisters, loved by you,
and, in the reverberations of my heart with them,
to dance and play and rejoice here too,
as the Light penetrates the darkness, illumining,
and takes up the sorrowful heart
into the sheltering embrace of eternal Joy.

What, after all, is there in the end
but the song and dance and play of intimacy?
It is the joyful reverberation of the heart at beauty
in which the gift is received with open hands
and the same gift, touching the inner heart,
unseals my reciprocal gift
back to the One who loves,
knitting together Lover and beloved,
made one in Love,
in an intimacy that is the fulfillment
of every longing.

ישוע

A CEASELESS ATONEMENT

I.

So many of your children, my loving God,
are hurting so intensely, in darkness and in pain,
submerged as they are in the ugliness of sin,
this twisting of the goodness that you have made,
this sacrilege committed
with the holiness of human flesh,
this collapse of the human person,
created for intimacy,
into the loneliness and isolation of enclosed fear,
of possessiveness and use that obscures the heart,
even as the heart can never stop crying out
for the cherishing love that it was made to know.

My God, my God, there are so many stories,
the unfolding
of each particular human life, unique,
the beauty of each one
of your incomparable children,
created by you as beloved
and called into the fullness of love,
but hurt, hurt by the sin and disorder of others
and falling, oneself, into the same darkness.
The heart, the heart
reaching out for love, acceptance,
only to be used as an object, and to use.

But some enter into sin through blindness,
through an unseeing
that becomes more unseeing still,
a searching for goodness and beauty,
grasping for it,
where it cannot be found,
but rather where it is even more hurt
and twisted by the lies that infiltrate the heart,
leading to the despair of finding
goodness, love, and beauty
that soon descends upon one's heart and life
like heavy shadows, like threatening storm clouds,
blotting out the light of hope and desire
to ever find what, at first, one hoped to find.

But some plunge into sin
through deliberate self-justification,
through the subtle lie
whispered to one's own heart,
claiming that everything
is fine and understandable
even as one is fleeing from reality,
from being, from truth,
to take refuge in the false security
of lies and fantasy,
or even just in the dulling titillation of the senses,
submerged in the flesh,
engorged by pleasure and escape.
And soon enough this self-justification
becomes the inability to even see
the light that one, first,
deliberately chose to ignore,
and one begins to call darkness light,

and light darkness,
as one's vision and understanding
are twisted beyond recognition,
so far from what they were meant to be.

But the worst of all, the worst of all is the sin
which manifests not a blindness to authentic good,
a mistaken seeking for beauty
where it is not liberated,
but twisted by the disorder
that makes it, as it were,
the very opposite of what you,
my God, intended it to be;
the worst is not even flight
from reality into fantasy,
the deliberate choice of falsehood and obscurity,
because it is supposedly easier to bear,
and more enjoyable,
in the addictive craving
for excitement and for lust,
than the real and holy sobriety
of authentic life and love;
rather, the worst sin of all is something that
is not even innate in the fallen human heart itself,
but has its origin in a force of evil deeper still,
a force of evil, nonetheless,
which grasps the fallen world
and seeks to submerge it
under its wicked influence:
this is the diabolical evil, the demonic sin.

This is the evil of the one who, long ago,
fell from heaven in a fully known and willed
disobedience and rebellion
against the One who is good.
This is the sin by which evil is committed,
not in the name of good or for its sake,
but rather in which the heart, so radically twisted,
is infatuated with evil itself,
with violence, with destruction,
and is inebriated by evil
with a wicked and disordered mind,
rejoicing with an empty excitement
at what hurts, at what degrades,
at what destroys all that God has made,
saying with a human mouth
words too evil to conceive,

but which the evil one once spoke in his fall,
and which he insinuated
into the hearts of our first parents:

“Better to reign in hell than to serve in heaven.
I will not serve this jealous and controlling God,
who claims to determine for me what is good.
No, I will attack, will destroy, will distort,
as long as the power, the vigor,
the control is mine.”

This is the envy of the prideful heart
which, unable to have goodness as its own,
and somewhere deep,
deep within its woundedness,
has decided instead that,
if goodness cannot be had,
known, and experienced as one's own,
then the only thing left is to twist,
distort, or destroy it.

All the while the heart
loses a taste for the sweetness
of loving surrender in which power is let go
to fall into the hands of the Love
that sustains the world,
and instead is engorged with the wicked pleasure
of disobedience and destructive force
by which evil becomes a god worshiped,
even as its voracious jaws consume and destroy
the very one who thinks, in his evil,
that he is the one who is in control,
whereas he is indeed the worst slave of all.

II.

Your precious children, my God,
your precious children!
How much agony and pain and darkness there is,
threaded into the fabric of each human life,
beautiful in your eyes, but so horrifically distorted
in any number of ways, by the evil, the disorder
which opposes itself to beauty, truth, and good.
Ah, but Love, your Love, my God, is stronger,
and your arms reach even into the darkest place!

You do not abandon your children
even in the most horrendous places
of degradation;

you do not flee, do not cover over your face,
do not cast away in anger, in disgust, or in despair.
No, my God, for you are Love and Mercy itself,
and your compassionate Heart is magnetized
to the very places of deepest misery,
and you pour out, pour out like water
into the hollow crevices of the ravaged heart.

And here the shame, the darkness, the wounds
that we bear,
haunting and causing us such anguish,
bleeding and festering with such agony,
you take upon yourself, you bear with us,
enwrapping our agonizing heart and body
with arms outstretched in cruciform love
and the boundless expanse of loving compassion,
touching us sweetly
with hands with holes in them.

In this way, my God, in this way, sweet Jesus,
you take the agonizing human heart
and press it close to your own Heart,
a Heart utterly harnessed in compassion, in love,
for each unique and incomparable child of God.
You are all for us, however lost we may be;
you are utterly given in love, utterly present
in the very place
where your presence is so obscured.

And in doing this, the fire of eternal Love,
blazing as an endless and infinite light
in the everlasting life
of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
—this Love that is also the Origin,
Ground, and Consummation
of every single thing that you,
my God, have made,
and of the whole creation,
still beautiful in your sight—
this eternal Love lovingly distills itself
into the intersection point
of the agonizing human heart,
in order, by the touch of its blazing heat and light,
to consume the darkness, the pain, the shame,
and every force of evil which binds and hurts us.

And you lift us up, lift us up through compassion,

by which every sorrow
and pain and anguish we feel
reverberates within your own Heart,
your own being,
in an empathy, an attunement, a suffering-with
that goes so deep that, in the very place of pain,
you are made one with us, and us with you.

And thus the light shines
in the darkness as consolation,
opening the way for darkness to give way to light
and the slavery of such anguishing suffering
to give way to the intimacy
of healing and liberation
by which the beauty that has been sought, but lost,
and the goodness which the heart thirsted for,
is found by the pure gift of Mercy,
of the divine touch,
which ravishes the human heart
sweetly in gentleness
as a pure and gratuitous gift,
enfolding and caressing.

III.

My God, my God, when I see the suffering
of so many of my brothers and sisters,
so deeply beautiful and so ardently loved by you,
when I sense and feel and see the depth of sin
which twists and distorts and burdens their lives,
hurting them so much, even as they cry for you,
my heart dilates and reaches out, it expands,
in a painful longing to be close to them,
to make everything that is theirs my own,
to be utterly harnessed in love and compassion
within the loving and compassionate
Heart of Christ.

Yes, I want to suffer more, and more deeply,
for their sake and on their behalf.
And yet this is not a matter of more suffering
in the sense of a particular quantity added up,
but of a deeper, wider, and more expansive love
that reaches out, that receives without reserve,
to be a living meeting-space of pure compassion
in which sorrow and suffering are held
in the embrace of enduring and undying Light,
so that Light may penetrate the darkness,

making all things new by your pure gift,
and the agony of compassionate Love,
suffering together with the suffering heart,
may bring forth the joy that is victorious over all.

I yearn, my God, and I know that you, too,
have spoken this word of invitation in my heart,
I yearn to be so totally open to them,
so radically close in love, prayer, and compassion,
in the intercession that springs
from the core of my heart
utterly surrendered to you in gratitude and love,
and from this place
 utterly surrendered also to them...
I yearn to exist as a living and ceaseless atonement,
in which your light and their darkness
meet in my own heart,
held and bound together
 in your reconciling embrace,
so that what sin has torn apart
 and violently estranged
may be woven back together, by Mercy,
into the joy of true intimacy
 and lasting togetherness.

Yes, I give my heart to you, my God,
 without reserve,
to belong to you, to be utterly yours,
in the pure intimacy for which you made me,
in the beauty, goodness, truth, and love
which are your deep desire for me,
created for my own sake.
And in this very place, held and cradled by you,
rejoicing in the truth of my belovedness,
playing and dancing and rejoicing
 in the inmost truth
of reality that reflects and shares in your own life,
ineffably beautiful Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
I also let my heart dilate and expand, compassionately,
to touch my brothers and sisters
in the places of darkness
that have not yet discovered
the fullness of your healing light
and the joy of your presence,
enfolding and caressing all.

Let me be close to them

in their pain, their suffering,
and yet also, in this very place,
to never cease to believe in the Light,
in the Love, that is stronger than all,
affirming with my whole being the goodness
that still lives, so ravishing, in every human heart,
and the goodness that persists
in the whole creation
and which you, my God, want to lift up,
to liberate, from all that holds it bound,
so that it may be held anew fully
in your healing embrace,
allowed thus to be once again,
by your cradling Love,
what in the beginning you made it to be.

By your pure gift, your pure mercy,
hold me, God, hold me unceasingly in your Love,
so that, safe in the enduring security of your arms,
I may also hold others,
so very close, in your name.
Yes, let me hold them, dear God,
as I am held by you,
so that through the throbbing compassion
of my own heart,
through my togetherness with them
in agony and suffering,
the ecstasy of your eternal Joy,
pouring out as Compassion,
may touch and hold and heal them
as you desire to do.

Ah, God, held by your Love
and in your Love given,
may this Love give birth in their sorrowful hearts
—in our hearts together,
brothers and sisters united—
to the happiness
of radiant goodness, beauty, truth,
to the experience
of your cherishing touch and embrace
that inaugurates the heart, through Mercy's kiss
and the sweet experience of Love's pure gift,
into the intimacy that we were made to know.

This is the intimacy which cradles and caresses us,
throughout this life at every succeeding moment,

until the final consummation that we will know,
at the end of time,
in the perfect security and lasting joy
of your everlasting and undimmed Light.
There we will be, my God, by your pure gift,
ravished in the tenderness
of the most blessed Love,
ineffably beautiful God, Father, Son, and Spirit,
who draw us all to yourself
and make all things new
in the sweetness of your eternal embrace.

ישוע

PEACE AND JOY

I.

Peace flows gently within my soul
In this moment, loving Father of us all,
and I thank you for this...

I thank you for the peace, yes,
but more, for the source of the peace,
since peace, when it is true and authentic,
is nothing but a sign of the living contact
of the heart with the reality of your Love,
with the radiant beauty of Reality as it is,
with the Truth that cradles me and upholds me,
permeating the spirit with the sweetness
of the eternal Trinity, so wondrous,
who live at the inner heart of all being,
communicating yourself without ceasing,
and drawing all ever deeper back
into the shelter of your most tender embrace.

Peace is the sign of the Spirit's presence,
the simple reverberation of his touch,
just as joy is but the echo in my spirit
of the intimacy for which you created me.
To seek peace and joy
as "things" within themselves,
to grasp for them possessively, is to lose them,
for they are but the experience of something else,
the echo, the voice,
the ripple of living touch in me,
the touch of heart and Heart, spirit and Spirit,
the wedding of my being with your Being,
and, in you, with the fullness of all things as well.

Thus the path from the narrowness of isolation,
from the closedness of fear and sin,
with walls up around the heart to protect,
and into the vulnerability of love and intimacy,
is a path of ever deepening peace and joy,
even as it passes also through suffering and pain.
For there is a pain due to sin, to self-isolation,
and from this pain you desire to fully liberate us;
but there is also a pain that is innately fruitful,
born as it is from love and to love ever flowing,
and that radiates with a mysterious beauty:
the dilation of the heart ever wider in longing,
in the beautiful thirst for the fullness of Beauty,
for the marriage-bond of intimacy with Truth,
and for drinking from the wellspring of Goodness
that satisfies completely while never satiating.

II.

Peace does not come from possession,
but rather from being-possessed,
for it consists in letting my heart be grasped
and held unceasingly by Love.

And such an experience, such a truth,
brings about a holy non-possession
in which hands fearfully clenched
are loosened and relaxed
in simple trust in the goodness of the Other.

Yes, and this very openness to receive
and to surrender myself lovingly
in response to the gift of Love first received,
is the only way of truly possessing.

Yet this holy possession occurs
not in the way that we now think of possessing:
of being able to say “mine” against another,
closing off in a private sphere, isolated,
and having my own controlled space,
under my own autonomous domination
apart from the touch and the orbit of Love.

Rather, it is to possess in being possessed,
as I say “mine” to my beloved,
when, in fact, I am possessed by them,
having given myself away to be theirs forever,

grafted into them in complete loving belonging,
and, precisely in this act, receiving them,
always, as a seal set intimately upon my heart.

This is the peace of belonging to you, my God,
of being cradled always in the circle of your arms
and in the perfect security of your embrace.
Yes, and the surrender of myself to you,
the letting go of all power and control,
in which I enter into the vulnerability of love
which makes possible a loving intimacy with you
as you so deeply desire, and as I desire too,
can occur only
in response to your prior movement,
in response to the prior gift of your love,
in which you give yourself to me completely
in your very act of welcoming and receiving,
letting me be set, forever, as a seal upon your Heart.

ישוע

TO LOVE YOU

I love you, my most loving God,
and I want to love you with every breath,
with every beat of my heart, every thought,
every word and action,
every desire and experience
—with every single moment of my existence—
in response to the love that I have first received,
and which I receive unceasingly in every moment,
pouring forth into me
by your boundless generosity
and awakening the reciprocal surrender
by which I flow back into you in response,
into the sheltering tenderness
of your eternal embrace.

ישוע

IN YOU (2-27-20)

Father, in you alone is true security,
in you alone is peace and serenity.
If the human heart seeks repose in anything else,
restlessness and agitation soon follow,
for you alone cradle all things fully,
protecting and sheltering us in our vulnerability,
and carrying us through all the uncertainties,

darknesses, and fears of this life,
into the consummate intimacy of eternity.

And yet this security in you opens out,
from the place of naked security in your embrace,
to embrace and hold and cradle
others in your name,
and indeed to see and experience your beauty,
and the tenderness of your own loving touch,
in the beauty and goodness
of the creation you have made,
and above all in the beauty of one another,
as we are given to each other
within the orbit of your Love.

My God, how true this is, how true,
that in the naked core
of the heart beyond all things
it is truly possible to be fully secure and at peace,
reposing in the vulnerability of faith and trust,
surrendered in hope and love
into Love's perfect security.
And yet this inner affirmation of you
beyond all things,
also spontaneously overflows from its fullness
into an affirmation of every single created thing
which you, loving God,
have fashioned in your love
—and which the heart receives
in the expansiveness
and holy liberty of joyful gratuity—
and also flows back, in and through all things,
and bearing them tenderly in the heart,
into your direct and unmediated embrace once again.

And in the end all things, yes, all things,
find their ultimate meaning
only in love and communion,
as the whole beauty and richness of creation,
permeated fully by your redeeming light
and made new in the final restoration
at the end of time,
will be completely transparent to the beauty
of your eternal intimacy as Father, Son, and Spirit.

And yet here, in the fullness of eternity,
and already now

in the radiant shadows of this life,
there is another reality that is also absolute,
and which is deserving of a love that is total,
unconditional, and complete, without reserve,
touching eternity by its complete surrender,
and manifesting your infinity
by its boundless promise:
this is the mystery of each unique,
incomparable person,
created with an infinite, absolute value,
because created in your image and likeness, God,
and finding rest and fulfillment and ceaseless play
only in the eternal consummation
of your own embrace.

To love another person, therefore,
is precisely to touch and be moved by them
in this sacred mystery that is seen and known,
always, by you, in your infinite and eternal Love,
and to trace the way back to the eternal mystery
of this person's absolute beauty in eternity,
where they will live forever
in the bosom of your own divine life,
and where we shall all, each of us unique,
yet all of us together, united in your Love,
be made one in the most intimate
and everlasting embrace.

ישוע

LIGHT IN DARKNESS

"Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage." (Heb 3:14-15)

I.

I am living in the realm of death,
even as I live.
The very desire for life has gone,
since so has the capacity.
I have slipped away from all things
and cannot make contact with them,
even if I try.
There is only one thing that remains
in this place of all-enfolding incapacity:

the all-enfolding mystery of Love.

Yes, for here in this seemingly so narrow place
my heart cries out with trust in expansiveness,
throbbing in the deepest night
in communion with the Light.

My heart cries out with all those
who suffer the sorrow of death
even while they live,
and through the fear of death are subject
to bondage all their life.

What more can I desire,
touched by Love and by Love intangibly held,
than to hold my brothers and sisters to my heart,
in all the depths of their pain and estrangement,
their hearts throbbing against mine,
as your Heart throbs against me,
yes, as you hold us all together, uniting us,
in the reconciling space of your atoning Love?

There is only one more thing
that I desire than this,
than to be close to those whom you love;
it is, beyond all things, the only real desire I have,
the only rest and joy and peace and gladness
which enfolds and permeates everything,
and gives beauty to every instant,
as it will be my eternal gladness:
to see you, my loving God, face to face,
in the radiant vision
of your beauty unveiled, at the end,
and to embrace you as you embrace me,
in the complete mutual self-donation,
in the perfect intimacy, for which, already,
I am harnessed, and I long,
with every moment of my life
and every throbbing beat
of my love-wounded heart.

II.

My heart cannot but ask you, Father,
to consummate in me your mysterious work.
I ask you to do now, to do soon,
what you have for so long been preparing to do,
and what you are indeed doing even now.

Draw me into that place of pure com-passion,
of abiding conformity with Christ Crucified,
for which I have longed since I was young,
that I may rest, in prayer and love and simplicity,
here suspended with him in sweetest silence,
sheltered by a complete incapacity
that is the work of your grace in me.
And then draw me, in your time,
beyond the barrier of death
into the consummation of your embrace.

This incapacity, as mysterious,
as scandalous as it seems,
appears to me deeply, in my inner heart,
to be the “key” that will protect this sacred space
even while deepening it immeasurably.
It will also allow my “Mary”
to be with me in this space,
sharing in com-passion
in the com-passion that is mine
with the Com-passion
of the Crucified and Risen Christ.

III.

For we have both been touched by this Mystery,
by the Mystery that is
the one eternal Event of Love,
incarnate in the center of human history
and gathering all together into unity,
in the bond of Love,
reconciled through the com-passion of God
to share in the eternal Passion of Joy
lived by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In this Paschal Mystery I am suspended,
and have been for so many years;
and yet this suspension draws me deeper,
deeper into the silence
of pure suffering and pure joy,
beyond words and thought and speech and act,
and yet where all is super-affirmed in tenderness.

Here the distance, by pure grace, is bridged over
between the darkness of fallen human hearts
and the radiant darkness
of the undimmed light of God.

Yes, Christ has crossed this distance in himself,
tasting death for the sake of all men,
and giving them eternal life,
lifting us out of the dregs
of our waywardness in pure mercy,
and restoring us to our homeland
in the bosom of the Father.

Let me abide here, my loving God, blessed Trinity,
at each moment of time, for the rest of my life,
as the veil is stretched ever more thin,
until my final breath.

For already I feel it tearing,
often in such desperate heaviness
that I feel in the darkness and anguish of this life,
but also, deeper, deeper, I trust,
in the inhalation of the eternal Breath alive in me,
and in the ravishing Light
that pours itself out in darkness,
and promises—with the surest certainty of faith—
to dispel, at the end, every lingering darkness
and to carry us, to carry us all
into the purest and most radiant light
of the beautiful and undimmed Day of Eternity
in which Father, Son, and Spirit
embrace without ceasing,
and cradle us, so gently,
each uniquely and all together,
in the inmost heart of your embrace.

ישוע

BEATRICE

Bluebonnets bursting with brilliant light,
and tiny bees buzzing as they take their flight;
something glistens in your eyes as you sit there,
waiting for me, anxious of how much you care.

What happened to you? How were you touched
by the hand of God during that time,
and how much?

You became his Beatrice to me, by his plan,
a gift that speaks more than it is, or can.

A gift speaks like this
because it speaks more than it is,
speaks of him who eternally is,

in temporal radiance,
and yet is also loved, itself, in him who,
above all, is loved.
Beatrice is beautiful,
precisely because of how she is loved.

Dante loves like God because God he sees,
in love's glance,
but he glimpses God in her
because God in her dwells;
and yet what can see
in the gaze of God but God's love?
And so looking at God it is God he loves,
in God's love.

Even if it is in her temporal frame
that he is manifest,
what can be loved in loving like God
but God himself?
And yet in God, loved himself for himself alone,
is loved each thing besides,
for his sake and for its own.

Do you understand the import of this,
the secret word?
The bluebonnets' brilliance
is not their own, but his,
and the bees' song of symphonic serenity
is a service
of the Creator of all beauty,
who is Beauty Himself.

So too your beauty, Beatrice,
is a blessing of heaven
come down to live in earthly flesh among women,
most blessed in the most blessed one, Mary Virgin,
and singing in each woman
in history's fabric woven.

ישוע

SEEN

What does it mean
to see myself with the eyes of God?
It is not bloated,
self-glorifying pride and complacency,
nor is it shame-filled self-accusation,

but the simple transformation of vision,
deep within,
impalpable at first, hidden and unknown,
but bubbling up little by little to the surface,
until the serenity emerges by which I know
that my littleness is held
in the ocean of immensity,
and my desperate poverty
is not desperate at all, but secure.

For the fragility of my life, my mind, my heart
is thoroughly seen, known, and loved by you,
cherished with ineffable tenderness,
incredibly sweet,
which mourns for me in my blind stumbling
but holds me still, tight yet free,
as forward I move,
on the path of longing, joy, and pain
to rest in the rest of your eternal embrace,
and loving gaze.

ישוע

MARY IN THE MOON

The Lady in the moon watches over the night,
and in the day her veiled presence reflects the sun.
There she is, friend, do you see—
peeking through the trees?

How sweet and beautiful, leaning over her Child,
leaning over all her children on this earth of exile.
She still watches over you too, my friend.

For we live, and work, and play, and sleep
under the same sky, the same stars,
the same moon.
You are now far away, in body and in spirit too,
but Lady Luna, Stella Maris, Mary Mother,
watches over you.

Fear not to be loved—just as you are, in poverty—
for the gentle rays ever descend,
enfolding and cherishing,
as they did that first night,
that first walk among the trees.

ישוע

COMING SPRING

The mountain passes swept with snow
sing silently of sun's swift rise,
and of moonsong in the night's serenity,
lullaby of history's longevity,
come to a point, here.

Snowfall, heavy and soft—soft accumulation,
heavy resting over earth, buried silent, still,
under the blanket that blinds the eyes, so radiant,
yet in the night, so dark, so still.

Snowmelt, trickling over muddy earth
in spring's sweetness,
melting multitudes of murky pathways
tracing their ways through the earth,
to lake and stream,
streams that take their way downward
as temperature rises,
and the bird's song accompanies all,
harbinger of coming dawn.

Sun and moon, snow and water, earth and sky,
and the singing of the dove, bird of longing,
and the tittering of little birds, endless jubilation,
for with the coming of the spring
comes Dayspring:
Christ, slumbering under earth, heavy and light,
arises as the everlasting Dawn, and life he brings.

ישוע

ALL SPOKEN IN ONE

Each thing speaks of everything,
while everything always speaks of something.
For how does anything speak
except in speaking of itself,
and more than itself?
For to say "I speak" is to say also
"I have been spoken."

A word is always more than a word,
a word of the Word itself;
and yet this Word is not abstract, impersonal, or empty,
but full,
and speaks of specificity, of singularity,

present in Love's superfluous outpouring.

The universe contained in a little flower-bud,
or in a babbling child.

Petals opening to the sun,
from the earth having deeply drunk,
"Mama," "Dada," the voice mouths, imperfectly,
speaking perfectly of the perfect mystery that stands
beneath all things.

"Abba, Father," says the little Son,
in his eternal immensity,
"My Son," says the Father back,
delight upon his face,
and in the gaze, the word of each,
spoken between the two,
the whole of all that exists is made,
everything spoken in the one.

ישוע

TIME'S FABRIC (PART I)

History's fabric is woven as a seamless thread,
even though it appears to us as torn asunder,
not only frayed at the edges, rough,
but falling to pieces, hardly even holding together.

What human eyes see, however, is not the fullness,
and the great Weaver of Time weaves away,
twitching the needle ceaselessly through the fabric,
his wisdom immeasurable, his love infinite.

O great Weaver of the threads of temporality,
weave into my life the mystery of eternity,
for the needle that pierces time, pierces hearts,
is the Cross of Christ, your Son.

Not alone in this, are we, for he first was pierced,
and we in him are pierced
by the love that he first bore,
and he weaves away with you, tugging ceaselessly,
as all is woven into the sinews of his own Heart.

TIME'S FABRIC (PART II)

Man is more than his story, his past, his wounds,
since his roots reach down deeper, surer,
into the creative act at the origin of all,

the history before his history,
the conception before his begetting.

Surety is found in this, and serenity in love,
for this origin is one of pure loving, of God's love
mothering forth the child even before the womb;
before the seed of fertilization,
the word was known in God.

Beloved, cherished, known, and held,
from eternity unto eternity, you are mine;
even though only in a temporal moment, child,
did you come to be in all reality, in essence,
in the substance of spirit and of flesh.

Yet I knew you always, and willed for you to be,
to be yourself in fullness of life, and being,
and to be, in being, simply and wholly mine.
This is the story that is your history,
and destiny, forever.

TIME'S FABRIC (PART III)

From this origin of origins all life flows,
and for good or ill it is influenced, swayed,
by the fabric of time, by human choice.

For the fabric, indeed, is disfigured,
even as I work,
and whenever a tear is made
I set to work immediately
to repair what is broken, to restore what is lost.

Still human freedom abides, child,
to resist the lance of love.
Will you let your history become His story,
or will you cling, closing tight in fright?

For the origin seeks to flow in you,
even unto today,
and I can remove the obstruction, clear the path,
so that it flows in you, freely anew.

Then you will come to see, in the origin's light,
the light of every moment, too, brilliant,
seen as I see, in the light of my own light.

TIME'S FABRIC (PART IV)

Let the heat of love draw near; fear not the burn.
Let the scalpel open the incision
to remove the sickness;
for in fact it is not removing anything but the fear,
and all that, of fear, is born, in sin.

And this cautery, this knife,
is really but the needle knitting,
weaving you back into the fabric
from which you went astray.
One body, only family,
one communion born of one Communion.
This is the gift you are given
in laying bare the heart.

Sweetness of love's kiss,
warmth of the tenderest embrace.
You long for this, even as, from it, you also flee,
for you fear the intensity of such a love,
and its totality.
Can such love be? Truly, can such love be?

Or is all intensity a perversion, a molestation,
a force that rips and destroys and harms?
Is there truly a tender intensity of love,
pursuing chastely the long-beloved
of the love-struck Heart?

TIME'S FABRIC (PART V)

Flee no more, my little beloved, my precious one,
for all the fabric of your life,
torn asunder, irreparable,
is not at all irreparable for me, who am Love.

You wish for the very thing you fear, I know,
and so I wish to calm fear even as I give.
All that is required of you is trust,
and trust's surrender.

You are woven in the fabric, even if you rebel.
But let it be as it always has been,
and in this find peace.
For beloved and sheltered in the one communion,
your joy is found in living the love
by which you are loved.

The threads are woven between heart and heart,

one body,
in the Body of the Son made man,
God in human flesh,
whose Body is the meeting-place of all persons,
the Place of Convergence, where all lines intersect,
and from which, freely, fully, all rivers flow.

TIME'S FABRIC (PART VI)

For time's earthly communion,
fabric-weaving and abiding,
is but a temporal expression
of my own eternal life.
Indeed it shares in the eternal already,
in each moment of time.

Do you understand this? Do you trust and see?
For all eternity, beginning without beginning,
end without end, the fullness of Now forever,
my life is one and indivisible, a pure fabric of love.

Yes, in the tapestry of eternity's masterpiece
—in which you, beloved,
and all my children, one body,
are destined by pure love and goodness to share—
the Father loves the Son
and the Son loves the Father,
and the Two are united in perfect intimacy
in the Kiss of the Spirit whom,
together, they share.

ישוע

NOW

From past to flee, the future to fabricate,
and the present moment to skim,
like the pages of a book.

This is a temptation born of our fear and our sin,
to live in the in-between that doesn't even exist,
product of our own mind and imagination.

But the fullness lives now, each moment indwelling.
Strands of the past are woven in,
beyond our comprehension,
by the weaving-work of the wonderful Weaver of tales.

And the future too is born from this,

in ways both unexpected and beautiful,
as currents deeper than our knowledge or foresight
arise at last to sight, and sing, liberated by love.

Grace lies here, in the present fullness, given.
And the past lives too, not in regret, nor in nostalgia,
in wish-it-were's or wish-it-were-not's,
but in the ever-living fullness
of God's presence to all time.

Sin washed away, grace enduring and upheld,
fostered like a seed, and sprouting,
abiding forever in the presence of the Forever One.

Surging currents from past to future,
stopping now, in this instant, without ceasing,
for Eternity is here now, intersecting, communicating,
while stretching out the warmth of embrace
to past and future,
seen, known, and loved by him for whom all is Now.

ישוע

PERFECT PRAYER

The perfection of prayer consists in spontaneity:
the babbling of a child

in the presence of the Father,
and silent resting on his lap,
secure, warm, and sweet,
and carefree playfulness in the beauty
of the world he gave,
and crying out to him
in pain and sorrow and fear,
and every other movement there may be,
without eyes turned to ideals and expectations,
without gauging oneself against
one standard or another,
without criticizing, analyzing,
or praising the self,
but simply being in his presence,
ceaselessly, and always,
such that every moment is
one unbroken communication,
one abiding living-together,
breathing in and breathing-out,
dance of love and togetherness,
of stillness and movement,

of silence and of song, listening and of speaking.

This is what it means to pray,
for each of us, unique,
and yet one single mystery
of loving relationship
in which we all share, as one Body,
one Bride, one family,
in the sweet spontaneity
and carefree abandonment
of the love shared eternally
in your very own life, God,
in that holy dance of mutual presence,
of listening and speaking,
of simple joyful being together,
of wholehearted unity,
between the Father, Son, and Spirit,
eternity without end.

ישוע

LOVE'S COMMUNICATION

Love always finds its own mode
of communication,
one indelibly unique and unrepeatable,
between heart and heart,
and yet of utmost and universal validity.

In this language,
born from the heart of encounter,
of mutual abiding between person and person,
the word—the logos—is born, a sounds.

This is why love is truth and truth is love,
and one lives not without the other,
for the Word is both, eternally.

And you, God, love to give love,
as you love equally to give truth,
to thirsting human hearts within this world.

For in the encounter between heart and heart,
as unique as it may be, as unexpected,
as unrepeatable,
the one and only Word
of love and truth is heard.

It is he, indeed, who is the true Beloved
who ravishes both hearts with his touch
and his kiss,
and fills their ears and their hearts
with his voice.

Such love endures forever, for of the Word,
and in him, it is born;
for frail human love is held
by the surety of God's love,
who delights to make himself present
at the heart of human life,
until human life is taken up, forever,
into the heart of his own Love.

ישוע

TENDER LOVER

Tender Lover,
how gently you revive the human heart.
Your touch, your presence,
is more subtle than any touch,
and you weave the fabric together
so beautifully.

It occurs in the silent depths of my heart
deeper than I can see, hear, or feel,
but this hidden work of your love
changes everything.

What months and months, years and years,
of human toil cannot even begin to achieve,
you bring to fruition
in a single moment's grace.

Be at peace, then, my soul, and rest,
for the One who loves you cares for every need.
All things happen as he wills, or in his hands,
and even what to you is inexplicable
to him is radiant, transparent to his gaze.

Only let him work, let him love,
with heart restful, pliable, and playful,
and he will do marvels
more than you could hope.

ישוע

DILATION

From the narrow dungeon of darkest depths
in which all was eclipsed, unseen and unseeable,
suffocating shame and severe constriction,
feeling blotted out from the book of life
and from the communion
of the family of your children,
and, worst of all, from your very presence,
which is Life and Love,
a simple touch of yours,
 a hidden word in the heart,
and what you have been doing
 all along peeks through.

No human experience belongs
to a mere individual alone,
for as unique and singular as it is,
precious between you and I,
it also casts ripples forth,
 and ripples also receives,
from every other heart in history's fabric,
in time's folds.

The heart, in the dungeon's narrow depths, dilates,
for all along, and more deeply now,
experience is co-experience,
and living is co-living with the hearts
 in this world,
joined together in the Body
 of the one Son of God.

He is the Convergence-Point
where we are all made one,
while remaining distinct,
indeed here affirmed most deeply,
the Home where all hearts live, move,
and have their being,
and find ourselves experiencing together,
 one and many,
all the richness in joy and hope,
 sorrow and pain,
that is proper to human life
 in time's temporal fabric.

Indeed, eternity flows on through time
as time flows towards eternity,

the current of the Trinity's life, surging ceaselessly,
and the rich life of the communion of saints,
 heaven-home,
as all experience, thought,
 and aspiration spreads,
to be shared in, as mine and yours, as ours,
in the one God
 in whom I and You and We are one.

ישוע

HEAVEN-HOMESICKNESS

Heaven-homesickness is tugging me,
this longing-filled joy, and joyful pain,
and I know not how long I can bear it.

But you, my God, always know
how to veil the beloved heart,
how to tenderly enfold, protect, and secure
your precious one in his or her vulnerability.

And this you always do,
not leaving us alone for an instant,
even in what appears to be the darkest place:
for even while on the Cross,
 Christ was veiled by you,
secure in your paternal love and care,
 and thus at rest,
able to look out with compassion
on the bleeding world,
and, beyond, with longing,
 to his true, eternal home.

I just want to hold to my heart every heart,
every person who lives
in this beautiful and broken world,
to cherish them as you cherish them,
to love with your love,
cradling in the Heart of Christ,
as in Christ's Heart I am held.

The dilation of the heart hurts,
and I feel like even a bit more
and I could bear no more.

But I am terrified to go back
to the darkest dungeon,

the desperate blackness
of prayerless loss of everything,
even if there this very longing too
is put to sleep.

I would rather bear it
even as it tears me asunder;
and so I simply welcome it, and,
at the same time, let go,
leaning into you who enfold and cradle me.

Whenever you wake up a heart to this extent,
granting them to so deeply see
and long for the eternal destiny
—the communion of all hearts
in the deepest embrace,
in communion with you,
sweetest, most blessed Three,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, glorious Trinity—
you always provide also
the means to live, to remain,
in the fragility and imperfection of this world,
for as long as you wish.

But, my God, my heart cries out,
and I know not how it will be!
Yet I am secure and at peace,
for I know that this very longing,
even though proper to my heart
through its awakening,
is also your gift,
ceaselessly given and constantly upheld.
And thus, if the heaven-torn longing
is your gift and grace,
so too will be the peace to bear it,
and, in this, to be whole.

Let this tearing, thus,
be for the making-whole of all,
that my every longing, sigh, and prayer,
echo forth,
to mediate your touch,
your ravishing sweetness, to other hearts,
that they may know your love, know your gaze,
and gaze back upon you,
sweet and beautiful One,
thus longing for you,

and in your footsteps running,
until we are all made one, eternally,
in the perfection of your embrace.

ישוע

LOOK TO BEAUTY

I.

The canvas is painted
neither all black nor all white,
but with human strokes
is always imperfectly drawn,
imperfectly executed in foresight,
choice, and act.
But you know this, God,
and accept it without difficulty,
for you know the frailty and blindness
of our hearts,
and simply take us by the hand
and lead us forward every day.

Looking back in the past,
imperfection is always seen,
for the maturation of the heart
as it continues to walk
always allows a deeper vision,
in love's redeeming light,
and a deeper liberation
of the heart's purity and transparency in love.

But this vision ought not generate shame
or alienation from self
—a temptation, however,
which is among the evil one's favored tactics,
for it binds the heart and keeps it from flying in carefree
abandonment and trust—
but above all it simply gives birth,
from the heart's womb,
to a humble gratitude for your provident,
ceaseless care.

It gives birth to humble gratefulness,
and simple praise to you,
for the seeds of goodness,
insight, love, and desire
which were present then, so beautiful, so good,
and have proved stronger
than all imperfection and disorder,

the latter which have been pruned away
in love's activity,
while the former have come
to yet deeper blossoming,
flowering forth and offering their sweetness,
in purity.

II.

Is this not the key
to joy and lighthearted heart-song singing?
To turn my gaze
to what is beautiful, good, and true,
and to allow this
to touch, attract, and draw my heart,
to lift me up, to purify me,
and to guide my steps.

There is so much that is wrong,
amiss, or imperfect
in the world, in myself,
in the state of fallen humanity,
but this should not absorb and obsess my gaze.
Rather, you direct me to it
when and as you will,
to simply lament for the darkness,
to ache in sorrow,
and then, through and beyond this,
to give birth to light anew,
to be even more attracted, drawn, and ravished,
by the light, goodness, and clarity
which alone, truly,
deserve the lasting and heartfelt attention
of our gaze.

Even when on the Cross,
with all the darkness before him,
all the darkness like arrows
violently piercing his Heart,
Christ looked not into the depths
with captivated eye,
but through the depths of darkness,
as if through a lens,
to see the spark of beauty flashing out,
the precious seed, which precisely
through his suffering compassion and solidarity
he liberates to become again, and to be,
what it was meant to be.

IN PARADISUM (A REFLECTION ON SONG)

I.

The symphony of sound
 echoing through the ages
 weaves its notes and melodies
 into history's folds,
 creating harmony
 in the midst of humanity's hurt,
 harmonizing dissonance, resolving discord,
 and bringing together in communion all, who,
 through sin, suffer from distance and isolation.

From the beginning, at the first,
 song birthed the world,
 the hymn of mutual praise
 and delighted self-giving
 between the Father and his beloved Son,
 in the Spirit of their mutual accord and love.

Ruah...like a breath of sound from a pure flute,
 or the echoing reverberation
 from a bow on a string,
 sounds forth the whole of universal creation,
 born of Eternal Love,
 and in Eternal Love conceived.

Ruah...and in this breath of life exhaled,
 a breath is inhaled, conceived,
 and breathes back in response:
 what marvel, what majestic mystery,
 what wonder!
 Man and woman stand, voiced in the one voice,
 full of word spoken in the one Word,
 and yet enfleshed,
 singing in the fabric of sinews and of bone.

“Sing, children, sing Our eternal song
 in temporal melody,
 and your song will be woven into Ours
 as measure succeeds measure,
 and movement follows on movement,
 in this majestic symphony.
 Love, as you are loved,
 give forth breath and voice

as you have been voiced,
to one another, to all creatures,
in loving affirmation,
and back to Us, Father, Son, and Spirit, who,
giving you forth from the womb of our Love,
receive you there anew,
and shall receive you eternally,
when history's trajectory has reached its end."

II.

But amidst the harmony dissonance was woven
by the disordered voice of the envious one,
and man and woman learned to sing
a song not of the Creator's giving;
the voice with which they sang was his,
and the words,
but twisted beyond recognition,
discordant, ugly,
in lustful possession, violence,
arrogant isolation,
and narrow clinging.

Lament moved the heart of the Maker,
the Singer of all songs,
and immediately at the moment
of the first discord
he sang forth words of promise and of hope
—for he knew, indeed,
that this discordance would arise,
and had planned
to sing forth healing and renewal,
so that from the very path
of redemption and restoration
a yet deeper song would sound
than that even at the first.

And so he did,
singing forth love into history's fabric,
growing in a crescendo of beauty and intensity
until he sang forth his very own Word,
his Love Incarnate,
into the measures of man's own making.

Dissonance colliding, death-dealing,
destruction-willing,
confronted the Word of Love
spoken forth in song,

and yet his sweet voice, gentle and pure,
at moments even silent,
spoke more deeply and more surely,
and overcame evil's cacophony
and death's silence
with the sweet sound of eternal dialogue:
the shared intimacy of sweetest belonging
between he and the Father,
filled to overflowing
with the echoing song of the Spirit.

And so the death-filled void of silent agony,
and the discordant noise of meaningless absurdity,
and all the pain and confusion
and loss of all times,
taken up by the Word spoken forth from God,
were overcome, healed, and renewed
in the one eternal Song.

Newness burst forth,
and wove itself into history's fabric,
making all that exists new in the one newness,
making all sing in the sweetness of the one song,
until the whole symphony of creation
is taken up, at the end,
into the everlasting song of heavenly bliss,
all creatures living and indwelling,
man and woman all,
in the innermost embrace,
the harmonious union,
of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
without end.

ישוע

AWE

The sweet subtlety of the work of God,
silent suffusion of the spirit, simple celebration,
super-affirmation of creation's goodness
even and especially in the suffering of solidarity,
but also in the tender support given each day,
and the surging currents of grace's activity,
hidden in the heart, intangible, at first,
before arising to the surface and singing forth.

I read, today, the first poem
that I wrote ten years ago,

and my heart is awed by you,
by your goodness, God,
for the mystery that enraptured me then
is the same now,
though stripped even more bare,
heart pulsing, open;
the seeds were present,
implicit or explicitly expressed,
only to take root and nourishment,
and to grow over time.

I am awed by you.

I hear you saying to me,
loving Father, in my heart:
“I love you more than you love yourself,
my child,
and so I have led you into a deeper darkness
than you thought possible,
or could have conceived.
But when you accepted that as your lasting fate,
and could see nothing else but a life of absurdity
and isolation from all
that is beautiful, good, and true,
I touched your heart
and spoke life into you anew.

“And now, trust me, beloved one,
that as I led you further then,
I will lead you further now,
further than you can even hope,
into the radiance of new life, love,
and overflowing fullness,
in the Resurrection-song
that pierces Passion’s night,
and illumines the latter
with the beauty of the former,
even as the latter persists
until the night of this life is at last dispelled
in the dawn of the eternal Day
that awaits all of humanity.

“We both wish the darkness
to persist in your heart,
for how can you separate yourself
from the shadows of this world,
from co-experience

with the experience of your brethren,
from closeness to Christ
in his path of solidarity with all?
The darkness is a light-bringer...
long ago I taught you this.
But also be ready, my child, and be open,
to the outpouring of abundant radiance
and undimmed joy,
that joy that, in faith, you have long known,
in which all the darkness and evil of this world, however
immense,
is less than a drop of water lost
in an infinite ocean of Good.

“Bear them both, my child.
This will be your pain,
and this will be your gladness.
This will be the fruitful tension of love
in which you participate,
and which Christ bore
throughout his earthly life,
and all his faithful too,
reaching across the distance, allowing love,
stretching across the space
between dark and light,
happiness and sorrow, joy and pain,
loss and utter redemption,
to weave together the fabric torn asunder,
making it whole again.”

ישוע

PRAISE BE FOR POVERTY

A tea stain on the table, shaped like a half circle,
from where a coaster wasn't used;
ruffled blankets twisted in artistic carelessness
at the foot of an unmade bed;
marks on the hardwood floor
from the heel of a boot
or where that bookshelf scraped
when being brought in.

The dent in the door from that punch,
when anger overcame him, and pain,
and the unused rooms filled with hollow hopes
and failed expectation,
open to dependent destitution,

the sweet gift at the ground of all holiness:
to possess nothing in simply being possessed,
to be utterly destitute, with empty hands,
that he may find rest and security
in God's hands alone.

Praise be to you, loving Father,
for the little things,
for the messiness of life, and the scars,
and the wounds that gape open
for graced outpouring.
Heal them, yes, heal them abundantly,
for they hinder our communion
with you, and our joy;
but praise to you in the process,
and the providence,
such that the marks then
become marks of beauty,
touched, healed, and made beautiful by you.

Sweet mercy in the mystery;
teach us to sink down
into poverty's dependency,
to find the freedom simply
to cherish our littleness,
to cherish the greatness that ever surpasses us,
and holds us,
in the loving plan and perfect provision
that is yours,
and which, from all eternity,
you have known for us,
and, in the folds and wrinkles of time,
bring to abundant fruit.

ישוע

A SINGLE ACT OF PURE LOVE

"Because we said that God makes use of nothing other than love, it may prove beneficial to explain the reason for this before commenting on the stanza. The reason is that all our works and all our trials, even though they be the greatest possible, are nothing in the sight of God. For through them we cannot give him anything or fulfill his only desire, which is the exaltation of the soul. Of these other things he desires nothing for himself, since he has no need of them. If anything pleases him, it is the exaltation of the soul. Since there is no way by which he can exalt her

more than by making her equal to himself, he is pleased only with her love. For the property of love is to make the lover equal to the object loved. Since the soul in this state possesses perfect love, she is called the bride of the Son of God, which signifies equality with him. In this equality of friendship the possessions of both are held in common, as the Bridegroom himself said to his disciples: *I have now called you my friends, because all that I have heard from my Father I have manifested to you* (Jn. 15:15). ...

The soul, indeed, lost to all things and won over to love, no longer occupies her spirit in anything else. She even withdraws in matters pertinent to the active life and other exterior exercises for the sake of fulfilling the one thing the Bridegroom said was necessary (Lk. 10:42), and this: attentiveness to God and the continual exercise of love in him. This the Lord values and esteems so highly that he reprimanded Martha when she tried to call Mary away from her place at his feet in order to busy her with other active things in his service; and Martha thought that she herself was doing all the work and Mary, because she was enjoying the Lord's presence, was doing nothing (Lk 10:39-41). Yet, since there is no greater and more necessary work than love, the contrary is true. The Lord also defends the bride in the Song of Songs, conjuring all creatures of the world, referred to by the daughters of Jerusalem, not to hinder the bride's spiritual sleep of love or cause her to awaken or open her eyes to anything else until she desire (Sg. 3:5).

... She should not become involved in other works and exterior exercises that might be of the slightest hindrance to the attentiveness of love toward God, even though the work be of great service to God. For a little of this pure love is more precious to God and the soul and more beneficial to the Church, even though it seems one is doing nothing, than all these other works put together.

...Great wrong would be done to a soul who possesses some degree of this solitary love, as well as to the Church, if we were to urge her to become occupied in exterior or active things, even if the works were very important and required only a short time. Since God has solemnly entreated that no one awaken a soul from his love (Sg. 3:5), who will dare do so and remain without reproof? After all, this love is the end for which we were created.

Let those, then, who are singularly active, who think they can win the world with their preaching and exterior works, observe here that they would profit the Church and please God much more, not to mention the good example they would give, were they to spend at least half of

this time with God in prayer... They would then certainly accomplish more, and with less labor, by one work than they otherwise would by a thousand. For through their prayer they would merit this result, and themselves be spiritually strengthened. Without prayer they would do a great deal of hammering but accomplish little, and sometimes nothing, and even at times cause harm. God forbid that the salt should begin to lose its savor (Mt. 5:13). However much they may appear to achieve externally, they will in substance be accomplishing nothing; it is beyond doubt that good works can be performed only by the power of God." (John of the Cross, *Spiritual Canticle*, 28:1; 29:1-3)

I.
You touched me so deeply
 through these words, my God,
when I was young, and so ravished by you;
and they still stand true before me today,
though now purified and clarified,
 made transparent,
correcting the imbalance
 and the unnecessary dichotomy,
and harmonizing all in love's true center,
 its heartbeat,
in the embrace of the Heart of Jesus Christ,
in your own Trinitarian heartbeat
 as Father, Son, and Spirit.

For it is true that your work alone
 redeems the world,
your work alone saves sinful hearts from sin
and wounded hearts from the shackles of their fear,
and accomplishes all other good, whatever it may be,
as a gratuitous gift pouring out
 from your generosity,
even if such gifts appear to be, and are,
mediated through human prayer and activity.

One act of pure love is worth more
 than all other works put together:
this is simple truth,
 for every person in every single life.
What can we truly give to you,
 but ourselves, but love,
but the openness of heart to receive your gift,
your outpouring of your very self,
 in the Spirit, into us,

harnessing our reciprocal gift to you in response?

Yes, what do you desire
but wedding human hearts to yourself,
but intimacy, communion
in the life of the divine Persons,
each one of your children
breathing forth the Holy Spirit
in union with the eternal breathing
of the Father and the Son?

What sacred happiness,
what breathtaking beauty, what glory,
that you have made us to breathe
with you the very Breath you breathe,
already in this life, though imperfectly,
and for all eternity
in the undimmed fullness
and unmediated embrace of everlasting Joy!

And this mystery of sharing in your life and love,
it touches us, not just in the apex of our humanity,
the still-point of the spirit
beyond our bodies and our life,
but rather descends into the rich fabric
of our everyday experience,
sanctifying it all from within, making it holy:
that these bodies of flesh are temples of the spirit,
that our work, activity, play, and rest
becomes a ceaseless act of pure love,
born of love's purity,
and our very human communion with one another
is a transparent reflection and participation
in your own eternal life
of intimacy as Father, Son, and Spirit.

Yes, each person can find their life
written in these words,
their longing to encounter,
at the heart of every moment,
the heartbeat of gratuitous intimacy and joy,
the playful communion of love,
the kiss of Lover and beloved.

It is for this that we, your children, long:
the pure for-its-own-sake-ness
of love and communion,

which alone gives meaning to all else, in fullness,
and also transcends all else
in the pure togetherness of hearts in love.

And this will be our everlasting gladness
when this life is passed,
and the whole world is re-created, made new,
in perfect transparency
to the uncreated life of the Trinity,
and each and every created thing, and person,
affirmed and cherished uniquely
precisely in this space.

II.

And you also speak to me, uniquely,
through these words,
and yet so far beyond them, too, in the heart,
telling me anew of your loving plan for me,
your gift,
that my heart's desire and spirit's song for so long
has been guided by you, and by you matured.

For you indeed do wish for me to abide, uniquely,
in a place of solitude, silence, prayer, and play,
at the heart of my littleness and poverty,
for my sake and for the sake of all the world,
in the midst of the humble destitution of my life,
in which you are my only security and safety,
in whom my frailty and smallness
is cradled in your love,
and my human communion, too,
sheltered and safeguarded
in its unique sacredness, its holiness in your sight,
as your gift, your manifestation, your delight.

A life of pure love, gratuitous and free,
useless in the eyes of the world,
but precious in your sight:
the beauty of prayer and togetherness.

So simple it is, so vulnerable, so small,
but the most important thing of all,
made present in each and every life, uniquely,
is made present for me too, here.

You give this gift to me, to abide in me,
and to bear fruit,

in living my humble life of prayer,
in illness and incapacity,
in the stillness of the heart at rest,
and its longing dilation,
in ceaseless wonder and play born of faith,
in the joy of filial belovedness and nuptial belonging,
in the gratuitous wonder that is your gift to us,
in the pure love of which the words speak,
so beautifully,
and yet also more human, more humble,
more flesh-and-blood;
and in equal measure, though secondarily,
flowing from this primal place of intimacy,
God, with you,
you manifest this gift, and make it live,
in the beauty of human communion,
in looking with your eyes of love upon the person
entrusted to me by you, to be with me here,
and in her loving, with you, all the world,
that the world may find and know
your goodness and love,
and find fulfillment in your embrace eternally.

Yes, this most humble and simple life, my God,
is a witness, also, for all persons,
of that central mystery,
that pure gratuity of love and intimacy
that you desire
to have with us, Bridegroom of the bride,
Father of the child,
the intimacy for which you have created us,
union with you,
the true and everlasting rest of the restless heart,
and oh...so beautiful and lovable in yourself,
eternal Beauty, eternal Goodness, you who are Love!

And this central mystery is also manifest, alive,
in looking out, from this most intimate embrace,
upon your world with the light of your own gaze,
alive and active, so rich, so full, so beautiful,
affirming and cherishing each person
with your own love,
and playing in every moment and every thing,
in the gaze of lighthearted contemplation,
your delight,
and lifting all up into the consummating space
of your embrace.

And, finally, it is manifest in your desire
for us to have such intimacy,
such blessed communion,
in you, with one another,
children of the same Father,
man and woman, son and daughter,
siblings and friends,
sheltered and held in the communion that is yours,
made present in us, among us,
and carrying us, at last,
to consummation in you who are eternal Intimacy:
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, without end.

ישוע

SWEET RESTORER

I.

What is your beautiful work of restoration,
nursing back to health this battered heart,
torn and bleeding, scarred and hurting?

Sweet Restorer of all that is lost,
Healer of all that is broken,
you put us back together, piece by piece,
with the adhesive of your grace,
the thread of your love.

You make us whole,
not in our selves alone, enclosed,
but only in ceaseless dependency upon you,
as it was in the beginning,
and was always meant to be:
pure childlike reliance
on the love of the perfect Father,
and spousal receptivity and reciprocity
before the Bridegroom-Son,
in the bond of the Spirit
who is Gift and Communion,
cherished in himself, a beloved Person,
the radiant fruit and fecundity
of the eternal kiss and embrace
of the Father and the Son.

Right in the midst of this eternal Intimacy,
we were conceived,
in the tender thought and intention
of your Love;

and from this inmost mystery
of the blessed Trinity,
we were created, fashioned
by the outpouring of Love's fecundity,
a gift manifesting Love's inner nature,
yet wholly free and chosen,
a superfluous act and overflowing delight
of the delight of Love
which has always and already
been perfectly full and complete.

You fashioned us to share in this fullness,
abundantly,
from the abundance that communicates itself,
not out of need,
but out of sheer generosity,
out of abundant happiness,
like water that, overflowing its bounds,
refuses to be contained.

And yet, indeed, when we were fashioned,
freely, by free Love,
Love longed for us and desired us,
incarnations of beauty that we are,
with an inner movement of tender affection,
heartfelt delight,
and drew near to us to enfold us
in your own gift,
and to receive our reciprocal surrender
back to you,
that through this gift we may share
in your inner being,
in the life of pure love and intimacy
that is eternally yours,
as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
in everlasting delight.

How then, in the fragments of time,
do you restore our hearts,
wounded as they are by sin, trauma, and suffering,
so far from the fullness that you,
in the beginning, willed?

You simply weave,
loving God of infinite tenderness,
through every moment of time,
in your mysterious way,

with the surety and certainty
of perfect wholeness to come,
and the cherishing love
that delights in our beauty
even in each moment of time's healing process,
bathed already in eternity's light,
and by eternity intersected,
such that, before your gaze,
we already shine with undimmed beauty,
even as this beauty comes to fruition,
in time, only over time.

For to you, the fabric is still whole and entire,
broken and restored by grace
from eternity's perspective,
such that all of our woundedness and pain,
our whole life's journey,
is seen from the standpoint of our eternal destination, our
true home,
where we stand before you,
whole and entire, restored,
in the truth of our being healed by you,
and in you fulfilled,
in the intimacy of your own life
that has become ours too.

II.

How do you desire to restore
this unique heart and life,
my loving Father, that you have given to me,
and is yours,
broken and bleeding as it is,
through this path of pain?

How do you wish for me to abide, in fullness,
in the fullness of the life and love
that you sing into me,
and which my heart wants to sing back to you,
and to sing to and for
each of my brothers and sisters,
without ceasing, through every moment of life,
and forever?

I am scared to accept it and live it, Father,
because I am so scarred by the loss of all;
I am scared of my own blindness and folly,
of interpreting my own hopes and desires

as your true and certain will, given freely,
and thus to hurt you and others
through my blindness.

But it was your sweet and loving plan, Father,
that led me so, guiding
even through my folly and mistakes,
to a place of humble fullness
and clarity in simplicity:
the place littlest and least, the lowest,
where rest is found in fullness,
and the fullness dwells
in utter poverty and dependency.

I should not fear, therefore,
to accept what you give,
not clinging to it, not possessing,
but being possessed
by the tenderness of your Love
ever holding me;
to be buoyed up, to be enfolded,
by your goodness,
manifest in the story that you are writing,
and want me to write, too,
with my hand cradled in your own.

What then?

The deep inner stillness, the abiding presence,
of unmediated contact with you,
Holy Trinity, in prayer,
in contact with that breathtaking Beauty,
that Mystery,
which, sober and quiet on the outside, so hidden,
is radiant abundance
and echoing song deep within,
sending forth ripples
from the humble littleness of this moment,
to echo forth in other hearts
for their enrichment and their good.

This is the center-point, the still-point,
the place of Convergence,
where you have called me to abide,
to dwell with undivided attention,
receiving what pours forth
from your Heart here,

in the Paschal Christ,
in the inner mystery of the divine life
of Father, Son, and Spirit,
breathing forth your silent breath,
your fullest Word beyond all words,
in the rich meaning
 that surpasses limited expression,
but touches, ravishes, and holds the heart
intimately in silence.

And this central reality,
 this unmediated contact,
pure gratuitous intimacy with you for its own sake, pure
beauty,
present with a fullness, an intensity,
in these prolonged moments,
the primal disposition and act
of my humble life each day,
also lives in every other moment too,
 in life's one fabric,
in act and word, play and work,
 suffering and joy,
in solitude and togetherness, silence and speech.

For the heart that knows true silence
is silent even in voice,
and hears the voice of Love even in the silence;
and the heart that knows true solitude
is, in solitude, together,
and in togetherness dwells in the inner solitude of the
self's identity before you,
abiding naked before your gaze, defenseless,
in the security that you give.

Prayer and play, solitude and togetherness,
silence and speech,
all of these shall dance, Father,
in the uniqueness that you give,
and I only need to walk the path that you set before me,
heart in heart,
and to write this story
with my hand cradled securely in your own,
which really means to let the story be written for me, and
through me,
as I simply open, receive, and rejoice,
letting all born of me flow back to you.

THE TRUE SPIRIT OF THE GOSPEL

The true spirit of the Gospel is lightheartedness,
humor welling up

from the deep springs within,
and overflowing in the radiant smile of the face,
the glow in the eyes, and echoing laughter.

For how can I truly laugh like this,
how can I sing,
how can I rejoice and play so freely,
and so deeply,
—with authentic joy,
and not the facade painted on the face—
unless I know that I am infinitely loved
by the perfect Father,
and in his embrace cradled,
cherished, and cared for?

Indeed, the beloved heart comes to know
that not only am I held
by the Father's enfolding love,
but the whole world itself,
through thick and thin,
is in the arms of perfect goodness,
a goodness that,
already, has redeemed and saved the world,
even if all the kinks are still being worked out.

What, ultimately, have I to do then,
but to open my eyes and my heart
and to witness the beautiful work
unfolding before me?

What have I to do but to let myself be swept up
into this radiant romance and sweet symphony
that surges like a current of humor-filled hilarity
and sober lightheartedness, singing like a child:

this Love that flows forth
from the inner heart of God
and drenches the world in his peaceful presence,
even as it gathers up all the world, heals it,
and carries it back to God anew,
there to find rest
in the light of his face, his radiant smile,

and to share in the delight of his laugh, his joy,
for all eternity without end,
in reciprocal jubilation.