

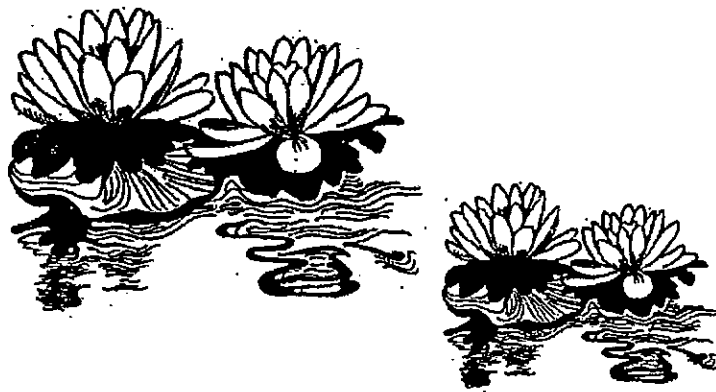
*Readings and Prayers*

*for*

*Reflection*

*Journaling*

*Sharing*



## *Welcome Morning*

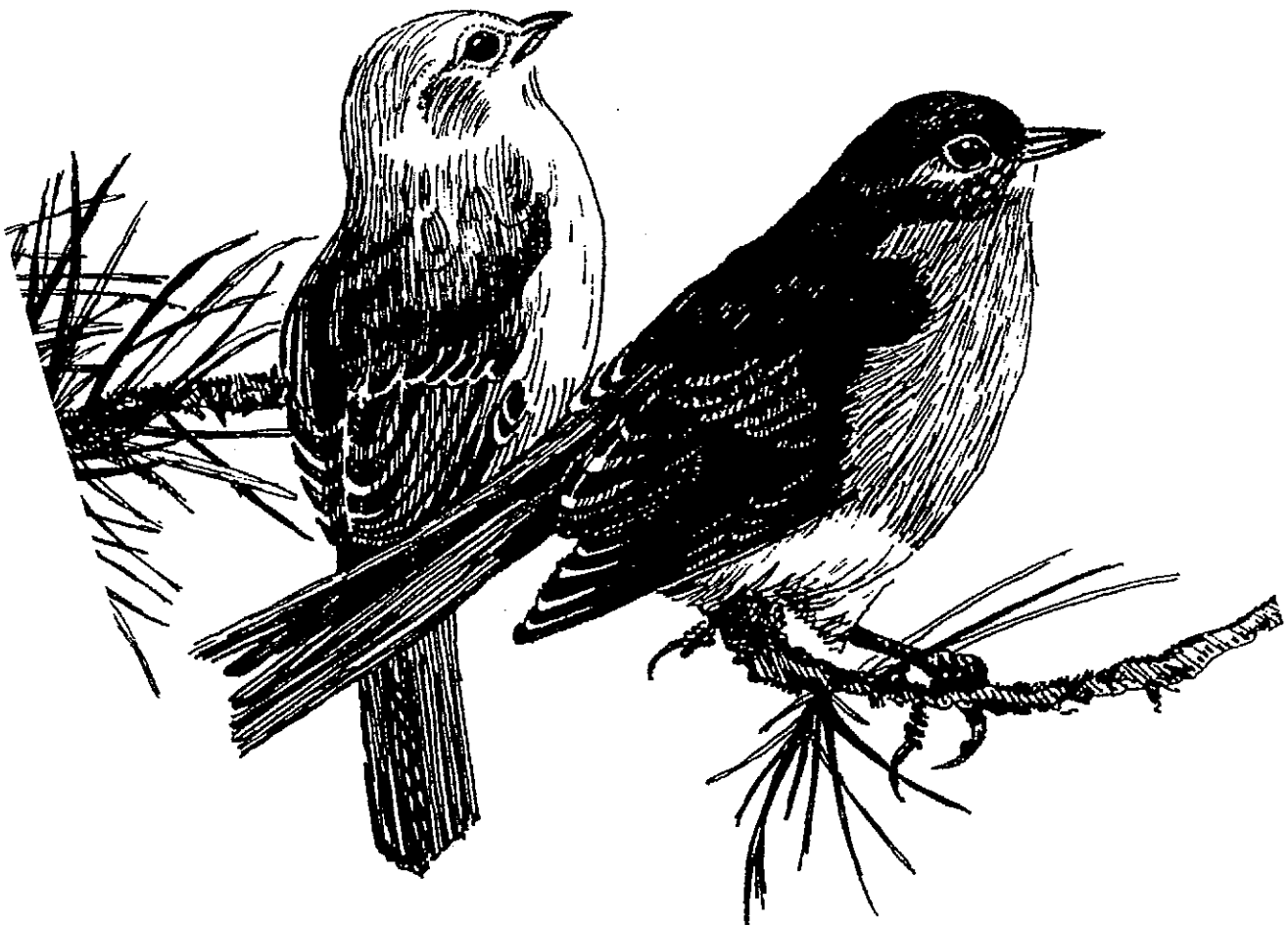
There is joy  
in all:  
in the hair I brush each morning,  
in the Cannon towel, newly washed,  
that I rub my body with each morning,  
in the chapel of eggs I cook  
each morning,  
in the outcry from the kettle  
that heats my coffee  
each morning,  
in the spoon and the chair  
that cry "hello there, Anne"  
each morning,  
in the godhead of the table  
that I set my silver, plate, cup upon  
each morning.

All this is God,  
right here in my pea-green house  
each morning  
and I mean,  
though often forget,  
to give thanks,  
to faint down by the kitchen table  
in a prayer of rejoicing  
as the holy birds at the kitchen window  
peck into their marriage of seeds.

So while I think of it,  
let me paint a thank-you on my palm  
for this God, this laughter of the morning,  
lest it go unspoken.

The Joy that isn't shared, I've heard,  
dies young.

--Anne Sexton



*Spirituality is more about whether or not we can sleep at night than about whether or not we go to church. It is about being integrated or falling apart, about being within community or being lonely, about being in harmony with mother earth or being alienated from her. Irrespective of whether or not we let ourselves be consciously shaped by any explicit religious idea, we act in ways that leave us either healthy or unhealthy, loving or bitter, in community or alienated from it. What shapes our actions is our spirituality.*

*--Seeking Spirituality, Ronald Rolheiser, OMI*

What is your reaction to the last sentence?

What shapes your actions?

Is this your spirituality?

*Here's the thing, say Shug. The thing I believe. God is inside you and inside everybody else. You come into the world with God. But only them that search for it inside find it. And sometimes it manifest itself even if you not looking, or don't know what you looking for. Trouble do it for most folk, I think. Sorrow, lord. Feeling like shit.*

*It? I ast.*

*Yeah, It. God ain't a he or a she but a It.*

*But what do it look like? I ast.*

*Don't look like nothing, she say. It ain't a picture show. It ain't something you can look at apart from anything else, including yourself...She say, My first step away from (thinking God looked like) the old white man was trees. Then air. Then birds. Then other people. But one day when I was sitting quiet and feeling like a motherless child, which I was, it came to me: that feeling of being part of everything, not separate at all. I knew that if I cut a tree, my arm would bleed. And I laughed and I cried and I run all around the house. I knew just what it was.*

*Well, us talk and us talk about God, but I'm still adrift. Trying to chase that old white man out of my head. But this hard work, let me tell you. He been there so long, he don't want to budge. He threaten lightening, floods, and earthquakes. Us fight. I been so busy thinking bout him I never truly notice nothing God make. Not a blade of corn (how it do that?) not the color purple (where it come from?). Not the little wild flowers. Nothing.*

*Amen.*

*Adapted from **The Color Purple**, by Alice Walker*

What have my images of God been throughout my life?

How have these images changed?

Which am I ready to step away from and which do I want to hold on to?

*Each of us is put here in this time and this place to personally decide the future of humankind. Did you think the Creator would create unnecessary people in a time of such terrible danger? Know that you yourself are essential to this World.*

*--Chief Arvol Looking Horse of the Lakota, Dakota and Nakota Nation,  
19<sup>th</sup> Generation Keeper of the Sacred White Buffalo Calf Pipe*

At this time in your life, what do you think makes you "essential to the World"?

*Perhaps the greatest lesson we can learn from nature is gratitude. If we could publish it in our lives everyday, the way nature publishes beauty in every sunrise and every sunset, how different might the world be?*

*--Dewitt Jones, photojournalist*

How would you answer this question?

***Now Is the Time***

*Now is the time to know  
that all that you do is sacred.*

*Now, why not consider  
a lasting truce with yourself and God.*

*Now is the time to understand  
that all your ideas of right and wrong  
were just child's training wheels  
to be laid aside  
when you finally live  
with veracity  
and love.*

*[You are] a divine envoy  
whom the Beloved  
has written a holy message upon.*

*My dear, please tell me,  
why do you still  
throw sticks at your heart  
and God?*

*What is it in that sweet voice inside  
that incites you to fear?*

*Now is the time for you to compute the impossibility  
that there is anything  
but Grace.*

*Now is the season to know  
that everything you do  
is sacred.*

—Hafiz, 14<sup>th</sup> Century Persian poet  
—translated by Daniel Ladinsky

What ideas of right and wrong have you had to lay aside?

What do you do in your life that you consider sacred now?

What else could you consider sacred?



*Resurrection.* The reversal of what was thought to be absolute. The turning of midnight into dawn, hatred into love, dying into living anew.

If we look more closely into life, we will find that resurrection is more than hope, it is our experience. The return to life from death is something we understand at our innermost depths, something we feel on the surface of our tender skin. We have come back to life, not only when we start to shake off a shroud of sorrow that has bound us, but when we begin to believe in all that is still, endlessly possible.

We give thanks for all those times we have arisen from the depths or simply taken a tiny step toward something new. May we be empowered by extraordinary second chances. And as we enter the world anew, let us turn the tides of despair into endless waves of hope.

--Molly Fumia

*Reflection and sharing:*

*When have you come back to life? Or perhaps taken a tiny step toward something new?*



*"...the kind of hope I often think about...I understand above all as a state of mind, not a state of the world. Either we have hope within us or we don't; it is a dimension of the soul, and it's not essentially dependent on some particular observation of the world or estimate of the situation. It is an orientation of the spirit, an orientation of the heart; it transcends the world that is immediately experienced and is anchored somewhere beyond its horizons.*

*Hope, in this deep and powerful sense, is not the same as joy that things are going well, or willingness to invest in enterprises that are obviously headed for early success, but, rather, an ability to work for something because it is good, not just because it stands a chance to succeed. The more unpropitious the situation in which we demonstrate hope, the deeper that hope is. Hope is definitely not the same thing as optimism. It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out.*

*It is this hope, above all, which gives us the strength to live and continually to try new things..."*

*--Vaclav Havel*

What in your life do you work for simply "because it is good, not just because it stands a chance to succeed"?

*Write it on your heart  
that every day is the best day in the year.  
(S)he is rich who owns the day, and no one owns the day  
who allows it to be invaded with fret and anxiety.*

*Finish every day and be done with it.  
You have done what you could.  
Some blunders and absurdities, no doubt crept in.  
Forget them as soon as you can, tomorrow is a new day;  
begin it well and serenely, with too high a spirit  
to be cumbered with your old nonsense.*

*This new day is too dear,  
with its hopes and invitations,  
to waste a moment on the yesteryears.*

*--Ralph Waldo Emerson*

What blunders, absurdities or doubts do you need to let go of today?

*Have patience with everything unresolved in your heart  
and try to love the questions themselves...*

*Don't search for the answers,  
which could not be given to you now,  
because you would not be able to live them.*

*And the point is, to live everything.*

*Live the questions now.*

*Perhaps then, someday far in the future,  
you will gradually, without even noticing it,  
live your way into the answer.*

*--Rainer Maria Rilke*

What questions do you have that you need to "try to love"?

*I will not die an unlived life.  
I will not live in fear  
of falling or catching fire.  
I choose to inhabit my days,  
to allow my living to open me,  
to make me less afraid,  
more accessible,  
to loosen my heart  
until it becomes a wing,  
a torch, a promise.  
I choose to risk my significance;  
to live so that which came to me as seed  
goes to the next as blossom  
and that which came to me a blossom,  
goes on as fruit.*

*--Dawna Markova*

What do you see as your seed which needs to move on as blossom?