

Making Space for God

Elemental Spirituality—Childhood

A Child's Prayer

Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. Keep me in thy tender care; guard me from the skunk and bear. Hold me in the dead of night; save me from my dreams of fright. Be my refuge, be my rock; lead me safely with your flock. I am yours and you are mine; for today and for all time. Bless Mom and Dad and Brother Joe; and help your weary world of woe. We killed your fish, we killed your soil; we've filled the sky with too much oil. We're mean to neighbors far and near; we hide behind tall walls in fear. Have mercy on us, we were wrong; make us clean, make us strong. Strong in goodness, hope, and love; strong in kindness from above. The peace of peace be mine this night; O darken not to me Your light. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take... Me home. Amen¹



Arrival

Take five minutes to settle yourself by breathing deeply. Inhale for the count of five through your nose and as you do so pray silently, "I belong to Jesus." Exhale through your mouth for the count of ten and as you do so pray silently "Body and Soul, in this life and the next." Once you feel relaxed invite the Lord to guide and direct your thoughts for the day. Think back over where you have been in the last eight weeks. What burdens, emotions, and concerns do you carry? What are you thankful for? Offer these to the Lord.

Childhood—A Conversation with My Five Year Old Granddaughter

"Pop, what happened to your hair?" Sadie asked.

"Well it fell out a long time ago," I said.

"Did it hurt when it fell out?"

"No, in fact I really didn't notice it falling out until afterwards."

"But why did it fall out Pop?"

"I'm not sure why, it just did." I replied. "The same thing happened to my father."

"Will it happen to me, Pop?"

"I don't think so. Little girls don't lose their hair. You're safe."

I started going bald thirty-five years ago and since that time my granddaughter is the only one I recall ever asking me about the experience. Children are inquisitive learners unencumbered with respectable mores of polite society. They immediately notice what is out of the ordinary. They ask questions. Unlike most adults, they have not lost their capacity to wonder and be amazed. It is that same childlike capacity that Jesus says is essential to entering and living in his kingdom.

Scripture Reading—Mark 9:36-38 and Mark 10:13-16

³⁶ He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷ “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.”

¹³ People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴ When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁵ Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” ¹⁶ And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

Reading for Reflection

Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up.

Pablo Picasso

When it's over, I want to say: all my life I was a bride married to amazement. I was a bridegroom taking the world into my arms. When it's over, I don't want to wonder if I have made of my life something, particular and real. I don't want to find myself sighing and frightened or full of argument. I don't want to end up having simply visited this world.

From the poem "When Death Comes" by Mary Oliver

We are all pilgrims, and our calling is to pilgrimage. The gift of monasteries, convents, churches, pastors, and spiritual directors is to make a safe place where we can pause on the way, reflect, and receive sustenance and encouragement to go on. And the task of the pilgrim is to trust; trust that the journey is safe enough for us to risk, to trust that others will help us on the way, to trust that those with the charism will provide safety and wisdom for us to keep journeying, and overall to trust the Divine Other that we will be kept safe in this journey of life. We trust that even though we will meet trials and tribulations, even though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, somehow it is a safe universe, and the Creator will shelter us even in death.

Irene Alexander in Conversations

William James, the American psychologist, used to give this advice: ‘Do every day something you don't like doing for no other reason than that you don't like doing it.’ He likened this exhilarating practice to the regular payment of insurance premiums. The small regular payments which you can afford without difficulty give you the sense of security resulting from the knowledge that, in the unfortunate event of fire, you are covered. In a similar way the regular acts of self denial build up reserves of strength with which to meet the great crisis when they come. The ability to say ‘no’ to inclination is part and parcel of the power to say ‘yes’ to opportunity when it knocks.

Christopher Bryant in The Heart in Pilgrimage page 108

The greatest of all illusions is the illusion of familiarity.

G.K. Chesterton

Benediction

You are the peace of all things calm. You are the place to hide from harm. You are the light that shines in dark. You are the heart's eternal spark. You are the door that's open wide. You are the guest who waits inside. You are the stranger at the door. You are the calling of the poor. You are my Lord and with me still. You are my love, keep me from ill. You are the light, the truth, the way. You are my Savior this very day.

Celtic oral tradition - 1st millennium