Journeys of the Spirit

Katharina Manassis
Journeys of the Spirit: Daily Reflections on Traveling With and Towards the Sacred

Welcome.

This is a collection of reflections about experiences that relate to the Sacred, God, the Ground of Being, or whatever you conceive the Spiritual Basis of Life to be. I use the term ‘God’ in many of the reflections because it is familiar to me, but similar terms from other traditions could be used as well. The title of the collection refers to journeys for two reasons: the reflections were written over several years of quiet contemplation while commuting to work on a train; and my belief that the spiritual aspect of life constitutes a journey for each of us, as we travel both with and towards the Sacred.

The ideas presented here are idiosyncratic, based on one person’s experiences and biased by her perspective (North American, white, female, middle-aged, widow, working mother). They are not always consistent. They are not always entirely original, but often a fresh take on old wisdom. They are sincere though and, I hope, a window onto the human quest for something beyond ourselves, or perhaps something better within.

Also, over the years that these reflections were written, some of my thinking has changed. In the beginning I was much more focused on the nature of God. Having lost faith in myself, I needed something Greater to believe in. I found not one but many versions of the Sacred, suggesting that there are as many avenues to spirituality as there are seekers. Nevertheless, the avenues are human constructions; the Reality remains one.

Later, I became more interested in the nature of godly living, and what has prevented it from becoming the norm rather than the exception. The words from Micah “walk humbly with your God” rang true. Walking with God came to mean seeing what God sees: a mosaic of billions of unique and poignant lives that can only form a complete picture when they join, and recognize the Sacred in one another and beyond. It also meant seeing with sadness what prevents that joining: the poverty, injustice, and competitive, dehumanizing systems that focus each on his or her personal, immediate survival, even at the cost of the global environment that is needed for our long term survival as a species; the insecurities borne of generations of war and abuse that leave us vulnerable to empty promises of glory, even at the cost of our ability to see life’s Miracle in the other and in our planetary home; an ability that is needed for lasting peace. Walking humbly came to mean knowing that there is always more than our personal ideas, ideals and experience; that we only find meaning when the self dissolves in a greater Solution; that love is an unearned gift from the Sprit; and that wonder can never die, as it is inspired by the eternal Unknown.
Exploring the ‘Journeys’

These reflections can be read in two ways. First, they can be read section by section. Although there is some overlap, the first five sections relate mainly to different and (I believe) complementary aspects of the Sacred; the latter sections relate mainly to ways one may encounter the Sacred in life. Thus, you can pick a section in order to read a set of reflections about one type of experience related to the Sacred. Then, read another section, and so on. Return to the sections or reflections that ring true. Ignore the ones that don’t.

Alternatively, try reading a reflection each day. If you commute on a bus or train, try using that time. If not, try to find another time when you are unlikely to be disturbed and can be alone with your thoughts and feelings. Dwell on the reflection, respond to it in whatever way you are inspired to, and take that thought or feeling into the day. If read daily, the reflections will take you through about a year.

If you value what you find, share it with others.

Dedication:

To all I have loved, whether they are with me or with God.
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1. **God in the Light**

There are times when we seem bathed in God’s peace, as in sunlight on a beautiful clear day. We experience wonder at what has been created for us, within as well as without.

*Everywhere*

Some say You are in the mountains’ splendor

Some say in the sunset’s glow

Some say in the miracle of birth

Some say in the first sign of spring

Perhaps You are in all of these

But looking further too…

In each smile of recognition

Each new understanding gained

In the sigh of relief after harm is escaped

In every fond memory

In laughter at one’s own expense

In hope that returns from the ash

In the silent peace of a favorite prayer

In the soul-stirring pulse of a drum

In every instant of meaningful life

In every place without fear

In every wonderful thing out there

In everything, in here
Connection

When we connect with God

Nothing is impossible

Nothing is shameful

Nothing is unbearable

Nothing is wrong with life.
Fearless

In faith, I need not fear
I need not fear pain
I need not fear anger
I need not fear being alone
I need not fear the crowd
I need not fear failure
I need not fear success
I need not fear tomorrow’s possibilities
I need not fear yesterday’s demons
I need not fear the night
I need not fear the day
I need not fear others
I need not fear myself
I need not fear death
I need not fear life
For life, death, time, place, others,
And my own troubled soul
All reside in God.
Your way

My way is straight as the crow flies
Your way meanders like an old stream
    My way is cruel to stragglers
Your way works with their strengths
    My way feigns independence
Your way accepts help with thanks
    My way hoards for the future
Your way gives everything now
    My way is walked with pride
Your way is walked with grace
    My way is rooted in sand
Your way is perennial
    My way is angry and fearful
Your way is peaceful and loving
    And leads me Home
Unknown Future

I can’t predict the unknown,
I can’t control the unknown,
I can’t plan for the unknown,
I can’t prevent the unknown,
I can only trust God
To be there with me in the unknown
Whatever it may be
Certainty

In life
Nothing is certain
Nothing is predictable
Nothing is secure
But this:
That within you
And within me
Lie the seeds of God
If only we seek them
And nurture them
In ourselves
And in each other
In the Garden

Some plant, and water, and fertilize
Then watch each day for growth
Desperate to see results,
Whether in the garden,
In their projects at work,
Or in their children;
Others plant, and water, and fertilize
Then step away,
Knowing that what they have started is good
And the rest is up to God.
Another Way

In those moments
Where I am caught between two impossibilities
And ordinary reason fails
But a new, third option suddenly appears,
And I see a way out
God seems there
In the paradigm shift
The Gift

Life is too grand a gift
To ever earn
Or deserve
Or repay the Giver
All we can do is say thanks
And make the most of the gift
And no cruel or stupid human vice
Can take away the gift
Or remove us forever from God;
God doesn’t keep score
But holds us
Heals us
And encourages us
To find a better way
Until all of our gifts can shine
Revealing a beautiful world
Freedom

Fear says
Hang on to your job
Hang on to your land
Hang on to your reputation
Hang on to your time
Hang on to your spouse
Hang on to your salvation

God says
Let go of what’s yours
Let go of you
Receive all life
Be free
Climbing

In my life
I have trodden the narrow path
And scaled the walls of rock
And hung by my fingers over the abyss
Always looking up to the summit
Tiny pinpoint in the sky
If only I were there,
Not realizing
That You are the mountain
And whether I stand
Whether I fall
Whether I ascend to the peak
Or languish in the depths
I am one with You
Seeing

When I felt wretched
You said I was fine
When I felt alienated
You said I belonged
When I felt burdened
You said I was free

When I looked inward darkly
You showed me the world

And light
The Day

God is in the joy of the new day

The certainty of knowing what must be done with it

The strength to do it

And the peace of trusting it will end well
There

There is no hunger
No emptiness
No loneliness

In God
There is no fear
No humiliation
No confusion

In God
There is no rage
No despair
No retribution

In God
There is only God

There
I Am Thankful

For the chance to hug my children
For laughter with close friends
For music, warm baths, and good food
For the moments of serenity
When I am not tormented by the past
Or threatened by a dire future
For the moments of infinity
When the strand of my life disappears
And the Fabric comes into focus
For surprising strength in a difficult spot
For recovery from predictable lapses
For the wisdom to find ever more to learn
Ever more to do and improve on
Yet know there is a time to recharge
A time to ask for help
And eventually a time to come Home
You Are...

The Peace that calms the torrent
The Love that knows no bounds
The Hope that rebuilds in the rubble
The Color when grey surrounds
The Home where none are outsiders
The Joy that overflows
The Cradle that all are rocked in
Life’s Ocean where all are known
Abundance

God is not like the man

Who invested a certain amount of time

And a certain amount of energy

And a certain amount of money

Expecting a certain return.

God gives what is needed

As a mother to her child

With no thought of compensation

God is here, now,

Offering everything
*God Plays*

Fun

Curiosity

Surprise

Awe

These things may not have a direct payoff

But life would be dreary without them

And, once in a while,

They jostle the gates of the soul

Enough for God to peek in
"Ever There"

No pit is so deep that You can’t draw me out
   No path is too twisted to find me
   No act too repulsive to turn You away
   No rage so severe You give up
Always I return, or You lead me home
   I do not know which it is
But there You are in the chant that fills
   The cracks in my broken-down soul
In the good-natured jab from a friend of few words
   In the gentle walk with no goal
In the hope for tomorrow that helps me go on
   In the kind words I speak to my child
In the courage to stand up for peaceful ways
   In the wonder at all that is wild
Thank You

For gaps in the daily frenzy
For the eye of the turbulent storm
For the part of the race that goes downhill
For the ceasefire in every war
For the chance to regroup and rekindle
A love for life that is real
For the chance to meet and mingle
With people not afraid to feel
With me

When I celebrate life
God celebrates with me

When I suffer or inflict suffering
God weeps

When I am timid
God encourages

When I lose my way
God waits for my return

When I succeed or bring out the best in others
God rejoices

When I fail
God forgives

When I was born
God welcomed

When I die
God will abide
Extraordinary Things

Hope, respect, empathy

Draw us together

Until we seek something better for all

Awe, wonder, reverence

Displace petty personal pride

As we melt into a greater Whole

Joy, humor, gratitude

Lift us from the daily grind

Helping us believe in Love
God Within

There is a Place within
Where you feel a solid Ground
Where things beyond reason make sense
Where Light can always be found
Return to it often and rest there a while
Remember the paths if you can
Be connected with Strength
Beyond strength that you have
Find Hope for yourself and all life
Dwell in the Dream of a better world
Then go out and make it real
Already There

In God there is no time

So I am already

All that I hope to be

I live already

In gratitude and awe

I receive already

The blessings of all my ancestors

I create already

The peace that I yearn to find

I know already

The potential of all those I care for

I feel already

The connection with all humankind

I am already there

In God
2. **God in the Shadows**

God is there in our darkest days: carrying us when all strength is gone, suffering with us and with all tortured souls, whether we know it or not.

**This Day**

Even when I cannot see

The land of my dreams

I can still get through this day

Diligently

Thoughtfully

Patiently

Courageously

Compassionately

Honorably

With God
Churning Waters

Sometimes there’s a comforting, steady rhythm
That pushes towards shore
And I trust
Sometimes there’s the gentle caress
Of water lapping my feet
And I am thankful
Sometimes there is total calm
I sense You in the silence
And I pray
But often massive swells rise up
Threatening to swallow the shore
And I cannot see You
Then whitecaps whipped by brutal wind
Crash in an endless roar
And I cannot hear You
Tiny needles of spray
Pepper my cheek till it’s numb
And I cannot feel You
Why does life make it so hard to find You?
Carried

God does not send misfortune

God carries through misfortune

Until we can walk again

To where we are hopeful

Compassionate

And whole
Home

Sanctuary

Rest

Refreshment for my soul

Cradle

Holding

Securely until I let go

Mother

Father

Enveloping Spirit of Love
Shepherd

Whatever my weakness
    God is with me
Whatever the limits of my mind
    God is with me
Whatever turmoil in my soul
    God is with me
Whatever memories bind me
    God is with me
Whatever dread and trembling
    God is with me
Whatever pain, despair and darkness
    God is with me
    And so I am whole
    And so I am safe
    And all will be well in time
Being

Thank you God

For being there

Even when I walk past your door

Even when I forget about You

Even when I act as in a dream;

Thank you God

For being there

Guiding me

Carrying me when needed

Sharing grief and joy

Thank you God

For being there

Thank you God

For being
Surviving the Mine

Sometimes I have to look back at the Light
   Glistening on the lake of my soul
   Even as I head into darkness
   Thankful to have seen It
   And felt its warmth
   Able to recreate, at least in part
The feeling of being washed by its glow
   Even as the grime settles into my pores
   Trusting I will find It again
   When I emerge from the mineshaft
   That is my daily life
   Into the glorious Shine
Child of God

To a child of flawed, human parents

It is hard to imagine being a child of God

There are so many uncertainties for the human child,

And everything is known with God

As a child of God

All hurts are healed

All illnesses cared for

All upsets soothed

A child of God is wanted and valued

Even when arriving unexpectedly

Or not achieving

Or not trying to please

A child of God

Always has a place to belong

And be loved

Even if the human child

Forever presses her nose against cold glass

Yearning for warmth
Being with God

Belonging for who I am
Rather than what I do
Being accepted and at peace
Regardless of my guilt or innocence
Feeling I matter
Without needing to be special
Coming home
For my tattered soul to mend
This is what is missing in my human experience
This is being with God.
Rocking Gently

If I can cradle my child
I can cradle myself
Even if I have never been cradled
   By another
   For all cradles
Are gently rocked by God
Patience

When I cannot feel anything spiritual

When I am overcome

By fear

By doubt

By anger

By despair

God is there

Patiently awaiting my return

Keeping me out of the abyss

Until I can climb again
Worthwhile

When I cannot change it
When my best efforts fail
When it’s beyond my control
When the quest is proven futile
I can still find something worthwhile
Not by hiding away in shame
But by stepping out
Lending a hand
Providing direction
Offering comfort
Healing my wounds
Saying a prayer
Watching white rays split the clouds
And knowing I still live in God
When I think of home,

I think not of the disturbed and disturbing

Environment of my youth

But of being at home:

At home in the universe,

Accepted and belonging here

Held by the Creator

Securely

Peacefully

Completely

Everywhere

And always

Home
Joining God

Whatever was missing in life
Is completed now

Whatever was unfinished in life
Is done

Whatever was blocked in life
Is freed now

Whatever was broken in life
Restored
God knows

God knows
I have all I need
But a greater sense of compassion
God knows
I am all I must be
And have a place in this world
God knows
I have done all I must do
So am free to make a difference
God knows this
And in God
So do I
Hope

At some point
This senseless, shameful, guilty, painful experience
Will seem meaningful
At some point
Its purpose will be obvious
The shame will transform into empathy
The guilt will spawn constructive change
The pain will end;
But some point is not now
I cannot make it happen
I cannot figure it out
I cannot conjure it up
I cannot anticipate how it will work;
I can only believe
That some point will come
In God’s time
Perspective

As it happened

It felt like shards of glass
Cutting the flesh from my bones

Years later

I looked back at the shards
As through a kaleidoscope
And saw a magnificent pattern

And all I had to do

Was keep living
And keep looking

Until I saw things

From God’s point of view
My ability to feel the spiritual waxes and wanes
   But You are constant
My ability to feel hopeful waxes and wanes
   But You are constant
My self-absorbed thinking waxes and wanes
   But You are constant
My self-control waxes and wanes
   But You are constant
My compassion for others waxes and wanes
   But You are constant
My energy and patience wax and wane
   But Your are constant
Nothing I am is consistent but this:
   That I am loved as I am
   Consistent or not
   Never beyond Your reach
Thankful

I will not wait
For mountaintop wonder, for breathtaking sunsets,
Or for oceanic, universal love
Before I thank God
I am thankful for every day
That my son wakes from a nightmare, not a seizure
That my daughter catches up on her homework
That my aging parents are well
That my boss is kind
That my colleagues are helpful
That I can talk to a friend
That I don’t feel overwhelmed
Or that I feel overwhelmed but survive it
I am thankful whenever the turmoil stops
And my soul, for that day, can rest
Holy Ground

I accomplish a great feat
And forget the advantages
That made it possible
Proud of my success
I am struck down by a random hurt
And cry “unfair”
Denying my own contribution
To the mess
I jump for joy
Then rail against despair
Again and again
Meanwhile
The Universe hums
Deeply, gently, profoundly
Beneath my human chatter
Sacred Foundation
Everywhere
Always
There

When I focus on God daily
I can trust that God is there
And stop thinking about God all the time
I focus on the task at hand
Secure in the knowledge
That I am doing what is good
And that if I drift away from the good
I can return to it again
As a child to its loving mother
Who is always there
Leaving

What I cannot predict
What I cannot control
What I cannot deny
What I cannot understand
I can leave with God
When I can do nothing further
When nobody can help
When I cannot live with what I am
When I cannot live without what I lack
I can leave it to God
After the hope is crushed
After the meaning is gone
After the thorns tear the heart
After the soul turns to stone
I have nothing to leave
But God is there
Loss

Someone I love dies

And I blame myself

Or blame others

Or blame God

Because it is easier to blame

And believe someone had the power to stop it

Than to accept

That it just happened

And cannot be changed

Only mourned and lived through

With God’s help
Unburdened

Lighten the load
Finish the doable
Cancel the unnecessary
Let go the impossible
Then forge ahead
Lighten the load
Ignore the displeased
Agree to disagree
Say ‘no’ with a smile
Get some help
Lighten the load
Remove the clutter
Indulge the senses
Attend to the moment
Be free
Lighten the load
Keep well what matters
Give away the rest
Reach out and be reached
Say a prayer…
And there is no load
Try

Even in a sleepless stupor

Unbathed and nauseous

We try

Even in a joyless time

Of unintentionally inflicted pain

We try

Even when the mind is stuck

And the feeling well is dry

We try

Even when the words are rote

And the tune is sung off-key

We try

Even when self-respect is gone

And the tunnel light is dim

We try

Knowing that we are still accepted

Still hold interest for

And still are gently, respectfully held

By the One beyond our perception

As we try
Tomorrow

When what is

Is painful

Is horrible

Is impossibly difficult

Then you have to be able to look

Beyond the present

To hope

Of sincerity

And decency

And generosity prevailing

Regardless of what is happening today.

Sometimes God is in the moment;

Sometimes God is in the voice that says

“Don’t let the bastards get you down”
3. **God of Redemption from Suffering**

We all turn away from God, we all stray from our spiritual Centre from time to time, and become self-centered. The result is suffering. Alienated and confused, we eventually turn back. Remarkably, it’s as if we had never left. Redemption is a universal human experience.

*Cry Out Loud*

Wherever it comes from

Whatever the cause

There is a meaning to suffering

If it inspires us to do better

Or if we bear witness

So that others are so inspired

The only meaningless pain

Is pain hidden or denied
Job’s Answer

He died
A devastating, sudden death
Two years later his doctor
Discovered a new treatment
“Why did You not let him live till then?”
Was my anguished cry at the time
Now I see
That the treatment only came
When the doctor could no longer bear saying
“‘There’s nothing I can do’”
As he said to me
And then felt compelled to act.
There is a meaning
In senseless events
From a greater, god-like perspective
But we rarely see it
And never at the time
Me First

I plan revenge against a foe

Unable to forgive

I discard the weak, ineffective ones

No longer of use to me

I know these acts are malevolent

And heavy with regret;

I casually ignore a plea for help

Too busy with important things

I insult a friend, not even aware

Of my words’ life-destroying sting

My ordinary carelessness

Brings little shame or guilt

But by its frequency

Damages more than the vilest deed

The opposite of good may not be evil

But self-absorption

Until “self” dissolves in God’s dream
Problems

If a problem can be solved with money
It is easy, and it is not a real threat
If a problem can be solved
By letting go of hurt pride
It is easy, and it is not a real threat
If a problem can be solved
By seeing things from God’s perspective
It is easy, and it is not a real threat
If a problem can be solved
By praying on it
It is easy, and it is not a real threat
So many problems are easy
So few represent real threats
When we let go and let God
Attachment

Attachment to possessions:
  Sources of security
Attachment to relationships:
  Sources of comfort
Attachment to habits:
  Sources of reassurance
Attachment to accomplishments:
  Sources of pride
Attachment to resentments:
  Sources of self-righteousness
Attachment to timetables:
  Sources of control
Attachment to all
  That is not of God
Is attachment to the wind:
  Blowing about empty promises
  And ultimately despair
Attachment to your soul
  And the Soul of all beings
  Cannot be uprooted
  And holds fast
Projection

We are afraid
And say that God is in charge of world events

We are angry
And say that God will smite our enemies

We are confused
And say that God will make sense of things

We despair
And say that God has abandoned or punished us

We attribute these human characteristics to God
To deal with our own overwhelming emotions

Yet if we stop and pray

In silence we find

God’s peace

God’s wisdom

God’s love

Were there all along

And in that peace, wisdom, and love

We are restored

And we too can love
When God Forgives

When God forgives
I am not just absolved of guilt.

When God forgives
I am welcomed to His home
Without a doubt that I belong there

When God forgives
I am valued as a participant
In His ongoing creation
Of the best possible world

When God forgives
I am secure in His presence
Wherever I am
And for all time
The Presence

When I was disgusted with myself

When I saw only fear and guilt and self-absorption

You were there

When I had broken every rule

Committed the most heinous act

Lost all self-respect

You were there

When I had cried in despair

Raged without cause

Cynically accepted the worst

You were there

And in Your presence

My misery vanished

My self vanished

My hope returned;

For in Your presence

I was One with all that mattered

And was good

I lost myself

And was whole
Forever

You are the Still Point
Ever-welcoming my return
Ever-valuing this strange creature
Ever-holding this fragmented self
Ever-joining this community of beings
   Ever-infusing hope
   Ever-lending strength
   Ever-beckoning us to love
   Ever-knowing
   Ever-present
Ever-yearning for life’s fulfillment
   Ever-there
God’s Fool

I’m stuck in a swamp of self-absorbed rage
    I sink in the depths of self-loathing
I’m trapped in a frightening basement of pain
    I collapse into emptiness
Yet a part of me separates out from all that
Solves puzzles, tells jokes, plays with concepts
    You show me that part
When I’m certain it’s gone
    Reconnect me with joy, and with others
You don’t give up on this self-conscious wretch:
    I escape my mind, and am wise
Unfragile

The separate self gets applause
That reverberates in its hollow core
Ever on the brink of collapse
Defending its fragile shell
That ultimately dies;
But when filled with God’s love

It breathes again
It grows again
It yearns again
For more
No longer defensive
Or broken as glass
Everlasting, unlimited
Joined with All Being

Alive
I cannot love the forest
Until I know I am a valuable tree
I cannot see the web of life
Until I have secured my strand
I can only reach to aid another
When my ship is anchored fast
I can only give away my pearls
When I know my children are safe

Trusting God’s love
I can love
Without it

I look out for number one
Time’s End

Knowing I am forgiven
I can forgive
And am freed from the past
Trusting in your Presence
I am healed
And am freed from the turmoil of today
Believing your Way will prevail
I can hope
And am freed from fearing what comes next
Becoming part of that Way
I am whole
I am grateful
I am no longer bound by time
Holy, Wholly, Holy

I am holy

Lacking much

Ever patching my Swiss-cheese soul

I am wholly

Wholly present

Listening, cheering, coaxing smiles

I am holy

As I am

Born of Love that shines from within

I am wholly

Wholly God’s

And God does not make junk
Generosity

The opposite of anxiety is not serenity
But generosity of spirit
For when anxious
We anticipate being taken from
So hesitate to give
We anticipate being harmed
So protect ourselves
We anticipate being abandoned
So cling to people
When generous
We anticipate nothing
We give
We love
We let go
We open ourselves to life
The Story

Sometimes the fear of losing

My security

My reputation

My control of my life

Causes me to sacrifice

My kindness

My wisdom

My empathy for another being;

I strive to be the hero

Defending my ideals and my honor

And lose sight of the story

And the invisible hands that comfort

And make things turn out alright;

Don’t be the hero

Be the story
Reaching for Grace

There is no peace
Without humility and respect
There is no hope
Without faith
There is no joy
Without gratitude and sharing
There is no love
Without forgiveness
What we yearn for most
Is within our grasp
If only we nurture its seeds
The Good Life

Pass along all good things you receive
Resolve not to spread the bad ones;
Pay forward every compassionate act
Vow not to abuse as you were;
For in becoming part of a Tide of goodness
We transcend individual pain
And in leaving our broken souls with God
We become whole
What It’s All About

It’s not about whether you hurt me or heal me
It’s not about whether you treat me fairly or unfairly
It’s not about whether you respect me or humiliate me
It’s not about you
It’s not about whether I help you or not
It’s not about whether I thank you or not
It’s not about whether I apologize or not
It’s not about me
It’s about striving in every moment
To contribute to what is best
Or to allow what is best to emerge
So that the Best in the universe can manifest
More and more each day
Hope

Hope is not a count-down
To better times ahead
Hope is not a promise
Of heaven when you’re dead
Hope is not a child
Who may be great one day
Hope is not the belief that God
Will answer what you pray
Hope is knowing in your heart
That with you in the dark
Is Peace, is Strength unfathomable
Until the curtains part
And when the Light within returns
You will not hide its glow
But be a beacon for all you touch
Wherever you may go
And when your candle flickers dim
There always will remain
A myriad lights to spread the Shine
Displacing fear and pain
Respect

Respect yourself
And others will start to respect you

Respect others
And your enemies will be few

Respect your children
And free them from your burdens

Respect the truth
And all will learn and grow

Respect God
And your foolish pride will vanish

Respect all life
And become an agent of Peace
Sacred Observer

There is a part of me
That is more than my thoughts
More than my feelings
More than my pain
There is a part of me
That is not tied to my history
Tied to my culture
Tied to my plans
This part of me
Sees me as if from a distance
Chuckling at the pride
Weeping at the abuse
Of self and others
This part of me
Is ever-curious
Ever-giving
Ever-true
This part of me
Does not belong to me
But to All
Death and Rebirth

When my self-conscious self dies

I can smile at my critics

Like the commuter who called me a roadblock

An object to be pushed aside

Or the reviewer who shredded my work

Five years of blood, sweat, and tears.

I can stop needing honors

Knowing I can do good

Whether recognized for it or not.

I can stop seeking fulfillment

Knowing I am whole

As long as I follow a just path

When my self-conscious self dies

I lose my public face,

Release what is best inside,

And walk as I worship:

With God
"Seeds"

The times of darkness

Of silence

Of bitterness

Of loneliness

Of pointlessness

Of ridiculousness

Of cruelty

Of despair

Like frozen ground

Hold the seeds of wondrous things to come

That we cannot imagine

And years from now

May even seem like blessings in disguise

As we reach a different point of view;

Don’t give up

Just because nothing makes sense today

God can still reveal

Infinite possibilities
Essence

All about you that matters

Emanates from God

Whatever your history

Whatever your scars

You can leave them with God

Whatever your abilities

Whatever your loves

They come from God

Whatever you encounter

Whatever your thoughts

You can reflect on them with God

Whatever your hopes

Whatever your fears

They subside, as you rely on God

All about you that matters

Endures

As it emanates from God
Another Point of View

To know what is deepest within

I must look at myself

My thoughts, feelings, and desires

From without

As a good friend would,

As God would:

When I could see no way to go on

I suddenly saw

That I didn’t deserve to die,

So I went to the movies instead.
Our Place

There is a place
Where the Sacred and the ordinary intersect

And I laugh at my human foibles

From God’s perspective

And weep for all human sorrow

With God’s love

May I dwell in that place more often

And welcome others to inhabit it too
Smile

Life is a rollercoaster of joys and sorrows
And just when you think you can’t fall further
The ride is over;
So to find joy solely in one’s own highs
Can only result in despair
But finding joy in others’ triumphs
In celebrations with friends
In communities drawn together
In seeing life improve over time
Whether my part is acknowledged or not
This is a joy that lasts
This is a stable solace
This is God smiling on the world
And me smiling along
Destinations

What is heaven
But to have a sense of meaning and belonging
   To Something greater than oneself

What is hell
But to feel disconnected from all that matters

What is life
But the quest for heavenly moments

What is death
But the end of the search
Living Well

Enjoying seeing things improve
Whether my part is acknowledged or not
Weeping whenever a being is harmed
As if for a family member
Seeing evil as out of character
And seeking the Sacred in all
Believing that every kind act is of use
Even if its impact is unknown
Not measuring time in relation to goals
Not measuring self by achievements
Walking gently until I can walk no more
Reaching out until I can reach no more
Embracing until I can hold no more
Blessing until I can speak no more
Giving thanks for each moment
4. Ground of All Being

Sometimes I think of God more as a dimension or substrate of life than a being; or perhaps as a common bond that all beings share and that joins them in a wonderful, intricate web.

Ground of All Being

All beings are One
In the Ground of All Being
They arise from It
Are rooted in It
Are nourished by It
Are united through It
And return to It
In the Ground of All Being
There can be no hatred
For how can I hate parts of my own being?
In the Ground of All Being
There can be no loss
For how can I lose what I am joined to?
In the Ground of All Being
There can be no end
All grows, decays, dies, and re-emerges
From the Ground of all Being
The Beach

I am a grain of sand
On a beach of billions
When I try to draw attention to myself,
And think I am visionary,
I am really just silly
Or, worse yet, an irritant in someone’s eye,
For a single grain can do nothing
But move and try to move its peers
In a direction that is good
So the beach becomes a gentle place
That yields to the feet of running children
And makes a pillow for a weary head
And provides a foundation for the sea
When the tide rolls in
The Whole

See the shining vessel
Rather than the shattered glass
See the unity that could be
Rather than the broken world that is
Beauty is not found
By dissecting its components
Go beyond the pieces
To Peace
Constant

There is strength
In accepting vulnerability
There is vulnerability
In being strong while others struggle
There is joy
In feeling sustained in sorrow
There is sadness
In rejoicing alone
Feelings alternate
With the rhythms of life
What remains constant
Is our connection with other beings
And with the Ground of All Being itself
We are rooted in the same Soil
Take nourishment from the same Substrate
Even when our individual ideas and feelings
Are fickle as leaves blown by the wind
    Even when we are uncertain
If our labors will ever bear fruit
Still we draw on the same Source
    For strength, for peace
For the ability to let others bloom
And add their splendor to the world
    As if it were our own
Knowing that all have the same Origin
And dwell in the same Ground
    That endures and sustains
All that matters
Wave

I am a wave on the sea of life.

A temporary manifestation of the Eternal

I fool myself sometimes into thinking I am separate,

Just as the wave appears distinct

Before it collapses into the foam at the shore

And then merges again with the sea.

My appearance, my genetic make-up

May be unique;

But my substance is one

With all that is, all that has been, and all that is to come.

Knowing this, I am never really alone

And never far from compassion
Signs

To experience the Sea

I follow rivers

Known to eventually lead there,

Many rivers, one Destination,

Sometimes discouraged by vicious rapids

So unlike the Tranquility I seek

Or the pointless meanderings of old waters

Which seem to have forgotten their Goal

I may still perceive the Sea from a distance

By opening my ears

To the sound of Its waves in a shell,

By opening my eyes

To spot the seagull’s flight,

By smelling the salt air

Or touching the sandy ground with my feet

For the Sea’s signs are everywhere:

In a dewdrop,

In a tear in a child’s eye,

In a cloud condensed from the ocean mist;

If only I open my heart
The Web

My words reverberate
In the hollow space that is my heart:
I feel empty and alone.
Until I see past this illusion
Into the web of life
And realize that I am a string
Entangled with so many others
And I cannot be plucked
Without moving another
Or at least being heard
Even as those I am entwined with
  Slip away
Even as my own string begins to fray
  The web continues
And I am never separate from it
Never banished or unacceptable
Never imprisoned alone
Because neither is possible
  In the Web
Where all belong and are joined
  For all time
Beyond Dimensions

All are part of a sacred Realm
And that Realm is a part of all
In the complexity
The mystery
The totality
That is Life
Barefoot

We enter life naked
And walk on holy Ground
As children we feel It beneath our feet
Squish the Sacred between our toes

Then as we grow
We are made to wear shoes and socks of civilization
Then steel-toed boots to defend against harm

Until we feel nothing
But our own sweat and blisters
Let us dare to go barefoot
To be vulnerable to God

Touching our common Base
Feeling the gentle Support
Walking on Timelessness
Each of Us

If each of us is one piece of all Being
One ornament on life’s Tree
One cell of a sacred Body
One drop in the chalice of Time
So how can we not forgive?
For to diminish another
Diminishes the Whole
And to snuff another’s light
Leaves us all in a darker place
And how can we not love?
For to adore another
Is to adore the Sacred in all
And to touch another
Is to join with all humankind
The Wind

The Wind blows over the chaos
That I leave in my troubled wake
   Healing it and me
The Wind pushes ever shoreward
   As I row in frantic circles
   Keeping me on course
The Wind gently lifts my tangled hair
   Reminding me I will be guided
   If only I unfurl my sail.
The Substrate

From God we emerge

In God we live

Into God we submerge again

Wrinkles of a perennial Fabric

Ripples on an endless Stream

Photons of a holy Light

Each distinct

Yet inseparable

From its Source
Individual Life

Without this individual life
    I could not choose
    I could not change
    I could not touch
    Another’s heart;
Without this individual life
    I would not mourn loss
    I would not feel shame
    I would not diminish others
    With my pride;
To be a blessing or curse
Depends upon remembering
    What I emerged from
    And will join again,
    Where I am rooted
Sustained with all I need
The Origin, the Source, the Destination
    Of this individual life
We are

We are held

We are joined

We are filled

We are

In You
Shape-Shifters

We are waves on a living Ocean
Wrinkles in the Fabric of time
Pulses of an infinite Current
Notes in eternity’s Hymn
Rising and falling
Emerging and subsiding
Growing and dying
As the Ocean, Fabric, Current and Hymn
Go on
Sustaining us
Never separate from us
Allowing us to take form
Until it’s time to come Home
Attachment

This particular thing
This particular love
This particular honor
Are so precious to me
That I scream when they are lost
This marvelous world
This community of beings
This calling to fulfill God’s dream
Are so precious
That they can never be lost
And, as part of them,
Neither can I
Beloved

Love flows through every bloodstream

Love weathers every storm

Love cries with every tear shed

Love calls at every morn

Love holds the broken wanderer

Love heals the twilight pain

Love strengthens the defeated

Love cares, and Love remains
Tapestry

All life is woven together

No one strand lies apart

All life sustains the Blanket

With wishes from the heart

With deeds that mend the torn bits

With words that ripple on

With thoughts that guide the weaving

With Love that’s never gone
Decisions

When we decide
Based on the knowledge
That we are all part of one Body
One universal Soul
No matter how difficult it is to see
No matter how buried our sacred selves seem
No matter how distant from God we feel
Then we cannot help but decide what is best
What is life-giving
What is kind
What is generous
What shows gratitude
What shows love
What brings hope to a dying world
And joy to each broken being
Until all find their place
In the one Being
That is God
Sacred Senses

As we connect by touch
So we are joined by the Spirit
As we each eat a portion of a meal
So we each harbor pieces of God
As the rain washes over us all, without exception
So the Light bathes all that exist
As diverse sounds make a symphony
So we each play a part in God’s realm
As the Sacred enlivens our senses
The ordinary takes on new meaning
Friends’ Blessing

As we go forward
May we be mindful
Of the Spiritual Basis
Of all that is, was, and will ever be
That holds us
Joins us
And allows us to recognize the Sacred
In ourselves
And in one another
Day by day
Amen
Sacred Ties

I hear God’s voice
In the rhythm of waves
But now the lake is frozen
I feel God’s touch
In the sunset’s glow
But now the night is dark
Yet God is still there
Within life’s course
Within each breath, each day
In the cadence of footsteps
That lead me home
In the lilt of kind words I speak
In the crows-feet from smiling
With so many friends
In the muscles that lift up the weak
In every moment I wish you well
In every silent prayer
Within the bonds that join us still
Despite time’s wear and tear
5. One

When I am tempted to hang onto this image or that image of the Sacred, I need only remind myself that God is within all and beyond all that can be imagined: God is One. Yet each of us perceives God through a different window, so none has a complete picture but all of us who look sincerely, humbly, and compassionately have something to contribute to the Vision.

*Head-games*

Whether I think of the Sacred  
As a personal being, as God  
Or as the inner strength that comes  
From knowing that on some level  
I am interconnected with all that is,  
Has been, and will be  
Merely reflects my preference  
For the concrete or the abstract;  
The Source is the same.
Perception

At times I choose to perceive

God the Father

Knowing there are many other facets of God

Which are equally valid

But knowing also

That in my most tired

Numb

Angry

Wretched

Desperate moments

Tuning in to the great Spiritual Dimension

That unites all beings

May not be possible

But praying

Complaining

Confessing

And crying out to a heavenly Father

Still is.

Then I choose to perceive God the Father

Although the Father and the Spirit

Are One
Paths of Least Resistance

Because I am an introvert
I perceive the Sacred more easily in myself
Than in others
Because I am a woman
I perceive the Sacred more easily when nurturing
Than when defending truth and justice
Because I am educated
I perceive the Sacred more easily by thinking
Than by doing
Because I am a Christian
I perceive the Sacred more easily in Jesus’ sayings
Than in those of other holy ones
How limited are my perceptions!
And yet they are enough
For I am never left blind
Even in the darkest night.
Both and Neither

When I pray
For the safe return of my children
At the end of each day
I believe earnestly
In a personal, caring God

When I reflect
On the nature of the universe
And its underlying Guiding Principle
I believe in a wondrous Mystery
That cannot be named

As I drive
From somewhere I’ve been
To somewhere I’m going
It suddenly strikes me
As a sweet paradox
That God is both of these and neither
The loving Companion, Author of the cosmos,
And its deeply reverberating Soul
Are One
Imagining as we need to

We need to name God
And imagine God
When despair overtakes us
And we no longer feel God.
When hope returns,
We can experience the God that cannot be named
Or described in human terms
Then we speak of the God of despair
As a projection of the human mind
Distorted by human flaws
We pride ourselves in being more sophisticated
Than those “backward” fundamentalists
Until our fortunes change
Seekers

Some say a concrete image of God is idolatry,
And results in divisive, fundamentalist beliefs
Others say that a less tangible God is blasphemy,
That denies the scriptures and dilutes faith.

If the first group is right
What are children, mentally challenged people,
Those without access to higher education,
Or other concrete thinkers to believe in?

If the second group is right
The educated must turn off their minds to believe,
And large segments of humanity are doomed forever.

God is not bound by these human limitations:
God has room for the thinkers, the believers,

The sophisticated, the unsophisticated,

The young, the old,

The flexible, the inflexible,

The traditionalists, the reformers
And every other kind of seeker of spiritual truth
Who seeks that truth in humility and compassion
Heaven

Our Father
Who art in heaven:
The heaven within us
When at peace
The heaven around us
That could be
If we saw You in each face
The heaven beyond all time and space
That is our core, our home, and our destiny at once
The indescribable
That is simple and clear
In You
Comfort Beyond Compassion

There is a strange comfort in knowing
That God is more than the sum of human kindness
For human beings are limited and fickle
And often anything but kind
And the kind ones may die or disappear;
We each carry a godly part
But God is more than the sum of the parts:
God is eternal, indescribable
Within, without, and beyond

Thank God
Soul Food

God the Presence
Fills the chasms of the soul

God the Father
Accepts it and forgives

God the Friend
Guides it in a caring way

God the Creator
Amazes it

God the One
Makes it whole
Within, Without, Beyond

God is with us
Accepting, holding,
Redeeming from pain
God is within us
Sustaining, inspiring,
Infusing with love
Overflowing and closing
The gaps that divide us
With us, within us
And beckoning beyond us

Is God
We are

Whether energy field
Or form
Whether present
Or eternal
Whether here
Or everywhere
Whether within, or without
Or beyond all arbitrary boundaries:

You are
And because You are
I am
And we all are
That’s all that matters
All

I am one
With all that is, all that was
All that will ever be
I am one
With all that is here, all that is there
All that is everywhere
I am one
With all that is me, all that is you
All that is God
So it doesn’t matter
If I look foolish or wise
If I succeed or fail
If I am rejected or loved
If I am captive or free
If I am happy or sad
If I am well or ill
It doesn’t matter
If I am
For I am one
With All
Each of Us

The One includes
Those who pray
Those who ponder
Those who love
Those who wonder
Those who weep
Those who sing
Those who cherish
All living things
Those who give
Those who receive
Those who question
Those who believe

The One includes each
Reaches each
Heals each

Completing each being in whatever way is needed

Even when each being thinks

It has nothing in common with the others

In the One
Indescribable

All-knowing
Yet unknowable
All-loving
Needing us to love
Eternal
Yet present in each moment
Everywhere
Yet contained in each heart
Indescribable
Yet familiar
Wondrous
Yet reachable
One
More

More than my body
More than my soul
More than my thoughts
More than my goals
More than my present
More than my past
More than the words
That I think will last
More than a gospel
More than a prayer
More than a mystery
More than I dare
More than a paradigm
More than a creed
More than a comfort
More than a need
More than all this
Yet nothing at all
Containing all life
Yet breaking all walls
We are One

We are One
With all that is here
All that is there
All that is everywhere
We are One
With all that is now
All that was then
All that is yet to come
We are One
With all that is real
All that is imaginary
All that is beyond imagination
We are One
And weep for our foolish divisions
We are One
And sing for the wonder of Life
We are One
Belonging

We are God’s
Nothing can change that
We come from God
We are grounded in God
We are connected through God
We are filled with God
We are held by God
We contain pieces of God
We are accompanied by God
We are destined for God
We can never be separate from God
In life, death, and beyond
At our best, at our worst
In our joy and in utter despair
Even when we forget God
Even when we pervert the very idea of God
Deserved or not
We are God’s
Walk Humbly

The heavenly Father
Is accessible to all
Regardless of ability or education
But often fuels intolerance
As competing factions claim
To understand Him better than others do
The Holy Mystery
Is difficult to fathom
And more difficult to relate to
But less susceptible to human failings
Less likely to lead to war
Only the knowledge
That our understanding is weak
Too weak to grasp the Ultimate
Though each of us grasps a part
Allows for both peace and God’s comfort
Walk humbly:
Justice and mercy will follow
Spirit of All Temperaments

I see You in the darkness

Others need blinding light

I taste You in the bittersweet

Others in Turkish delight

I hear you in a lonely bell

Others in a noisy din

I feel You as I mourn my loss

Others when they win

How can these disparate roads converge

Which seem to lead apart?

How can we share this faith, this Love

That stirs such different hearts?
Because the Sacred is infinite
It resides within you, within me,

Within all beings,
So I must honor you, myself, all beings,
And the planet that sustains us
If I am to honor the Sacred;
Because the Sacred is infinite
It knows all things and all beings
But cannot be completely known
So your description of it
Though different from mine
May be equally valid;
Because the Sacred is infinite
Its compassion has no limits:
Yearning for all to be whole
So It transforms us
Until we share that yearning
And cannot help but act
May We Each Find

May we each find a faith

That speaks to us

And teaches us how to listen;

May we each find a faith

That prods us

To manifest the Sacred within;

May we each find a faith

That holds us

When the world seems barren and cold;

May we each find a faith

That joins us

As children of one Soul
6. Beyond Mind

There is something spiritual about being perplexed, and recognizing contrasts and contradictions: accepting the limits of the logical mind can be liberating. As we go beyond logic, we go beyond self and so have a chance to join in a larger Vision.

Contrast

Were it not for night
I would not welcome the day;
Were it not for silence
I would not enjoy harmony;
Were it not for the putrid smells
I would not savor the sweet;
Were it not for the ordinary
I would not value the Sacred.
I must be bound to yearn for freedom,
And confused to seek Enlightenment
Heisenberg found that observation
    Alters what is observed
Thus, whether I choose to or not,
    I act,
I cannot sit in the audience,
    I change the world
Simply by existing,
    I am connected
Without reaching out or being reached
    By being
    I belong
Mind and Spirit

There is a part of the brain that, when stimulated,

Produces the experience of God’s presence

Some say, this means there is no God

Outside the brain

There is another part of the brain that, when stimulated,

Produces the sensation of tasting strawberries

Does that mean there are no strawberries

Outside the brain?

Amazing

That the capacity for faith is hard-wired
Faith

Where did I come from?
Why am I here?
Where am I going?
Is there a God?

There are no factual answers
No answers that can be proven
No answers that can be seen
Yet we design answers
Not knowing if they’re true
Not ever being sure
Believing nonetheless

Because living with uncertainty
Is what faith is all about
Why?

If we did not suffer
We would never need others
We would never learn from overcoming suffering
We would never be the heroes
Of our own life stories;
If others did not suffer
We would never feel compassion
We would never work for greater justice
We would never appreciate what we have so sincerely;
Perhaps it is wise
That God allowed suffering to exist,
Even though that wisdom is impossible
For the sufferer to see
Timeless Companion

God is before us

After us

And contemporary:

Born with us

Struggling with us

Laughing with us

Weeping with us

Dying with us

Yet eternal
Because I am human

Because I am human
I perceive God in terms of human relationships:

Being raised by parents
I perceive the Father;

Being involved in friendships;
I relate to God’s human emissaries;

Being part of a community,
I feel welcomed by the spiritual unity of mankind.

Some say this makes God a projection of my human mind.
I say it is because of my human mind that I perceive this way:

Were I other than human,

I would no doubt perceive other aspects of God.

As the microbe, the gull, and the whale
All perceive different aspects of the ocean
That extends beyond all perception
Sunday School

When I examine
My own troubled mind
I see only confusion and doubt

When I teach others
About life, love, and God
It all becomes simple and clear
Losing Religion

Faith is inclusive

Of all who believe that compassion

Unites with the Sacred

In Whom we all have our being

No matter what the specific beliefs or practices

Of one’s religion:

Lose religion,

And believe
Paradise

If the world were perfect
There would be nothing to do
But languish in its perfection
Games would quickly become boring
Fruit would no longer taste sweet
To dulled taste buds
Pleasure would cease to be pleasurable
As we’d start to take it for granted
Existence would be pointless;
Because life is imperfect
We find hope in the contrasts
Between what is, was, and will be
We find joy in the absence of suffering
Especially if we can make a difference
And bring that joy to others;
Without change there can be no hope
Without suffering, no joy
Without adversity, no heroes;
Because of its imperfection
Life is beautiful
Change

When I start noticing my flaws
And try to change
  I try
  And try
  And try
  To no avail;
  When I feel accepted
    Exactly as I am
    And accept myself that way
    Change happens


\textit{Time}

Time divides

As no other dimension

Do we focus on heaven

Some future bliss

Or do what we can here on earth?

Do we dwell on history

Lest we forget

Or forgive the past and move on?

Time is fleeting when busy

Time is endless when hurting

Time is cruel to the stricken

And kind to the weary;

We blame time for our failings

And our indecision:

A convenient hook

For responsibility’s cloak;

Yet All that is real

Stands outside time:

Neither now nor then nor ever,

Simply here
Hidden Reality

Real pride
Comes not from success
But from effort;

Real wealth
Comes not from money
But from valuing people;

Real wisdom
Comes not from knowing
But from wanting to learn;

Real happiness
Comes not from feeling
But from doing
Journey

Because I belong to God

I have arrived:

I don’t need to do anything else

Prove anything else

Be anything else;

I have arrived

And only because I have arrived

Can I attend to the journey of life
Perfect

How can the Creator be perfect

If the creation is imperfect

And Creator and creation are One?

Unless the greater perfection

Is to allow for imperfection

So the creatures have something to do;

By perfecting creation

And thus its Creator

We join in a greater Solution

We find purpose

That was missing in Eden
Ignoring I

When I am honored

Valued
Wanted
Welcomed
Celebrated
Cherished
Loved
I can ignore I
And honor
Value
Want
Welcome
Celebrate
Cherish
And love others
Disappearing Act

When I feel good enough
I ignore others’ faults
When I feel loved
I love
When I am safe
I offer shelter
When I am well
I heal
When joy fills my soul
I inspire
When I am whole
I disappear
And live
Dualities

We are light:
Waves and particles at once
Waves in our interconnection
Our common propulsion towards a better world
Our common bond:
The Strength and Wisdom of the ages
That is with us and within us always;
Particles in the uniqueness of our lives
Which are never repeated twice
Each with its own myriad of perceptions,
Ideas, emotions, and acts
Which make life so awe-fully good
And distinguish it from other realms
We oscillate between these:
Experiencing our particle nature in one moment
Then waves in the next
As particular concerns become meaningless
And wave-like conformity unsatisfying
Struggling to find the Peace that surpasses all dualities
Short Circuit

Within
And beyond
In the moment
And eternal
All-powerful
And dependent upon us
All-loving
Needing creatures to love
Father and Force
Friend and Substrate
Perfectly consistent
And contradictory
God short-circuits the thought process
Leaving darkness
Leaving selfless belonging
Leaving Peace
The Adventure

If time can expand or contract
As we approach the speed of light
Then who knows what it does
When we become light?
Do we exist in the beginning of time or its end
Or in that very moment
Or is that question meaningless
Because we are in another dimension
That we only glimpse occasionally
In the timeless moments of life?
Wherever, whenever we go
No-one can say exactly,
So the only certainty
Is that it will be a holy adventure
Transformation

When I feel safe here
I explore there

When I feel accepted as I am
I change

When I feel valued as an individual
I focus on others

When I feel held by a caring God
I praise the Ground of All Being:
I am open to new possibilities

When I feel loved
Who are You?

God loves as a Mother without restraint

Yet prods us like a friend

God is life’s Goal just out of reach

Yet always close at hand

God is the Force that orders worlds

And the still, small Voice within

God is the Mystery we can’t reveal

And the Place where thought begins
7. Meaningful Action

I sometimes envy those who can put their thoughts and feelings about God aside and “just do it”, working for a better world. I’m not always one of them, but they intrigue me. What motivates the saints? Here are some possibilities.

God waits

When the choice is between
Nurturing one’s relationship with God
And doing the right thing
Do it.
God’s not going anywhere.
What Matters

Are you Father?

Are you Mother?

Are you Force for Good?

Are you Ground of All Being?

Are you all of the above or none,

Or are you more than I can comprehend?

What does it matter?

As long as You hold me

And inspire me

To act out of love
Opportunity

I was taught to answer
When opportunity knocks
To recognize a chance for more
And pursue it
I acquired money, things, success,
Even relationships this way;
I was not taught to answer
When my next-door neighbor knocks
Or the man on the street who needs directions
Or the woman who can’t fit a bulky item in her car
Or the young mother who is unsure
How to teach her child to ride a bike
These too are opportunities
To make life better
Only the result is not temporary gain
But faith in the human condition
That endures
Priorities

Do what you must
To preserve yourself and your family
Do what you love
And make the most of your gifts
Don’t do what you should.
Shoulds are driven by others’ expectations
And the desire to be liked by them
They come and go as the people they serve do
Musts and loves last
Follow Your Bliss

When you pursue stuff
When you pursue glory
When you pursue safety
When you pursue love
More often than not
You end up disappointed, troubled, and tired
Like a man drinking sea-water:

As each success increases the thirst for the next
And none brings relief or peace;

When you pursue your calling
When you dedicate yourself to a cause
When you strive for your personal best
When you become who you were meant to be
More often than not
You forget about your thirst
As you greet each day’s possibilities

Boldly and with joy;
And the stuff, glory, safety, and love
Come along eventually too
Motivation

It is easier to forgive myself

Doing the wrong thing

For the right reasons

Than the right thing

For the wrong reasons

The first is a well-intentioned screw-up:

I learn from it and go on;

But to act out of fear or self-interest

Even if the result is good

Feels rotten
Rest

I use my circumstances
To excuse myself for doing less

When in truth
I choose to do less

Regardless of circumstances
Why is it so hard to say
‘I choose to rest’
Without shame?
Choice

When others control me
They can set limits on my actions
But not on my ideals
I can rage against the limits,
Succumb to despair,
Or seek out those actions that are still possible
And consistent with my ideals:
I can always do something that has meaning
Solid

If the work I do is destroyed

By a single adverse event

That discourages those who work with me

Then maybe it was not meant to last,

Like a dune in the shifting sand.

For what is good, and worth doing endures

And becomes part of the collective Good

As a solid mountain endures in the rain

Even if it’s craggy peaks are softened by the water’s flow:

It persists and defines a landscape
What Matters

I must let go of the belief that I can do
All that is required
Serenity lies in doing what matters
Taking pride in it
And not worrying about the consequences
Of what is undone.
The taskmasters of the undone
Will manage a day’s delay
The chance to do what matters
May never come again
Warmth

A loving act
Is worth doing
Not only when repaid with thanks
Or used to foster greatness
Or paid forward to another
A loving act
Is worth doing
Even when the beloved
Cannot acknowledge it
Is unaware of it
Or is unable to love
Dying people,
Plants, animals,
Those with mental challenges
May not do much in response to love
But the act of loving them
Enriches life
As each ray of sunshine
Adds to the world’s warmth
Plodding Along

There have been times
When I have been incapable of joy
Or spiritual feelings
And the best I could do
Was be aware of my misery,
Trust that the joy would return one day,
And in the meantime
Try to resist the temptation
To seek joy immediately in unhealthy ways
Or to dwell on the misery so much
That I could not say a kind, thankful, or encouraging word
To anyone else;
Sometimes the best you can do is put one foot in front of the other
And remain steady in case others stumble
Gifts

Each day is a gift:
Receive it with gladness
And bring joy to the Giver;
Spend it wisely
And bring joy to your soul;
Each person is a gift:
Receive her with gladness
And bring joy to her Maker;
Engage with her wisely
And bring joy to you both;
Each place is a gift:
Receive it with gladness
And bring joy to your senses;
Look after it wisely
And bring joy to the world
Universal Dreams

Whatever is good
Celebrates life
And life’s Source
Whatever is good
Gives to life
And life’s Source
Whatever is good
Receives from life
And life’s Source
Never giving just to look good
Never taking just to use
Unchained from personal needs
Free to dream dreams
For All
Locomotion

When I seek my purpose
I stumble in the wilderness
When I seek God’s purpose
I spring forward on a rubberized track
When God’s purpose and my purpose are one
I fly
Complicated...or Not

When I try to decide
If I should prioritize being
An environmentalist
A pacifist
A socialist
Or just a good global citizen
It’s all overwhelming
And I don’t know where to start;
When I decide to regard every being
As different from me yet fascinating and incredibly precious
As I would regard my newborn
I cannot destroy that being
Or fail to help him or her flourish:
The ‘ists’ don’t matter
Because only good things happen
As I act out of love
Prayer

There is only one prayer
That can ever be answered
And that never fails:
God grant me the wisdom to do what is right
And the strength to do it
And thank you for not giving up on me
If I don’t
Amen
Hands of God

In all I do

May I treat others

With respect and gentleness

Without expecting these in return

So that human abrasiveness

Does not erode

Sacred purpose
Heartbeat

When being and doing are separate
We do like chickens without heads
And being is an indulgent respite
From what the real world demands;
When being and doing are one
Our doing emanates from a common Source
Our being connects with all beings
We no longer fibrillate aimlessly
Like muscle fibres twitching without a current
We pump in unison
Pushing life forward
In a coordinated, holy Heartbeat
Born Again

It doesn’t matter
What we imagine God looks like
Or sounds like in our favorite holy book
Or seems like when we practice
Our favorite religious ritual
Only what God does
Defines God
When God creates, sustains, and redeems
God is
When we co-create a better world
Look after each other and the planet
Forgive and love again
We are born
In God
When I linger a moment
To listen to my child
When I carry a tissue packet
To dry a tear if needed
When I do a tedious task
To save a colleague grief
When I shine the light on my team
To share some of the glory
When I work through the night
To create what may inspire
When I learn what I must from failure
To allow me to carry on
Then I infuse the ordinary
With humble, steadfast love
Then I become a hero
Greater than any story-teller could describe
Shine

May I understand ever more clearly
How to be part of the solution
Rather than part of the problem
How to bring out the strength, wisdom, and beauty
Of those I encounter
Rather than the opposite

How to focus on the abundant, just, life-giving world
That may yet become a reality
Rather than the obstacles to reaching it

How to marvel that each pinpoint in a star-filled sky
Is one of Your unknown worlds
Rather than exalting my own petty schemes;

May I understand this, live this,
And join others in this

Until our brief, inspired moments
Become a continuous Shine
Becoming

May I become less eager to impress

More eager to help

Less eager to escape the dark

More eager to bring light

Less eager to spread cynicism

More eager to spread hope

Less eager to rest on my laurels

More eager to prompt change

Less eager to echo the status quo

More eager to sing life
Focus

When I focus
On personal aims
On personal gain
On personal fame
On avoiding shame
I live from deadline to deadline
And die a little each day;

When I focus
On where there’s a need
A hunger to feed
A venture to seed
A cause to lead
I live unfettered by time
And refreshed by the Eternal
Respond

Respond to destiny
Don’t pretend you can control it
Or fight to change its path
Respond to destiny
Give shelter from the cruelty
Give comfort to the harmed
Respond to destiny
Pursue the opportunities
To strengthen those in need
Respond to destiny
Tread gently through the world
And pause to rest in God
Respond to destiny
Be light where there is darkness
Be hope in times of despair
Respond to destiny
With Love
A Wholesome Discipline

Appreciate what’s good in the present when you can
Daydream or remember what’s good when you can’t
But focus on what’s good
Believe in the Spirit that fulfills all life when you can
Believe in a kind, holy Parent when you can’t
But believe in a gentle God
Be the change that you seek when you can
Be a decent person when you can’t
But be a source of peace
Do what you love and what inspires when you can
Do what is necessary when you can’t
But do your best
That’s enough
Gifts

Gratitude
Forgiveness
Hope
Compassion
Are healing gifts
But they don’t always get things done
Self-respect
Perseverance
Equanimity
And the courage to stand one’s ground
These bring important work to fruition
God grant us both


\textit{Wisdom}

Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do

Is to tackle a vexing problem

In your own life

Or the life of another

With all your ideas

Strength

And tenacity;

Sometimes we pray to get through suffering,

And at other times suffering is a signal

That it’s time to stop praying

And act
Justice

We can pass a law
That tries to redress injustice
Or promote greater fairness from now on
But a lawyer sees it as a challenge
To prove her client the exception to the rule
A judge sees it as a new means
Of enforcing his old prejudices
An ambitious person sees it as an obstacle
To winning the competition with her neighbor
A lazy person sees it as an opportunity
To reap what he did not sow
An anxious person sees it as a threat
To a successful life for her child
A depressed person sees it as more evidence
That there is less to go around for all;
A law may address the worst abuses
But it cannot change human nature;
Laws don’t make a better world:
Hopeful, tenacious people do
God help us keep hope alive!
Immortality

Who will remember
The headlines and books
When the stores and libraries close

Who will remember
The websites and shows
As the airwaves, as cyberspace goes

Your fame, your name
Will fade to black
But left when you depart
Is the hope you inspired
The love you gave

The footprints on another’s heart
8. Relationship with the Sacred Being

In order to transcend my narrow, self-focused ways and work for a better world, I need to feel valued, connected to, and loved by the Sacred as I am; in order to change the world for the better, the Sacred needs the actions of transcendent human beings.

*Perfect Fit*

Without creation
There is no Creator;

Without motion
There is no Mover;

Without my child
I am not a mother;

Without us
There is no Divinity;

The Sacred and the human
Need each other
And make each other

Whole
Evolution

A Master of a fully formed world

Is like a parent of an unplanned child:

Taking responsibility for looking after it

Without much joy or hope

A Creator of a world in development

Is like a parent of a much-desired child:

Seeing not only the work of maintaining what is there

But the possibility of realizing

A unique, unpredictable, incredibly wonderful potential

By nurturing the best

With Love
Wonderful Parent

Because my very being
Gives meaning to the Creator
The Creator’s presence in my life is unconditional
I am not expected to dance
Like a puppet on strings,
I am not expected to reflect glory
Like a human mirror
I am not expected to think, or feel, or do
As the Creator would
Only to be open to a sacred Presence;
For when living in that Presence,
Justice, honesty, respect,
And compassion for all living things
Happen without even thinking about them;
I love unconditionally
As I am loved,
I need no commandments,
Only wonder
Conduits

For a short time on this earth
We may be conduits of God’s love
We cannot claim anything for it
For it is God’s, not our own
We cannot repay it
For God has a limitless supply
We can only help it flow forward
Allowing what we have received
To touch others as it has touched us
And in so doing
Change the world
Thy Kingdom Come

Let me forget
All the worries and doubts
All hopelessness and despair
Let me forget
All desires and goals
And needing to get my share
Let me forget
The shame and hurt
And burning for revenge
Let me forget
My mind’s cruel jabs
Which on my soul impinge
That I may clear
A space within
A channel free from me
Where sacred Peace can flow at last
To heal and to let be
To join with those I touch in Love
To set their channels free
That Peace may unencumbered flow:
God’s dream becoming real
Sometimes my efforts to do good
Come from a need for security:
For the world’s compensation for good deeds
Sometimes my efforts to do good
Come from a need for approval:
To know that I belong and am valued
Sometimes my efforts to do good
Come from a need for self-worth:
It just feels good to do good
But then there are those special times
When my efforts come from elsewhere:
From an ancient, universal Aching for change
From a powerful wellspring within
That flows with sacred Love
That manifests God’s purpose
Unhindered by human needs
Prisms

My children are different from me

At times I see the resemblance

At times they surprise me completely

They are people in their own right

They don’t need to be connected to me all the time

Rovelling in my orbit

They don’t need to match my feelings and ideas

Like mirrors

They don’t need to do exactly what I teach

Only take it and make something good out of it

That is relevant to their life’s time

Like prisms refracting light into new colors.

I can give my children this freedom, this separateness from me

Why is it hard to believe that God does the same?
Just the way they are

Some parents only like
Children who resemble them
And mirror their desires
Some parents only like
Children who accomplish things
And reflect well on their homes
Some parents like their children
Because they think they’re neat
Just the way they are
Those children grow
To resemble their parents
To reflect well on their parents
And to regard the next generation
With the same loving curiosity they experienced
With their own parents
And we all experience
With God
New Beginnings

When I am humbly aware
Of all that I do not know
Of how limited my mind
Of how unskilled my hands
Of how empty my soul
Of all I have not learned

God is my Teacher
My Friend

And the Force that guides my hands
Peace

We cannot find peace

Without God

The Spirit of Compassion;

God cannot make peace

Without us

The instruments of compassion
God’s-Eye View

I have prayed, as others have,
To become an instrument of Your peace
What I have dared not pray
Is to join Your peace:
To be saddened by Your sorrows
Which are the sorrows of all beings
To be inspired by Your joys
Which are the joys of all beings
To be hopeful of Your dreams
Which are the dreams of all beings

For to pray this
Is to pray for constant attunement to all beings
And to never be complacent again
The Flame

As the Sacred joins us
Uniting us in compassion
Freeing us from the anger,
The fear, the shame
The self-consciousness
So we join the Sacred
Bringing together our scattered sparks
Until they coalesce into a single flame
That warms and brightens the world.
As God completes us
So we complete God
The Tool Box

We are co-creators
Of a better world
Partnering with the Sacred
Yet humbly aware
How limited our reach
How limited our hearts
How narrow our minds
How slow we are to grasp
What is truly important
Still, we are the instruments of peace.

God has no others
Happening

With our hands
God makes peace happen

With our feet
God makes change happen

With our minds
God makes hope happen

With our bodies
God makes bliss happen

With our mouths
God makes truth happen

With our arms
God makes love happen

With us
God happens

With God
Our happenings have meaning

And make a better world
Power

God is in the face of a child
An old person
A weak person
A fool
For like them all
God is helpless to act
Without the help of human hands
Yet powerful enough
To inspire giants
If we do not forgive
They will not be forgiven
If we do not sustain this world
It will not be sustained
If we do not bless
There will be no blessing
If we do not live as one
There will be no peace;
How great our responsibility,
How great our thanks
For the opportunity to fulfill it
And be truly alive
Living

When God teaches us
And we make things better
When God inspires us
And we create beauty
When God loves us
And we become that love to others
When God is with us and within us
And we move with and within God
Then God’s existence means something
So God lives
Then our existence means something
So we live
If God were Human...

If God were human
What would He say
To guide you and help you decide?

If God were human
What would She give you
To prepare you for life’s ride?

If God were human
Where would you be
And where directed to go?

If God were human
What would you cling to
And what release to the flow?

Imagine yourself an ever-loved child
Encouraged, embraced, and renewed
By a Parent, a Friend, a Being of Light
Or whatever form you choose
What I Need

When I am held

Cared for

Loved

By God

I can let go

Of I

Content to be merely a strand

In the tapestry of life

And contribute my small speck of colour;

I can let go

Of God’s image

Knowing the fabric itself is blessed

Not just its Weaver;

I can let go

Of my confining, competitive mind

Join with all beings

Make a difference

And become what I was meant to be
Purpose

Bring God to life
By bringing God into life
Wherever you may go;
Meet God in life
By seeking God in every life
That you encounter;
Keep God alive
By keeping God in life
Whenever you remember;
Live God’s Life
By joining God and life
However you are able
Sacred Path

May my ways
Become part of your Way
May my thoughts
Never stray far
May my deeds
Realize your Dream
May my goals
Align with your Star
May my children
Keep your Light
As my lifetime fades away
May my soul
Pour into your Ocean
That I glimpse from a distance today
The Visitor

Within, without
And with us through all
Whether celebrating
Or about to fall;
Parent and Friend
Foundation and Light
Source, Destination
And Lantern at night;
Before and after
And evermore
Yet always knocking
Till we open the door
Vocation

Each day
That I overcome suffering
In myself or another being
I find meaning;

Each day
That I see how my actions
Align with those of the Creator
I feel joy;

Each day
That my hands make manifest
A part of the Creator’s dream
I am awe-struck
I am complete
I am a conduit of Timeless Love
Enlightenment

Enlighten me
With the light that I move towards
The light that streams and glistens
Leaving me amazed
The light that displaces what’s dark

Enlighten me
Lighten the loads of my worries
Lighten my mood in the gloom
Lighten my endless responsibilities
Allow me to leave some with You

Enlighten me
Take me from knowledge to wisdom
Focus my mind on what counts
Show me the road to compassion
That I may enlighten too
Credo

I believe in a sacred Dimension
That is limitless and beyond description
That joins and holds all beings with love
       Now and forevermore
I believe that the Sacred
       Works through us
Compelling us to improve the welfare of all beings
       And of the planet as a whole
In recognition of our common Bond
Applying our strength, intelligence, and unique gifts
       Towards fulfilling creation’s promise
As we let go of our egotistical desires
       And respond to the Infinite
Prayer to a Caring God

Thank You
For creating life
Every day in our hearts and minds;
Help us
To help each other
Become what we were meant to be;
Forgive us
For all that drives us away
From your ways of peace and love
Inspire us
That with renewed strength we may seek
To fulfill your eternal dream
Doing and Praying

Whether I do good
And experience compassion
That draws me close to God
Or I pray
And am inspired by God
To behave compassionately:
The road between God and a better world
Is a two-way street
Paved with human compassion
9. Relationship with the Sacred in the Other

When I feel secure in my relationship with God, paradoxically I become less interested in theology and more curious about other people. Occasionally, that curiosity evokes something special in them and in me. Buber called it the “I and Thou” experience. I call it encountering the Sacred in the Other.

_Honor the person_

When I ask myself

How can I use this person

To get the job done?

I honor the job

And only the job gets done

When I ask myself

How can I affirm this person

As we do the job?

I honor the person

Allowing what is best in him or her to emerge

And permeate all they do

And the results are splendid
I’m worried about you

I’m worried about you
Is one of the most honest
Yet insistent statements;
It’s impossible to be angry with
Yet impossible to ignore;
It asks someone to help you
By changing themselves;
It acknowledges that you can’t find peace
Without the other person’s response,
You can’t make them do something
But you hope they will consider it
For their own benefit
As well as yours;
It’s caring, but not calming;
It urges action, with love.
When we meet remarkable people
Inspired by the Sacred
It’s God’s way of saying
I’m worried about you
Ribbon

When I am with you
Not to dream of tomorrow
Nor cleanse my past
Not to fix all your problems
Nor have you fix mine
Not to play with your feelings
Nor elicit certain words
Not to create something newsworthy
Nor boast to my friends
But to listen and respond
As truly I am
This moment is timeless
This moment is a ribbon
That binds us to one another
And to God
Friends

In close friends I experience the Sacred

On a more human level,

Not so high and parental;

I see their limitations and they mine,

Give advice but respect their choices,

And continue to believe in them

Even when they behave foolishly

Or stop believing in themselves;

They give me the privilege of learning from their mistakes

So I am spared some pain;

They revel in my joy, and I in theirs;

Through them I see what life might have been

Had I chosen a different path

It may not change the choice,

But it may allow me to walk in a different way

And experience something new
Recognition

May I recognize You

In every place

Every person

Every moment of peace

That I may treasure and preserve

Every place

Every person

Every moment of peace

And in so doing

Preserve and extend

Your essence

And become more fully

Made in Your image
Bereaved

The words I regret not saying

More than any others

Are ‘thank you’;

To share someone’s hopes, doubts,

Joys, and sorrows

Is a sacred privilege:

Such bonds are rare

And often all too brief
Puzzle

When I envy you
And want what you have
I try to remember
That if nobody exceeded me
In power, in talent, in grace,
I would be perfect:
Perfectly self-sufficient and alone;
Because you have more of this and I have more of that
We are drawn together
Like pieces in a jigsaw puzzle
Until God’s picture is complete
Why did you take my arm when I stumbled?

Why did your tears well up when I cried?

Why did you give this moment to me

When I had nothing to provide?

Was it the hope of some re-payment?

But you didn’t make a demand

Was it the need to have someone need you?

Perhaps, but it wasn’t your plan

This reliance on random kindness

Is awkward, humbling, and odd

Yet with every shared humane gesture

We see more of the face of God
Being a Friend

Be my friend, as a fellow child of God
Not for me to impress or look down upon
   To rescue or be rescued by
To seek obsessively or be sought by
To try to possess or be possessed by
To control or be controlled by;
   For all those patterns
Are unrequited dreams of youth
Of parents we could never have
Of lovers we could never find
And make your company a thing to feed a love-starved child;
   Let me instead
Be curious about your daily life
Your stories of the unexpected
Your blind spots and your vision
Your progress and your pain
Amplifying your experience with echoes from my own
And sharing my thoughts, for what they’re worth
   Truthfully, whether you like it or not
Gently, to preserve your trust
Compassionately, to reflect our common Source
Risking

In faith

There is no future threat

As we open our minds to new possibilities

In friendship

There are no past demons

As we open our hearts to one another

In Love

We believe

We connect

We come alive
You Belong

This is what you ought to do
Says the judge
How you get there is up to you
This is what you ought to believe
Says the preacher
Making sense of it is up to you
This is how you ought to feel
Says the mystic
As you deal with impatient tellers and demanding bosses
This is who you ought to be
Says the saint
Who lived a thousand years before your time;
Only the knowledge
That you belong
And can be a blessing to all in the Web of belonging
As they can be to you
As each glimpses in the other a thread of God’s Being
Will inspire action, belief, feelings, and a soul
That can overcome all impatient demands and cruelty in this world;
That can step outside the pain
And live authentically
Silence

Share the pain
When it is real pain
Not some misguided attempt to gain sympathy
Or to blame someone else for your woe

Share the joy
When it is real joy
Not idle gossip that titillates
Or boasting about a recent triumph

Share what is best
What comforts and inspires
And lets others comfort and inspire you

Allow silence for the rest
For in it you can fathom things
Which words diminish
And communicate things
Which go beyond conversation
The Tide

When the holy in me
Encounters the holy in you
We become sources of sacred Energy
To one another
No longer drained away
By constant toil, hardship, and worry
No longer polluted
By the false gods of substances or social acclaim
Or by fantasies of fulfilling old dreams
But building a bottomless reservoir
Of real hope
Real love
Real joy;
Then give and take have no meaning
As we become more
Than the sum of our parts
And for a moment
Are one with the Tide
Tongue-tied

When I give what you need
And you give what I need
When I ask for what I want
And listen to what you want
Even if it is not what we each had in mind
We sacrifice with gentle honesty
Some of our fantasies
Some of the smoothness
In our relationship
But in time
We learn more
We respect more
We build more trust
We store less resentment;
Some of the most awkward moments
Are also the most loving
Become

Become the well
To those thirsting for the Spirit

Become hope
To those trapped in despair

Become love
To those who have no family

Become joy
To those crushed by their cares

Become peace
To those wracked by fear and rage

Become life
To those dying inside

Become Grace
Loved Child

Love your children

For in children who are loved

Compassion flowers naturally

Whenever they see someone in need;

It is their very first impulse:

They act on it without conscious effort

In children who are rejected

Or only loved when they perform

Compassion is choked by the brambles

Of fear, of defensiveness

And the need to look out for number one;

Their lives become a battle

To keep the brambles at bay

Rather than a celebration

Of the beauty inside us all;

There are ways of wisdom

Ways of loving

Ways of living

That only a loved child can reveal
Each day I try to help
But cannot be there with them
When they are tested
Each day I try to understand
But cannot get completely
Inside their heads
Each day I decide
Based on my own intuition
And an educated guess at their needs
Each day I convince myself
That I do what's best for them
Though I know so little for certain;
But if God knows them
And I stop to know God
Then maybe I can choose wisely
Love

If I need your approval
If I need you to act
A part in my play
If I seek to steal the show
If I laugh at your expense
I use you
If I hurt when you hurt
If I want to calm your fears
If I delight in your success
And pray that God bless you
If your smile lights up my day
I love you
I See You

I see in your eyes the history of time

In your smile a new beginning

I see in your gestures a sacred dance

In your laugh the universe singing

I see in your mourning the tears of the Earth

Wherever life has ceased

I see in your reaching the yearnings of all

In your walk their footsteps towards peace
Born Free

Born unplanned
Born disabled
Born with an imperfect mind
Part of a family
Part of a community
Part of a mother’s heart
Connected by birth and by need to us all
They remind us of interdependence
They’re free from gold chains
Of conventional success
That pale when compared to their grace
Hospitality

When you are as fascinating to me
   As my newborn child
When you are as acceptable to me
   As my best friend
When you are as respected by me
   As my favorite teacher
Then I can welcome you
   As an honored guest
   Joining other guests
Until all beings are my guests
And life is a home never empty
Community

God happens
In every group united by a just cause
God happens
Whenever the differences between us and them
Melt into a larger ‘we’
God happens
As we embrace each other’s ideas
And envision a whole
Greater than the sum of the parts
God happens
Not just between me and you
But within a greater
Us
Oratorio

There is a gentle hum
Beneath a choir of hundreds
Diverse voices sharing a common song
None standing out dramatically
Yet all lending their strength to the sound;
Like hundreds of ripples lapping the shore
Forgoing the big splash
But together changing the landscape;
Like hundreds of smoldering coals
Cooking hotter than any bright flame;
Like hundreds of sand grains reshaping a sphinx
That has withstood earthquakes;
There is a power in community
That no hero’s feat can match
That persists beyond mountaintop moments
That warms the frozen soul
And becomes a continuous prayer
Thin Places

There are places
Where the boundary
Between what is Sacred and what is human

Is thin;

We enter these places in silence,
In reverence,
In total devotion to a worthy task,
In paradox that takes us beyond the mind,
In visions that take us beyond ourselves;
And we also enter them in encounters
With people we heal
Or who heal us,
With those who seek to inspire,
With those who pay forward
And multiply their blessings,
With those who persevere
When few blessings are apparent;

We enter these places
In communion with God
And with all who are touched by the Spirit
Or whom we are able to touch
This Child

We can’t decide
How we begin
Or where our birth will place us
We can’t decide
What womb, what genes
Or whether we are welcome
Yet each arrival
Is one more chance
To live the human story
To make it better, more complete
To add to creation’s glory
A bet, a gamble to be sure
But definitely worth the wager
Who knows what brilliance yet unborn
Will fill this crib or manger?
One Chance

In every moment
I must learn from you
       Teach you
Learn about you
       Reveal to you
Give to you
Receive from you
       Touch you
Be touched by you
       All that I can
       For one of us may be gone by tomorrow
10. The Sacred in Reconciliation with Oneself and Others

Inevitably, we hurt and criticize each other and we hurt and criticize ourselves. Then, we carry the hurtful patterns from past relationships into new ones and inadvertently recreate the very pain we thought we had escaped. How can we get back to respectful, loving relationships in the face of human cruelty? How can we not? Few things separate us from the Sacred more than the inability to forgive and reconnect with others. May we learn again to love, to receive love, and ultimately to become Love.

*New Being*

Rather than purging each sin
And becoming focused on fault-finding

Unleash the good within
And selfish, hurtful words and deeds

Will retreat
As dust blown by the wind
Or dirt washed away
And a new being emerges
Like a surfer piercing a fog bank
Like a sculpture freed from its stone
The Hardest Faith

It is harder to believe in the goodness of another person

When that person betrays you

Or humiliates you

Or abandons you

Or treats you like something less than human

Than it is to believe in God,

Even though you can see the person

And only imagine God;

Yet if we cannot believe there is good

In each of God’s creatures

Then how can we believe in the goodness of God?

And without our belief in their goodness

How will they ever learn to manifest it?

Our enemies are children

Descended from the Sacred

As we all are;

In desperate need of someone

To tell them who their Mother is

Whose essence they carry within
The Best

Look for the best in each moment
   And you will not worry;
Look for the best in each person
   And you will not hate;
Look for the best in yourself
   And you will not fail;
Look for the best in humanity
   And you will never be alone
To perceive the Sacred in others

Is still a struggle

To do this

I must look with different eyes.

I must look for the self-conscious, fearful part of them,

Subtract it from the whole,

And imagine what remains:

The music of their souls set free
I feel drawn to those who are like me

Then learn to hate them

For showing me in their behavior

The very things I lack

Or despise about myself

Rather than seeing them as teachers

To guide me towards Wholeness
Equals

When I stop needing your praise
When I am unhurt by your criticism
When your opinion of me counts less
Than my opinion of myself
Then I can enjoy my connection with you;
It will never be as close or exciting
As when I sought your praise and feared your scorn
But it will be infinitely more fun,
More relaxed, more interesting and rich,
More challenging, and more humane
As I see you as an equal member of the same community:
The community of mankind
Working towards freedom

Forgiveness does not mean feeling less animosity
Towards those who have hurt me;
But consciously deciding to no longer dwell on the past,
To no longer replay the way it could have or should have been
To no longer rehearse the perfect come-back or means of revenge
To no longer imagine an apology that is unlikely
To no longer lose today’s joy for the sake of righting a wrong
Focusing instead on becoming a better person
A better member of the human family
Regardless of the past:
The decision comes first,
The feelings follow
Flawed Fellowship

You who honk at me to turn
Into thick and dangerous traffic
You who deny me mercy
By quoting a regulation
You who hide your mistakes
And blame me instead
You are a flawed human being
Just like me
Not an object
Of my frustration, scorn and rage
We are the same in the sight of God
God accepts us
Flaws and all
Patiently waiting for us to learn
To accept each other
Noble Nemesis

Through angry eyes
I am the innocent victim of a deliberate, personal, unfair attack

Through loving eyes
I am a jealous sore loser, beaten by the rules of the game.

Through angry eyes
I must restore safety and justice or die

Through loving eyes
I can risk peace and win-win solutions.

Through angry eyes
You are a powerful, evil, inhuman beast

Through loving eyes
We are both children of God
Understanding

If I resent her criticism blindly

I risk losing a friend

If I see it as either a possible truth

Or a reflection of her own envy

Of an ability I possess that she lacks

It no longer stings:

I understand

So I do not need to forgive
Sorry

I’m sorry
Although I don’t know if I could have acted differently
Or even would today
I’m sorry
Although I understand what took place between us
And no longer blame myself entirely
I’m sorry
Although I don’t expect you to forgive me
Or even respond to these words
I’m sorry
Because you suffered and are suffering
And I wish you healing and peace
Preachers don’t bring forgiveness,  
Healers do;  
For to forgive an unhealed wound  
Is insincere  
And invites further injury,  
But when you heal the wound  
Restoring yourself to health  
Forgiveness happens without effort:  
Don’t forgive, heal
It is so much easier
To conjure up an idealized parent in the sky
That divides deserving from undeserving siblings
And to tattle on others when they misbehave
And to accuse them of starting a fight
Than to seek the sacred Spark within each:
Their part of the timeless Flame
That unites and fulfills us all
Love story

Love means always having to say you’re sorry
Because you can’t stand to see the other person hurting because of you

Love means always having to say ‘I forgive you’
Because you understand where the cruelty came from,

Love means always having to say ‘please’
Because you know the other person can’t read your mind

Love means always having to say ‘thank you’
Because you want the other person to know what their actions mean to you

And the opportunity may not come again
Choose Not to Dwell

Some memories are too painful
Too brutally humiliating
But you can choose not to dwell on them;
Some guilt is too unbearable
Annihilating the soul
But you can choose not to dwell on it;
Some rage is too consuming
Too vicious to contain
But you can choose not to dwell in it;
Some people are too callous
Too casually destructive
But you can choose not to dwell with them;
Some systems are too rigid
Too mercilessly dehumanizing
But you can choose not to dwell within them;
Some things are not changeable
Some things are not forgivable
Some things are not forgettable
But you can choose not to dwell on them;
And in so choosing you are freed
To dwell in peace, with God
Enemy?

I recognize within you
A desire to honor the Holy
Whatever you conceive it to be;
I recognize within you
A possibility of friendship
Though veiled behind mistrust;
I recognize within you
Dreams of a better world for your children
That is every parent’s hope;
I recognize within you
A capacity for tenderness
Though buried by layers of defenses;
I recognize within you
A part of your being that is free
From anger, fear, shame and despair;
I recognize within you
A deeply shared humanity
Yearning to surface
Believing I have flaws, I try to hide them
And so hide my talents too;
I fear people seeing them
Humiliating me, abandoning me, taking advantage of me
Because of them
So I don’t let people get close
And don’t risk forgiving them
In case they hurt me again;
I cannot be open to new experience
For fear it will shatter the flawed self
Or make it lose control;
I compete to prove my worth
Then lose and feel more flawed
Or win and make others feel flawed;
Yet my main flaw is the belief I am flawed:
I am perfect
As I am
Unique, irreplacably precious
A beautiful piece of life’s puzzle
Made in the image of God
Knowing this, life becomes simple
Old Hurts

Surface scratches
That’s all they are
A shredded self-esteem here
A few anxieties and addictions there
And periodic dips into the blackness;

Surface scratches
On a perfectly cast bronze
That comes from the same Foundry
That gives shape to all beings
And is joined to their substance;

Alone I am raw and unforgiving
Joined I am whole and at peace
Forgiving Me

When have I forgiven myself?
When I can revisit the past freely
   Neither avoiding it
   Nor obligated to dwell there;
When I can relate to others genuinely
   Neither hiding the truth
   Nor compulsively confessing it;
   When I can pursue joy
   As well as goodness;
When I am truly thankful to be alive
Bless you
Not only you who bring a smile to all,
Who turn a motley crew of tourists
Into a caring community
Just by your presence on the beach;
But you
Who anxiously defend your place from trespassers
And frighten small children in the process,
Whose surly look could sour honey,
Whose remarks could enrage a saint;
For you too are blessed
And have blessings to share:
You just haven’t discovered them yet
May You Be Well

May you be well
May the demons that prodded your cruelty
Leave you in peace
May the thorns of daily harassments and cares
Pull away from your soul
May you heal
May you find wonder again
Like the babe for whom all things are new
May you be thankful again
Like the wise ones who smile every morning
For all that they’ve learned and can do
May you come to a place
Where you can say
To all whom you love
To all who have hurt you
To all whom you barely know
To all:
May you be well
Who You Are

What if every hurtful act
Were seen as being out of character?

What if every kindness
Were seen as a sign of one’s true nature?

What if every failure
Were seen as a temporary stumble?

What if every accomplishment
Were seen as a discovery of hidden abilities?

What if we assumed that the best within is constant,
And the worst is an aberration?

What if we believed in a divine Spark in every being
Waiting to ignite and burn away the surface junk
Of fear, rage, discouragement and pettiness
If only we recognize it and give it some air?
I can’t forget the abuse and pain
The dark humiliation
I cannot look in the person’s eye
And wish for their salvation
I can only look at the path of life
And know they have not erased it
They have strewn sharp stones and changed its course
Till it seemed all my efforts were wasted
But I washed out the dirt and bandaged my wounds
And with God’s help went on
I can let go the rage and the need for revenge
Because I can see a new dawn
Cruelty

Most cruelty is not planned
Most cruelty is not deliberate
Most cruelty is not a sign of a cruel character

Most cruelty happens
When we forget to be kind
When we are focused on goals
And lose sight of our companions on the journey
When we act without praying
React without reflecting
Get distracted
And lose sight of the Sacred
As all people do from time to time;
For this reason
Most cruelty is forgivable
For who can say they have never been cruel?
Imperfect Parts

If each of us is one part of all Being
One ornament on life’s Tree
One organ of a sacred Body
One beat of a cosmic Pulse
Then how can we not forgive?

For to diminish another with blame

Diminishes the Whole
And to snuff out another’s light
Leaves us all in a darker place
May All Be Well

May all be well

Those whose sorrows we see
And those whose are buried inside

May all be well

Those who share the earth
And those on the other side

May all be well

Those we meet on the journey
And those we have left behind

May all be well

Those we worry and pray for
And those out of sight, out of mind

May all be well

In whose wisdom we’re rooted
And those to whom all things are new

May all be well

Who inspire, then leave us
And those growing old, needing You

May all be cradled in the hammock of time

May all be nourished by Love

May all discover their connection with You

Within, beside, and above
Adversaries

All who struggle against me
Are one with me
To condemn them
Is to cut off a part of myself
To understand them
Is to know my own dark side
To offer comfort to them
Heals my own brokenness
To wish them well as they go
Sets my own inner demons free
So I can focus once more on Love
I cannot forgive myself fully

Unless I forgive others fully

Not merely erasing

Their sins from my ledger

But celebrating their humanity

That is our common humanity

Our common goodness

Our common Godness

That binds the universe
Choices

Life is tragic
Choose to seek its comedies

The future is uncertain
Choose to believe it will work out

God is unknowable
Choose to believe in a comforting Image

The world is a battlefield
Choose to make peace with those near

The soul is turbulent
Choose to allow it to rest

People are harsh
Choose to give love a chance
There are those who destroy a reputation
And try to destroy a life
But as long as life persists
There is a choice:
To dwell in resentment
And become bitter, wrinkled, and sad
Or to decide
That even if the wrong can’t be righted
It must be left to the universe
Or to some Higher Power
For the sake of stopping the pain;
If I propagate misery
My enemies win
And the world becomes meaner and colder;
If I don’t
Hope’s flower can peak through the snow;
May the misery stop with me
11. Mindfulness

Meditation is often thought of as focusing within one’s mind, but really it is the opposite: setting aside the worries about the future, the hurts of the past, and the tendency to self-consciously evaluate oneself in order to be free to attend to what is there in the moment, dissolving ‘self’ in the task at hand. It can also be described as simply listening to God. I am refreshed by and thankful for these sacred moments.

Mindful

When I am mindful
I eat when hungry,
Drink when thirsty,
Sleep when tired,
Think when interested
Or faced with a problem to solve,
Dance when happy,
Weep when sad,
Laugh when amused,
Tremble when afraid,
Honoring nature’s needs
Moment by moment;
Finding comfort
In belonging to the Unity of all beings
Act or Adore

Crashing waves that shift the sand
Carve out caves and harbors
Refresh the swimmer and urge to shore
Insistently pushing for change;
Floating beams of yellow warmth
Billowing down from the surface
The diver enthralled in the heavenly light
Perceives how all life is One;
   We strive for better,
   We’re arrested by awe,
   Able to lose ourselves
   In meaningful action or in God
   Whichever is called for by the moment
What Comes Along

Enjoy what comes along:

The show that’s surprisingly funny

The hour to walk by the sea

The unexpected coffee

With delightful company

The smiling child you lift up high

The friend who says you look great

The unplanned, undeserved little thing

The fortunate twist of fate;

Enjoy what comes along:

Take off the shackles and dance

Enjoy what comes along:

Stop marching and give it a chance

Enjoy what comes along:

Be thankful, end the quest

Enjoy what comes along:

Feel blessed
What is Called For

When I pray without doing good
I become self-indulgent
Diminishing God’s gifts by not sharing them;

When I do good without praying
I become proud
And ignore the Source of all goodness;

When I open my heart
As I ready my hands
I am fulfilled
And ‘I’ doesn’t matter:

I do what the moment calls for
Abandoning myself to God’s dream
Nurture

What we nurture

We become:

When we think about being threatened

We become angry and afraid

When we think about friendship

We become better friends

When we imagine success

We become competitive

When we imagine new possibilities

We become curious

When we expose our senses to death

We become deadened inside

When we expose our senses to faith

We become hopeful

When we act out of obligation

We become drained of life

When we act out of love

We become life-affirming;

What we nurture

We become

Moment by moment
No Past

There is a season
When there are no regrets
And no resentments;
When every tear has been shed,
Every rage spent,
Every question answered,
Every sorrow healed or forgotten
And you choose to look back no more;
Some do not reach this season
Till the winter of their days;
Those who find it sooner
Live now
The Present

In this moment
Nobody can hurt me;
In this moment
I can choose what to do;
In this moment
I don’t need to judge myself
Or think about other people’s judgments;
In this moment
I am free
Judgment

When I ask myself
“Am I happy yet?”
I can’t find happiness
And I become miserable;
When I find something or someone
To focus on, explore, and try to understand
I come alive
And smile
Now

In the moment
There is freedom
From the dread and trepidation
Brought by past woe and pain;
In the moment
There is freedom
From plans that compel you to act
According to their prescription;
In the moment
There is no limit
To the possibilities
That might yet unfold;
In the moment
You can leave your head,
Choose a new path,
And live
Mental Scenery

They’re just thoughts:
They can’t help me,
They can’t hurt me,
They can’t make me do anything
Or stop me from doing anything;
They’re just thoughts:
I can welcome them,
Choose to watch them come and go,
And be present here, now
Alive

If I dwell on my greatness

Or dwell on my failure

I am paralyzed;

To truly live

I cannot dwell:

I must perceive my surroundings

And choose how to respond

Moment by moment

Even if it scares me to death
The Melody

The Sacred is in the moment,
If you listen
Tune out the static of your thoughts,
Tune in to the Melody of the universe;
You are at home everywhere and always,
Connected to millennia of wisdom,
To the Wellspring of life itself:
You are at one with All
What Is

I pursue ever new projects and goals

Hoping to find meaningful work

Not realizing that happiness

Lies in finding meaning

In what I already do;

As long as I pursue

My focus is on the future;

Only when I stop

Can I be present

And perceive the wonder

Of what is
Seeking to be the best

No matter how noble the goal

Focuses me on myself

And on the future;

Seeking to fix what’s in front of me,

Whether it’s a broken toaster or a runny nose,

Focuses me on problem-solving

And the satisfaction of day to day accomplishments

That runs deeper than a brief splash of fame
Second by Second

No matter how many worries
No matter how many doubts
No matter how disturbing the memories
No matter how badly worn out;
I can cope with this moment
This instant of time
And trust God that eventually
The rest will be fine
Scholar

When alone
Learning about my world
Or teaching what I know in writing;

When with people
Learning about my fellow humans
Or teaching what I know in speech;

This wonder
This curiosity
This agility of spirit and mind
This is the stuff of joy!

I leave with God
My troubles
My faults
Their troubles
Their faults
And everything that perturbs
This bliss
Dance

Gently embrace what is
Not comparing it to the past
And feeling loss
Not comparing it to the future
And feeling anxious
Not comparing it to what others have
And feeling jealousy
Not clinging to it
Fearing change
Not pushing it away
Fearing harm;
Accepting the truth,
The rhythm of life
That is not nearly so harsh
When we dance with it
And trust it to lead us Home
Sweetness

The apple falls and rolls away
I chase it and fall on my face
I get up and run until weary
Then finally grasp it and bite:

It is sour;
I look in my other hand:

The sweet fruit was there all along
Getting There

How do I reach the moment?

With hope

I let go of the future

And all its anxious possibilities

Knowing it will ultimately be good;

With faith

I let go of the past

Its failures, losses, and guilt

Knowing I am redeemed;

With love

I live in today

Thankful for all I experience

Blessing others as I have been blessed

And am present, fully
The Bridge

The bridge
Between the reverent spirit
And the helping hands
Is formed
When we walk mindfully with God
And every step
Is a prayer
Passing it On

When I teach about fairness

I become fair

When I teach about kindness

I become kind

When I teach about hope

I become hopeful

When I teach about peace

I become peaceful

When I teach about all I aspire to be

I become it

In that moment

Simply by focusing

On passing it on
Life Lessons

Few things I worry about happen
    But other awful things do
Few things I fantasize about happen
    But other wonderful things do
Few hurts I hold onto are healed
    But I learn from those I let go
Few losses I grieve are restored
But in grieving them I am renewed
And open once more to experience
Constant

As players cross a stage, coming and going
    As the mist I sail through disappears
        As cobwebs fall away
        So my thoughts pass by
            Leaving me still
                Centered
                Resting
                In You
Morning Train

Ignore the clatter of the mind
Hear the rails’ quick rhythm
See the blurr of autumn leaves
Outside the window pane
Fold your arms to save the warmth
Munch your apple-a-day
Smell Chanel across the aisle
Smile for all that’s good
Rest in God’s love
Rest in God’s love
Rest in God’s love
For a while
**Forever Moments**

It’s never too early for heaven

It’s never too late for God

There’s always a chance of connection

To the Love that joins us all

Time folds itself up when we’re joyous

Accordions as we laugh

There is no before and after

Only one-ness with life’s Path
'Is 'ing

What I have
What I have learned
What I am capable of doing;

What I feel
What I perceive
What I remember fondly;

All of these I am thankful for
But I can only be truly grateful
When I am content with what is:
When I no longer yearn for more
Or different, or better;
When I no longer lack
Accomplishments, attributes, relationships;

When I no longer worry about
Health, family, security;
When I no longer hang on to
Money, resentments, and time;

Content with what is
Even if it is all there will ever be
Knowing I am well enough to savor
This moment, this gift from God
12. Compassion based on Our Common Being

We suffer when a family member suffers, as if a part of our own body were afflicted. We rejoice when a family member finds happiness, as if the happiness were our own. We belong to only one family: the human family, God’s family. How can we not care for our kin? How can we imagine God not caring for any one of us?

God Includes

God includes

All beings that have been

All beings yet to be

All beings we know about

All that we cannot see

All beings we treasure

All beings we hate

All beings regardless

Of nature, place, or date
If I value
My relationship with God
And my relationship with you
Then I must value
Your relationship with God
Whatever it may be
And know that there are as many such relationships
As there are beings alive
And each is different
Yet loving
For God’s capacity to love has no end
Whose God?

God does not belong to the successful
God does not belong to the democratic
God does not belong to the educated
God does not belong to the pious
God does not belong to the poor
God does not belong to the oppressed
God does not belong to the ignorant
God does not belong to the ostracized

God does not belong to anyone in particular…

We all belong to God
The Mystics’ Common Bond

Jews cannot name God

Muslims cannot depict Him

My own church speaks of Holy Mystery

And so, central to all faiths

Is humble acceptance

That the Sacred is beyond human description;

If we remembered this

We would live in peace

For awe-struck people cannot fight
Faiths

So many wells to one Water Table
So many leaves stirred by one Wind
So many windows on Infinity
So many roads Home
Many ‘Gods’

Don’t just tolerate diversity of religion
Celebrate it
For without diversity
God would only be accessible
To those with certain abilities
To those of certain backgrounds
To those of certain temperaments
To those with certain knowledge
To those with certain education levels
To those with certain opportunities
To those living at certain times and places in history;
With diversity
Access to God is certain
For all
God’s Psychology

Respect all life
And your individual goals come second
Submit to God
And you cannot pursue selfish ends
Let go of personal attachments
And you reach enlightenment
Remember you’re chosen and have nothing to prove
And become free to do God’s work
Lose your ordinary, self-centered life
And you will be reborn a child of God;
In different ways
All faiths seek to liberate from the focus on self
When pointing to the Sacred,
And so inspire compassionate action
Never Alone

Creator and creation touch

In the recognition

That God joins us in our suffering

Yet transcends all suffering

All time, all space, all life, all death

And that in joining others in their suffering

In seeking to give to others

As God has given to us

We are never alone

And we too transcend
Grace

We strive to avoid suffering
Then to find meaning in the suffering we encounter
Or in spite of it, when suffering defies all logic
Then we realize that much of life is suffering
As long as we dwell on our feelings;
God's grace eases suffering
By taking us outside the particular feelings
Outside the loss of love, of security, of face, of life
To rest, to acceptance, to peace,
To what we can still do
That diminishes suffering all around
Peace

Every generation
Estranged from God
Estranged from Love
By trauma, cruelty, and grief
Rears children
Estranged from God
Estranged from Love
Inflicting trauma, cruelty, and grief
And war and violence continue;
When we are able to raise a generation of children in peace
And love them as God loves us:
Attentively
Authentically
Unconditionally
Honoring all beings
As though we were never scarred,
Then we will have peace
Mine is Best

I say my architect is best
And lose sight of His handiwork
I say my prophet is best
And forget his sacred Message
I say my book is best
And claim mine is the only true Author
I say my rules are best
And insist they be followed by all;
The Architect, Message, Author,
And Foundation of all meaningful rules

Weeps
Because the pride that says
“Mine is the best”
Pushes us apart
And pushes us away
From all that has ever mattered
"Letting Go"

Whatever you value
Don’t insist that others value it
Whatever moves you
Don’t insist that others be moved
Whatever you practice
Don’t insist that others practice it
Whatever you believe
Don’t insist that others be convinced
For there are as many paths to the Sacred
As there are worshippers
And as many truths
As there are tongues
And none knows the Answer completely:
Only in confessing our ignorance
Can we find a God for all;
Only in softening our individual ideals
Can we join to become agents of Good
At War

At war we vilify dissent
And disrespect the individual
Quashing human rights in the name of safety;
At war we depict our enemies as inhuman
And disrespect others
Making them easier to kill;
At war we become preoccupied with our traumas
And disrespect our children
Breeding insecurity: the seed of future wars;
At war, history is written by the victor
And we disrespect the truth
That our crimes equal those of our enemies;
At war we claim to know God’s choice of sides
And disrespect God
Whose love embraces all;
At war we convert our vital resources to arms
And thoughtlessly scorch the earth
As we disrespect, and ultimately destroy
All life
On Neither Side

When God is forced to choose sides

God cannot be present

Except to take home the fallen

Comfort the bereaved

Strengthen the wise

Until they can stop the battle;

When God is forced to choose sides

God cannot be present,

For God unifies

Man divides
A God who feels
  Human fear
  Human isolation
  Human hopelessness
  Redeems us;
  To walk with God,
  To participate in redemption
  We must feel
  Human fear
  Human isolation
  Human hopelessness;
  Only by joining those who suffer
  Can we lessen their suffering
Only when I admit
That I know almost nothing about You
That I can never truly describe You
That I cannot claim to understand You
Any better than anyone else
Can I be open to your Presence
And see all who seek your Presence
With the same humble bewilderment
As kindred spirits
And join them
In seeking your Peace
Welcome

If you belong to a special group or special nation
And treasure that specialness
You are separated from the rest of humanity;
But if you value people
Special or not,
You will never be alone
Never Alone

What must I teach my children
I ask myself
As I fret on the morning train
Which of life’s lessons to choose?
Only this:
That like me
Like everyone
They are part of the Ocean of Life
So no matter where they are
Or how they direct their energies
They are not alone
And I am not alone either
For in some way we are all connected
And in that connection
We cannot help but feel compassion for others
We cannot help but do what is right
We cannot help but be strong
In the face of danger and mortality
We cannot help but contribute
To the Tide of Love
Sharing

Compassion is natural
When understanding the unity of all beings
For how can I not empathize
With a part of myself?
How can I destroy another
Without diminishing myself?
How can I bring joy to another
Without rejoicing?
I am never alone
As long as I can see another’s face
Salvation

Who wants to live forever
When all beings die?
Who wants to enjoy heaven
When others suffer in hell?
How can I save myself
And not return for my children?

We are all children of the same Universe
We are all saved or doomed together
Immigrant

It is not enough
To accept you
Tolerate you
Treat you with common courtesy
Allow you to live in my neighborhood
If I don’t also
Comfort you
Nourish you
Value what you have to offer
Learn about your customs and beliefs;
To do this I must see you
As a fellow child of God
For only then
Can I befriend you
Treasure you
Advocate for you
Find joy in you
As I befriend, treasure, advocate for, and find joy in
My closest kin
In the Unity of All Being

In the Unity of All Being
There is both wonder and pain:
Wonder because we are part of Something
That is greater, wiser, stronger
More noble, more intricate, more generous,
More vast, more lasting
Than we can describe in words;
Pain because so many beings suffer
Hurt, cold, hunger
Injustice, exclusion
Fear, rage, despair
And in the Unity of All Being
Their suffering is ours;
In the Unity of All Being
Life’s purpose is simple:
Share the wonder, reduce the pain
I sent a wish for peace

On my Christmas cards, then realized

That peace is more than the absence of war:

Peace is the awareness

That all that we hope for

All that we anticipate

All that we aspire to

All that we yearn for

All that we seek

All that we pray for

All that we need, and want, and crave

Is here, now

In the discovery that we are one

With each other

And with all Being
In You

In You
We are one
So I cannot be cruel
For that would mean hurting myself

In You
We are blessed
So I cannot curse life
And deny the wonder of being

In You
I can only
Feel wanted and loved
And love and want those around me

In You
I can hope
That Your life-giving ways
Will some day touch every heart
I’d like to see my child do well
Not to reflect well on its mother
Or relieve her anxiety about its future
But just because it gives me joy
To see it thrive;
I’d like to see you do well
Not to reflect well on me
Or relieve my anxiety about your future
But just because if gives me joy
To see you thrive;
I’d like to see this group do well
Not to reflect well on me
Or relieve my anxiety about its future
But just because if gives me joy
To see it thrive;
I’d like to see the human family do well
Not to reflect well on me
Or relieve my anxiety about its future
But just because it gives me joy
To see it thrive
Echoes

Seek to feed
And you will not hunger
Seek to quench
And you will not thirst
Seek to understand
And you will be understood
Seek to calm
And you will find peace;
When you give what you desire most
You give to all Life
And what is given can’t help but come back
As the music you play
Brings joy to your ears
And your own caring words
Make you whole
When I am grounded

I make each moment count

When I am grounded

I serve the Greater Good

When I am grounded

I do not crave the spotlight

When I am grounded

I seek to heal, to love

When I am grounded

I join with those before me,

Behind me, and around

When I am grounded

I drink from ancient wellsprings

And teach without a sound

When I am grounded

I know my destination

But focus on the way

When I am grounded

I hurt with others’ sorrows

And hold instead of pray
Loving Legacy

Whether you succeed
Whether you fail
Whether people like you
Or you end up in jail
Whether the sun shines on you
Or you’re caught in the pelting rain
Whether things work out
Or end in accidents and pain,
Know this always
That within your veins
Runs the Legacy of millions:
Their wisdom and their strength remains
13. Compassion based on Paying Forward

When we experience God’s love on a personal level, as a love more unconditional than any parent can give, we want to pay back what we have received. Paying back is not possible though, so our only option is to pay forward: providing others with a similar but human version of what we have experienced.

*Golden Rule*

Do unto others not as you would have them do to you

But as God has done to you:

As God has given to you,

So give;

As God has forgiven you,

So forgive;

As God has held you,

So hold;

As God has accepted you,

So accept;

As God has loved you,

So love
Family

Live God’s love
Not because you follow the commandments,
Not because you should,
Not to win approval,
Not because it’s considered ethical
But because you cannot do anything else:
When you feel accepted
As a child of God
And you see others as God’s children too,
That inner knowledge must come out
And compassion becomes as natural as breathing
Shine

White, brilliant light
Contrasts with the darkness most:
A symbol of inspiration,
Of goodness conquering bad
And yet, most of us prefer lamps to naked bulbs,
Knowing intuitively
That life is never that brilliant, that pure
And a translucent, dusty shade
Creates a softer light;
Those who recognize their impurities,
Experience forgiveness, forgive themselves,
And then dare to shine with love
Gently, persistently illuminate the world
Parents

God the Father or Mother

Is the perfect metaphor,

For no other human love

Approximates God’s Love

Like the love of a parent for a child;

To live God’s love,

I must love others

As I have been loved

As I love my children:

Giving them always what I believe is best

With no strings attached;

The children of God

Are parents to the world
Giving

If I give what I think is wanted
   I seek approval,
If I give what I think will help
   I seek self-worth,
If I give what I think is enough
   I am stingy,
If I give what I think is good
   I am proud,
If I give without thought
   As I have been given
No matter what the response
And thankfully take others’ gifts
   Then my gift is a blessing
   That brings into life
My Source of All Blessing
   My God
Mother

As a mother
No matter how much my child hurt me
I would never give up on my child
Or stop teaching my child
What is necessary for life;
I would never leave my child
Without the means
To carry on without me;
I would never hate my child
Or point out flaws
That cannot be forgiven;
I would never send my child
Into a wilderness
That cannot be crossed;
I would always be there for my child,
I would always see promise in my child
Even if my child had horrible self-doubts,
My child would still be the most precious, special, unbelievably blessed being to me;
If I regard all I meet with a mother’s love
Then I become a conduit of the love of God
Becoming Blessing

May I forgive
As I have been forgiven,
May I hold
As I have been held,
May I encourage
As I have been encouraged,
May I be present with others
As You are present with me
The Generous Spirit

The generous Spirit
Gives you the benefit of the doubt,
Approaches you with curiosity rather than judging,
Assumes you are just having a bad day
And encourages your strengths;
The generous Spirit
Sees past the defenses borne of fear
To the wounded child within,
Confident that the child will find courage,
Will heal,
And will shine forth with love,
And responds as though she already had
So she too can exude
The generous Spirit
Paying Forward

In forgiving
As God has forgiven me,

In welcoming
As God has welcomed me,

In embracing
As God has embraced me,

In encouraging
As God has encouraged me,

In liberating
As God has liberated me,

There is joy
Heaven

God is the Spirit of Compassion:
I experience God’s Compassion
And experience compassion for myself
And experience compassion for others
And can go beyond experience
To compassionate action;
If others respond to that action
By experiencing compassion too,
Then the Spirit of Compassion
Infuses more and more of life;
Maybe that’s how we make heaven happen
Already There

I am already loved by God,
I am already valued by God,
I am already encouraged by God,
I already belong with God
So I need not impress anyone

   And am free
   To love,
   To value,
   To encourage,
   And to share belonging

   With others
When I pray for others

I can only pray:

Strengthen them

As You have strengthened me,

Forgive them

As You have forgiven me,

Love them

As You have loved me,

And teach me to do the same
Because God loves me gently

With forgiveness, acceptance, and encouragement

I can love others gently

With forgiveness, acceptance, and encouragement

And, if I remember,

I can love myself gently

With forgiveness, acceptance, and encouragement
Honor

Honor your body,
Honor your mind;
Take care of them,
Celebrate them,
Do not harm them
For through them
You communicate God’s love;
Honor each person’s body,
Honor each person’s mind;
Take care of them,
Celebrate them,
Do not harm them
For through them
Each person communicates God’s love
Beginning at Home

I yearn to participate
In a good solution,
In realizing God’s dream,
In fulfilling creation’s promise
Yet, as a part of that creation,
I cannot act upon it
Only within it
And within myself;
God’s love spreads
Into open hearts
Willing to love and honor themselves
And love and honor each other
As God has loved and honored each one
May I Be

May I be authentic,

Speaking the truth kindly;

May I be inspiring,

Sharing what I know with joy;

May I be loving,

Seeking what matters to each person I meet;

Thankful for these goals

And the means to reach them

As I experience authentic, inspiring Love

That is ever-present, everywhere

Cradling the universe
God reaches out to the vulnerable
And joins us in our vulnerability,
Loving us unconditionally
Whether or not we love back,
Entrusting creation to our care;
So how can we not
Reach out to the vulnerable
And join them in their vulnerability,
Loving them unconditionally
Whether or not they love back,
Entrusting the future to their care
As God entrusts the world to us
So we must trust
In the sacred Spark
That exists in every being;
Assume it is there
No matter how deeply buried,
Nurture it as we would a child
By respecting those
Who cannot respect themselves,
By being proud of their deeds
When they cannot take pride themselves,
By forgiving them
When they cannot forgive themselves,
By loving them
When they cannot love themselves;
As we are trusted, so we must trust
As keepers of Love’s flame
Belonging

If I am God’s
Then I must forgive them
As God forgives them,
Then I must have hope for them
As God has hope for them,
Then I must listen to them
As God listens to them,
Then I must teach them
As God teaches them,
Then I must believe in them
As God believes in them,
Then I must love them
As God loves them;
For, if I am God’s,
Then I must know that all beings are
And in that knowledge
Embrace them
As God

As God has forgiven me
When I could not forgive myself
So must I now forgive you;
As God has understood me
When I could not understand myself
So must I now understand you;
As God has believed in me
When I could not believe in myself
So must I now believe in you;
As God has loved me
When I could not love myself
So must I now love you;

For even in the unforgiving, judgmental, discouraging, rejecting
Latrines of human existence

There is God,
There is hope,

And you are beautiful and strong
God Be With You

May the Sacred within you shine forth,

May you never cease to Wonder,

May the Force be with you,

May the Spirit move you,

May you be blessed

And be a blessing

To all you touch

Amen
14. Visions

Sometimes the Sacred is more apparent in images or in sensory experiences than in words. The meaning of these images and experiences may overlap with ideas already described, but it is expressed in a different way.

The Diamond

Free will, the philosophers say,
Is there so I don’t feel like God’s puppet
And God doesn’t feel guilty for allowing evil;

Free will, I say,
Is there to allow each being
Its own exploration of one facet
Of the infinitely faceted Sacred;

So that none are excluded
Unless they fight over which facet is best

And thereby diminish God
Catch the Wind

God is reached
When I stop pursuing,
And instead
Watch, wait, and wonder
Until touched by the gentle Breeze
Of Grace
Far from the Beach

Surf the waves,
Stop fighting them
Or yearning for calm,
And embrace others on the ride;

Know that the current pushes towards Shore
Even if you cannot see ahead;
Observe the chaos
And trust that,
Frightening and inevitable as it is,

It will pass
And you will reunite with Peace
Skiing

When I look back at the trail
Where I have panted uphill,
Where glided with ease,
Where dared a steep pitch,
Where fallen and risen again
Returning to my snowy plod,
I thank my Companion,
My limbs’ Guiding Force,
My Teacher,
Trail-keeper
And Maker of sun, snow, and air
Do not pray for an easy life
For calm waters do not progress;
Pray instead for a means to do the right thing
For there is no greater joy
Than to strive to do it and succeed;
Even if the striving is turbulent
As your work conflicts with the currents
Of popular opinion
And is degraded and obstructed
By ignorant leaders currently in vogue;
Fight the current
Or skillfully paddle through it,
Do not be relegated to a peripheral pond
Unless it is to catch your breath
And find your bearings
For the next leg of the journey
Leaving the Hospital

Whatever tragedy has befallen,
Whatever problems loom,
Whatever grips my fevered mind,
Whatever shakes my soul
I feel the sunshine on my arm,
Cool breezes blow my hair;
I need only drive from here to there:
This moment I am blessed
The Marketplace

Once I saw life as a road
With each new career goal
And each new relationship goal
Marking the passage of time
And occasionally I’d let myself stop
To smell the flowers;
Now I see that life is the flowers
Which delight my senses
And need my care,
Giving to me and accepting from me
As all beings give to and accept from each other,
Give to and accept from the planet,
Give to and accept from God;
It’s not a lonely road I see now
But a marvelous, timeless
Marketplace for all
Amoeba

What if we are all extensions,
Individual yet inseparable limbs,
Of one single-celled Being
That forms us,
Sustains us,
Connects us,
Draws us back into Itself
But cannot define Itself,
Move forward,
Or impact the universe
Without us?
Creation Myth

Once there was a Vase
Perfectly cast and exquisite
But empty;
When It could stand the emptiness no more
It shattered,
Each piece taking on its own life
Yet knowing its Origin deep within
And yearning to rejoin It
By joining with the other pieces;
So the static, empty Vase
Became dynamic and teeming with life,
But only by breaking apart
And trusting the pieces
To one day make It whole
Telescope

We view the stars
And think we see the universe,
Yet if we saw them through the Hubble
What myriad swirls of purple galaxies
Would be added to our view!
Some so distant that their brightness
Might shine from centuries ago
And hide what’s there today;
Still, Hubble’s view is only a piece
Of the unimaginable whole;
We view our faith
And think we see God
The Creator of that whole,
Yet the wisest sage or prophet
Gives only a Hubble’s view
Vision

See reality as God would have it be

Even if it is not that way yet,

See beyond your linear thought

To curiosity about the inexplicable,

See beyond your limited justice

To limitless generosity,

See beyond your conventional self-esteem

To knowing you can endure more

Reach more

Be more

Than you ever imagined
Here and Now

I am baptized by snowflakes
   Melting on my brow,
Caressed by a cooling breeze;
I am calmed by the surf’s sound
   Drumming in my ears,
I feel the sunbeam’s embrace;
   At times like these
I stop pursuing
   A seemingly elusive Truth:
Sometimes the Ground of All Being reveals Itself
   As the ground beneath my feet
Sunrise

Success is not
Achieving the spotlight;
Success is
Finding some small way
To help bring about the Dawn
Soul

Whatever piece of me
Is aware of being one
With all beings,
With all life
And lives in ways
Consistent with that awareness
Becomes more than me,
Becomes eternal,
Becomes Love
Walk

If you are seeking God, walk

Then walk some more;

Walk until walking itself becomes a pleasure,

Until you no longer think about how far you have come

Or how far you have to go,

Until you hear only

The wind stirring the leaves

And the steady pulse that sustains you,

Until you see only

The path beckoning ahead

And the sweat on the tip of your nose,

Until you feel only

The soft, yielding earth below

And the easy flow of air within,

Until your arms swing without effort

And your footsteps follow the Rhythm of the Universe
Traveling

When I am traveling
I make the most of each day
But don’t fret if I cannot do everything planned;

When I am traveling
I accept that some things are beyond my control
And take unforeseen glitches in stride;

When I am traveling
I am open to unexpected joys
Savor the moments that hold them, and go on;

When I am traveling
I have no image to maintain
So am free to be more than my usual self;

But isn’t all of my life
Traveling?
The more I build my self up
The less the light of God can shine through me;
Knowing I am loved
I can forget my self,
I am transparent,
Luminous
And blessed
Mountains

I stand on the peak looking outward
To the distant, glistening lake,
Mighty summits to my left and right
Forming an unbroken circle:
Ancient guardians and friends
Beckoning towards the turquoise pool;
The chill of dusk approaches
But the mountains remain warm,
Glowing embers of the day;
They surround me, envelope me,
Hold me
Until I feel held by all Time,
Held by all Love,
Held by the Universe itself
Ready to float freely away if I choose
Drawn to the light, to the lake, to the new horizon
To the Infinity
That is the Cradle of life and its end—
But there’s more work to be done
So I take the gondola back down
Window

It doesn’t matter
If I achieve great things,
It doesn’t matter
If I fail;
It doesn’t matter
If I resolve the past,
It doesn’t matter
What comes;
It doesn’t matter
If I am loved or scorned,
It doesn’t matter
If I’m alone;
It doesn’t matter
If I am confused or content,
It doesn’t matter
If I feel pain;
It only matters
That in this encounter
I am Love:

I am a window for heaven’s Light
To shine through this day
The Way

God’s Way
Celebrates the connection,
The interdependence
Between me and others,
Between me and this time and place,
Between me and God;
And in so doing
Dissolves me
Into the greater Me
That is its Origin
Its Destiny
Its Life
Rainbows

Only rain

Allows the sun’s light

To show its true colours;

Only through despair

Do we truly understand Love
There is no miracle but Love
That survives within the darkness;
There is no smoke-and-mirrors god
That heals the sick by faith;
There is no scientific feat
That stems the ravages of time;
There is no ingenious human plan
That will save a dying planet;
There is no miracle but Love
And our ability to receive It
The Cathedral

How do you build a cathedral?

It can’t be built alone

It takes architects, tradesmen, artists, and more

And still they can’t finish the dome;

A boy comes along, a bit slower than most,

What can he add to the design?

“I’ll tell people about it!” he sweetly chimes,

“I’ll tell them and it will be fine!”

All beings are needed to finish God’s home,

Every one has something to add;

This world’s a cathedral: unfinished yet grand,

So receive others’ gifts and be glad
Labyrinth

You cannot choose your path,

Only how you walk it:

Fast or slow,

Poised or staggering clumsily,

Intentionally, focused on each footstep,

Or reactively, following every distraction,

Taking the unpredictable turns with grace

Or despairing of ever reaching your goal,

Lingering in the quiet centre

Then continuing on, as you must,

Gently brushing past fellow travelers with a smile

Or seeing them as frustrating obstacles,

Never knowing how much further you have to go,

Pursuing a seemingly random course

Whose design is not clear until you end,

Able only to trust that it leads somewhere good

And that you are not alone on the journey
Music

If all I touch are those that hear my voice
Or see my performance
Or shake my hand
Or read my book,
Fame matters
And when my fame dies, so do I;
But if all life is connected in a wondrous Web
And my tears are dewdrops that bend its strands
And my words are fingers that strum it
Then whatever I do ripples on across time,
Whatever I am makes a difference
To some broken soul,
And when I am no longer seen or heard
I’m still part of life’s melody
New World

I cannot see the outcome
Or tell when my work will bear fruit,
I cannot hear a thank you
Every time I try to help,
I cannot know the impact
My efforts will have over time,
I cannot recognize the people
Indirectly touched by my deeds,
I can only trust
That when I act with care
Each encounter becomes like a prayer,
A chance to welcome the Sacred in you
And invite it to surface more often,
And millions of encounters later, some day
A world joined by Love will emerge
Art

At our best
We are human expressions
Of divine Intent,
Artistic creations of the Sacred,
Living manifestations
Of an ancient Dream,
Transforming, completing,
And honoring life
That it may reach its ultimate form
In continuity and communion
With all other beings on the tableau
And with the Artist’s brush
Seeking Heaven

Be the heaven you seek:

Be timeless,

Be selfless,

Worship your God without fear;

Be the heaven you seek:

Include all,

Respect all,

Grasp opportunities to give;

Be the heaven you seek:

Laugh often,

Thank always,

Never be too old to learn;

Be the heaven you seek:

Dream big,

Be open to love,

Look for the best in each being;

Be the heaven you seek

And if you can’t,

Believe you can become it
Our souls, 
Those unique, sacred elements within each of us,
Bleed together on life’s canvas
Forming one Great Soul
That is without time
Without boundary
Without end
And so knows us as no other
And holds wisdom from all that live,
Have lived, and are yet to be
And in this Soul we have our being,
However we describe It or relate to It;
It fuels our desire to live
Authentically, humbly, compassionately
And with purpose
Moving towards ever greater wholeness
For ourselves,
For each other,
And for all creation
Undivided Reality

There is no young or old,

No traditional or modern,

There is only Love;

There is no winner or loser,

No hero or villain,

There is only Love;

There is no right or left,

No ally or foe,

There is only Love;

There is no man-made or natural,

No creature or creation,

There is only Love;

And no matter how clever our ideas,

How passionate our desires,

How powerful our actions,

How profound our deepest longings,

There is only Love,

There has only ever been Love,

And only Love will go on