

Before I tell my life what I  
*want to do* with it, I must *listen*  
to my life telling me *who I am.*  
Parker Palmer



# A Discernment Retreat

## *Participant Booklet*

From  
**Service to**  
**Sisterhood**



# Morning Prayer

## Learn to Live the Story

*Marty Haugen*

Here we remember stories how you shaped the world in love,  
birthed the oceans and the fertile lands from the shining skies above.  
Still you surround and fill us, you bring life into all things,  
into root and bud and fruit and leaf, into fin and fur and wings.  
God of all creation, come create in us anew so in grief and in elation  
we may learn to live the story with you.

Here we remember stories of the ones who heard your call,  
through the waters and the wilderness you were faithful to them all.  
Still you disturb and call us from the safety of our homes,  
to embrace the love in hidden ways and to trust in you alone.  
God of blood and fire come and move in us anew  
so that truer deeper higher we may learn to live the story with you.  
Here we remember, here we remember.

Here we remember stories of the one who wore your face,  
he was hope for those in fear and doubt, he was healing, he was grace.  
He spoke with words of fire and his deeds were brave and true,  
he proclaimed the reign of love and peace, and he showed the way to you.  
He taught a God who suffers with the broken and the poor,  
God disguised within the enemy and the stranger at our door.  
God who raised up Jesus, come and raise us up anew,  
in our death and resurrection we may learn to live the story with you.

He and his friends had gathered for the stories and the feast,  
Jesus washed their feet to show them how the greatest shall be least.  
When they were all at table he took blessed and broken bread,  
“Take and eat,” he said, “my body, so the body shall be fed.”

After the meal was ended he blessed a cup of wine,  
“Take and drink this cup, my life blood, this is symbol, this is sign.”  
Every time we gather in the breaking of the bread  
we proclaim the life of Jesus and his rising from the dead.  
Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

Remember, O God, your people, all who seek you on the way.  
May they know your hand of comfort, may your light fill all their days.  
Remember all those who suffer, remember those in need.  
Give us courage and compassion to be one with them in deed.  
Keep in us a vision of the world where all is new,  
may your reign begin within us, may we truly live the story with you.

# Morning Prayer

Through him, and with him, and in him, amen.  
Through the life of Jesus and with him in his death  
and in his resurrection is our glory and our prayer.  
In the Spirit's presence may our prayer be strong and true,  
God our Father, God our Mother, be all thanks and praise to you.

Amen, Alleluia, come Lord Jesus, Amen.

## Psalm 139:1-12, 23-24

*Nan Merrill translation*

O my Beloved, You have searched me  
and known me!  
You know when I sit down and  
when I rise up;  
You discern my innermost thoughts.  
You find me on the journey and  
guide my steps;  
You know my strengths and  
my weaknesses.  
Even before words rise up in prayer,  
Lo, You have already heard  
my heart call.  
You encompass me with love where're  
I go,  
and your strength is my shield.  
Such sensitivity is too wonderful  
for me;  
it is high; boundless gratitude  
is my soul's response.

Where could I go from your Spirit?  
Or how could I flee from  
your Presence?  
If I ascend into heaven, You are there!  
If I make my bed in darkness,  
You are there!  
If I soar on the wings of the morning  
or dwell in the deepest parts  
of the sea,  
Even there your Hand will lead me,  
and your Love will embrace me.  
If I say, "Let only darkness cover me,  
and the Light about me be night,"  
Even the darkness is not dark to You,  
the night dazzles as with the sun;  
the darkness is as light with You.  
Search me, O my Beloved, and know  
my heart!  
Try me and discern my thoughts!  
Help me to face the darkness within me;  
enlighten me, that I might radiate  
your Love and Light!

## Each Soul Completes Me

*Hafiz*

My Beloved said, "My name is not complete without yours."

I thought: How could a human's worth ever be such?

And God knowing all our thoughts — and all our thoughts are innocent steps on the path —  
then addressed my heart, God revealed a sublime truth to the world, when She sang,

"I am made whole by your life. Each soul, each soul completes me.

# My Life-line

## Being Loved

- How old were you? Where? Who was there?
- What made you know you were loved in that experience?
- What was it about the people that made you know you were loved?
- What lasting effect did this experience have on you?

## Being Love

- How old were you? Where? Who was there?
- What made you know you were a presence of love?
- What qualities did you have that led you to be a presence of love?
- What lasting effect did this experience have on you?

# My Life-line

**Being Loved**

**Being Love**







## ...Through Others...

“The vocational discernment search for harmony between “who I am” and “what I will do” would become a distracting echo chamber if one’s fundamental life orientation remained skewed.”

“Without conversion and ongoing transformation,  
it is all too easy to confuse who God wants me to be with who I want me to be.”

### **How can we get in touch with “this transcendent presence within ourselves”?**

- Who are the people in your life who have helped to shape you into the person you are today?

- Who shaped you during your year of service?

- Who inspires you?

- “Without conversion and ongoing transformation, it is all too easy to confuse who God wants me to be with who I want me to be.”



# God Calls Me Through Others For Others

## **Make Me an Instrument of Your Peace**

*Lori True*

Make me an instrument of Your peace  
Where there is hatred, let us bring love;  
Where there is injury, let us bring pardon;  
Where there is doubt, let us bring faith  
Where there is despair, let us bring hope;  
Where there is darkness, let us bring light;  
Where there is sadness, let us bring joy.  
    May we never seek to be consoled, as to console;  
    To be understood, as to understand;  
    To be loved, as to love  
        It is in giving that we receive.  
        It is in pardoning that we are pardoned.  
        It is dying that we are born to new life  
Make me an instrument of Your peace.

“Unlike the commandments of the moral law, which are meant to mark the floor below which love should never fall, vocation has to do with the wide open space above. Love has no ceiling, and so my vocation is, quite simply, the way I will rise. Yet, like picking a point on to dome of the sky, there are an infinite number of ways up. So what will be my unique way of responding to God’s loving call? What will be the transcendent trajectory of my life?”

# Words Of Wisdom

Go on advancing, you are on the true road.  
Remember it is not you who have taken it  
but God who has placed you there.

Walk trustfully and may nothing in the  
world be able to dishearten you.

May Jesus' Spirit dispel you from that other  
spirit which makes you discouraged and  
mistrustful. Give your heart, once and for all,  
to love and trust.

*Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat*  
*founder, Society of the Sacred Heart*

Charity is the name you bear:

Charity it is the robe  
in which you are clothed  
with its three parts:

Love of God,  
Love among yourselves and  
Love of the Poor.

*Saint Vincent de Paul*

Simplicity resembles that beautiful flower called the sunflower  
which follows the sun and ever turns towards it.  
So too, the mind and heart of one who possesses simplicity  
are always turned towards God for life and living warmth

*Saint Julie Billiart*  
*founder of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur*

# Prayer

## Three Tips For Nurturing Your Prayer Life

### **1. Create space for prayer.**

You can't create intimacy with God; you have to make room for it. Set aside a designated time for prayer. The Gospels tell us that Jesus liked to pray in the morning. Maybe that time will work for you. Get up early and dedicate that time for prayer. Start small, by giving 5 or 10 minutes to the Lord. Once you get a handle on that, move up to 20, 30, and so on. Praying throughout your day is more likely to happen when you're also being intentional about setting aside time specifically for prayer.

### **2. Don't make praying the focus of your prayer.**

Many of us sit down to pray, and our primary thought is: "I am now praying. Praying is good." But focusing on the fact that you're praying is like trying to drive while looking at the windshield instead of through the windshield. In prayer, don't focus on the conversation you're having, focus on the person with whom you're having it.

### **3. Don't give up.**

If you're praying and your mind wanders, don't give up. Don't ignore the thoughts that come in. Many of us assume that the "pop-in" thoughts are distractions, but what if these are the things God wants us to stop and pray about in the first place? Instead of giving up, offer even your distracted thoughts to God in prayer.

# Prayer

## God's Call in Scripture

God Calls Abraham (Genesis 12:1-5)

God Calls Moses (Exodus 3:1-12)

God Calls Ruth (Ruth 1:15-18)

God Calls Samuel (I Samuel 3:1-10)

God Calls David (I Samuel 16:6-13)

God Calls Esther (Esther 4:9-17)

God Calls Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:4-19)

The Baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:13-17)

The Call of Simon the Fisherman (Luke 5:1-11)

The Call of James and John (Matthew 4:21-22)

Jesus' Resurrection – Mary Magdalene and the Other Mary (Matthew 28:1-10)

God Calls Mary (Luke 1:26-38)

Jesus and the Samaritan Woman (John 4:1-30)

Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-40)

God calls Paul (Acts 9:1-22)

God Calls Lydia (Acts 16:11-15)

## Lightening the Load

*Francis Dorff, O. Praem*

The first thing we have to do  
is to notice  
that we've loaded down this camel  
with so much baggage  
we'll never get through the desert alive.  
Something has to go.

Then we can begin to dump  
the thousand things  
we've brought along  
until even the camel has to go  
and we're walking barefoot  
on the desert sand.

There's no telling what will happen then.  
But I've heard that someone,  
walking in this way,  
has seen a burning bush.

# Prayer

## **Pilgrim**

*Dom Helder Camara*

**when your ship,  
long moored in harbor, gives the illusion  
of being a house;  
when your ship  
begins to put down roots  
in the stagnant water by the quay: put out to sea!  
save your boat's journeying soul and your own pilgrim soul,  
cost what it may.**

# World Café

**Focus** on what matters.

**Contribute** your thinking.

**Speak** your mind and heart.

**Listen** to understand.

**Link and connect** ideas.

**Listen together** for insights and deeper questions.

**Play, Doodle, Draw**

(writing on tablecloths is encouraged!)

**Have fun!**

# Evening Prayer

## Christ Arise in Me

*Trevor Thompson*

Christ in me arise and dispel all the darkness  
Christ in me arise with your power and your strength  
Christ in me pour out your blessing and healing  
Christ in me arise and I will rise with you  
    Be now my vision; open these eyes,  
    showing me all that I must see.  
    Onward to the kingdom,  
    You are the way.  
    Arise in me and I shall rise with you.  
    Be now my footsteps, leading the way,  
    taking me where I must go.  
    Onward to the kingdom,  
    You are the way.  
    Arise in me and I shall rise with You.  
You know my heart and you know my ways,  
You who formed me in my mother's womb.  
I live and move in You,  
my whole being thrives in You.

## Psalm 27:1, 4-9

*Nan Merrill translation*

Love is my light and  
    my salvation,  
    whom shall I fear?  
Love is the strength of  
    my life,  
Of whom shall I be afraid?  
  
One thing have I asked of Love,  
    that I shall ever seek:  
That I might dwell in the  
    Heart of Love  
    all the days of my life,  
To behold the Beauty of my Beloved,  
    and to know Love's Plan.  
  
For I shall hide in Love's heart  
    in the day of trouble,  
As in a tent in the desert,  
Away from the noise of my fears.  
And I shall rise above  
    my struggles, my pain,

Shouting blessings of gratitude  
    in Love's Heart  
And singing melodies of praise  
    to my Beloved.  
  
Hear, O my Beloved,  
    when I cry aloud,  
    be gracious and answer me!  
You have said, "Seek my face."  
    My heart responds,  
"Your face, my Beloved, do I seek;  
    hide not your face from me."  
  
Do not turn from me,  
    You who have been my refuge.  
Enfold me in your strong arms,  
    O Blessed One.  
Though my father and mother  
    may not understand me,  
You, my Beloved, know me and love me.

# Evening Prayer

## **Messenger**

*Mary Oliver*

My work is loving the world.  
Here the sunflowers, there the hummingbird —  
equal seekers of sweetness.  
Here the quickening yeast; there the blue plums.  
Here the clam deep in the speckled sand.

Are my boots old? Is my coat torn?  
Am I no longer young, and still not half-perfect? Let me  
keep my mind on what matters,  
which is my work,

which is mostly standing still and learning to be astonished.  
The phoebe, the delphinium.  
The sheep in the pasture, and the pasture.  
Which is mostly rejoicing, since all ingredients are here,

which is gratitude, to be given a mind and a heart  
and these body-clothes,  
a mouth with which to give shouts of joy  
to the moth and the wren, to the sleepy dug-up clam,  
telling them all, over and over, how it is  
that we live forever.

# Morning Prayer

## You, Lord, Are in This Place

*Keith Duke*

You, Lord, are in this place  
Your presence fills it  
Your presence is peace

You, Lord, are in my heart  
Your presence fills it  
Your presence is peace

You, Lord, are in my mind  
Your presence fills it  
Your presence is peace

You, Lord, are in my life  
Your presence fills it  
Your presence is peace

## Lectio Divina Process

*One of the many varieties!*

### *Four movements*

1. Read the Scripture passage (“Lectio”)
  - Read the passage silently, slowly, reflectively.
2. Reflect on the passage (“Meditatio”)
  - Underline any word or phrase that particularly strikes you.
3. Respond in quiet prayer/journaling (“Oratio”)
  - Why did this particular word or phrase struck you—what it was within your own experience that responded to this particular word or phrase.
4. Rest in God’s invitation for you then pray/share out loud if you want (“Contemplatio”)
  - Be still. Respond in prayer however you are moved: praise, gratitude or petition.

## The Call of the Disciples

*Luke 5:1-11*

One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. He saw at the water’s edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.”

Simon answered, “Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.”

When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon’s partners.

Then Jesus said to Simon, “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.” So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

# Morning Prayer

**1st Reading:** Share one word or phrase that stands out to you.

**2nd Reading:** Share what it was within your own experience that responded to a particular word or phrase in this passage.

**3rd Reading:** Share what this passage or your insights might have to say to this group, to your community, or to the world.

**Contemplation:** Be still. Respond in prayer however you are moved: praise, gratitude or petition.

# Read, Think, Pray, Act: “Lectio Divina” in Four Easy Steps

*James Martin, SJ*

*Jesuit priest and author of “Becoming Who You Are” (Paulist) and “My Life with the Saints” (Loyola)*

When I first stumbled across the term *lectio divina* (literally, “sacred reading”), I imagined elderly monks sequestered in a quiet room, silently poring over medieval manuscripts, as sunlight streamed through stained-glass windows and illuminated the pages they were turning. It seemed something that would remain far from my experience.

But after I entered the Jesuit novitiate, I was introduced to the ancient practice of *lectio divina* in a way that made it both accessible and understandable. Members of monastic communities still use this method of prayer, of course, but it is equally available to even the busiest and the least monastic among us.

## **A Simple Approach**

*Lectio divina* is a way of encountering God through Scripture—normally, by taking a specific passage from the Bible as the basis for this prayer. There are many possible approaches to *lectio*, but the easiest I’ve found was suggested by my New Testament professor, Fr. Daniel J. Harrington, SJ. He suggested breaking it down into four steps. As an illustration, let’s use the story of Jesus preaching in the synagogue in Nazareth, as told in the Gospel of Luke (4:16-30).

### **1. Reading**

What does the text say? First, you read the text. At the most basic level, you ask: What is going on in this Bible passage? Sometimes a Bible commentary is helpful to enable you to better understand the context.

With our passage from Luke, you might remember that Jesus is in the temple at Nazareth, reading from the Hebrew Scriptures. Here, at the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus reveals to the people in his hometown both his identity and his mission. How shocking it must have been for them to hear a “local boy” comment on a reading from the prophet Isaiah by saying, “Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.” In other words, I am the fulfillment of Scripture!

After initially finding Jesus pleasant to listen to, the townspeople turn on him and almost kill him. Somehow, he slips through their midst. No wonder this passage is sometimes called “the rejection at Nazareth.”

### **2. Meditation**

What is God saying to me through the text? At this point, you ask whether there is something that God might want to reveal to you through this passage. Often, it might connect with something in your life.

For example, are there situations or places where you feel called to be prophetic, even in the face of rejection? In the gospel story, Jesus probably knew that his message would be controversial, and yet he proclaimed it anyway. Is there something in your life that calls for such a courageous stance? Perhaps this is what God wants to communicate to you.

# Read, Think, Pray, Act: “Lectio Divina” in Four Easy Steps

## **3. Prayer**

What do I want to say to God about the text? After meditating on this passage, you might find yourself fearful of what you feel called to do. If it means standing up for someone who has been mistreated, or even standing up for yourself, this might frighten you. You might worry about being rejected as Jesus was. You might even fear being rejected by those close to you, as Jesus was in his hometown.

On the other hand, you might feel emboldened by the confident example of Jesus. You might think about how all the prophets probably felt a measure of fear when called to prophetic action. Yet, like Jesus, they acted in the face of this fear, always trusting in God. Use this part of your prayer to tell God about your feelings. Be honest—and don't worry: God can handle any emotions that you have!

## **4. Action**

What do I want to do, based on my prayer? Finally, you act. Prayer should move us to action, even if it simply makes us want to be more compassionate and faithful.

Now that you've read the story of Jesus in the temple, have asked yourself what God is saying, and have spoken to God about your reaction, it's time to do something. Perhaps you resolve to be more courageous in standing up for the oppressed. Or you decide to forgive someone who has wronged you. Or perhaps you feel that you still want to pray more about what to do. Whatever it may be, now is the time to let your prayer move you to action.

## **Savoring and Listening**

Another, slightly different, way of praying lectio divina is to let yourself dwell on a single word or phrase in the scripture passage you have chosen. This allows you to “savor” the text, as Saint Ignatius Loyola put it. This works especially well with the psalms.

Say, for example, you are reading Psalm 23, which begins with the phrase “The Lord is my shepherd.” When you arrive at the stanza, “He makes me lie down in green pastures,” you might find yourself drawn to meditating on what it would feel like to experience rest in that green pasture. If you're a busy person, you might take the opportunity to simply relax with God. Or you might think about the places in your life that are green pastures for you, and thank God for them. Your lectio could be as simple as a prayer of rest, or wordless gratitude.

God has many ways of working in our lives and communicating with us. Lectio divina is just one of them. God can also speak to us through the Mass and the sacraments, through our experiences and our relationships, and through nature, music, and art. In all these moments, the voice of God is coming to us. So when you are praying and feel God is speaking to you—listen!

# LCWR-CMSM

## Transformative Elements for Religious Life

*In August 1989, the Leadership Conference for Women Religious and the Conference of Major Superiors of Men met in Louisville, Kentucky. Over 1,000 religious from across the country were present to address the theme of the conference, "Traditions and Transformation in Religious Life."*

**We will nourish these transformative elements for religious life in the future:**

### **1. Prophetic witness**

Being converted by the example of Jesus and the values of the Gospel, religious in the year 2010 will serve a prophetic role in church and society. Living this prophetic witness will include critiquing societal and ecclesial values and structures, calling for systematic change and being converted by the marginalized with whom we serve.

### **2. Contemplative attitude toward life**

Religious in 2010 will have a contemplative attitude toward all of creation. They will be attentive to and motivated by the presence of the sacred in their own inner journeys, in the lives of others and throughout creation. Recognizing contemplation as a way of life for the whole church, they will see themselves and their communities as centers of spirituality and the experience of God.

### **3. Poor and marginalized persons as the focus for ministry**

Religious in 2010 will be investing their resources in direct service with and advocacy for structural change on behalf of the poor and marginalized. They will minister where others will not go. Their own listening to and learning from the poor and marginalized will shape all aspects of their lives.

### **4. Spirituality of wholeness and global interconnectedness**

Animated by their deep conviction of the oneness of creation, religious in 2010 live and work in a manner which fosters:

- Participation and harmony among all people,
- Healthy personal and interpersonal relationships
- Reverence for the earth
- Integration of spirituality and technology on behalf of the gospel.

### **5. Charism and mission sources of identity**

By the year 2010, religious groups will have re-examined, reclaimed and set free the charisms of their foundresses/founders. Corporate ownership of a focused vision gives meaning and expression to mission and ministry. Some groups who share similar visions/charisms have already joined together. communicate to you.

# LCWR-CMSM

## Transformative Elements for Religious Life

### **6. Change of the focus of power**

Religious in the year 2010 will have replaced models of domination and control with principles of mutuality drawn from feminist and ecological insights, so that collaborative modes of decision-making and power-sharing are normative. Priorities for service will be generated and shaped in the local arena, while impetus for such action will be influenced by global awareness.

### **7. Living with less**

Religious in 2010 will be transformed by the poor, living a simpler lifestyle that includes reverence for the earth.

They will develop a spirituality that will free them to be more authentic witnesses by letting go of non-essentials, by being content with what is enough, and by sharing their resources with the poor.

An alternative motivation for the above might be economic circumstances beyond our control.

### **8. Broad-based, inclusive communities**

In 2010 religious communities will be characterized by inclusivity and intentionality. These communities may include persons of different ages, genders, cultures, races, and sexual orientation. They may include persons who are lay or cleric, married or single, as well as vowed and/or unvowed members. They will have a core group and persons with temporary and permanent commitments.

These communities will be ecumenical, possibly interfaith; faith-sharing will be constitutive of the quality of life in this context of expanded membership. Such inclusivity will necessitate a new understanding of membership and a language to accompany it.

Religious life will still include religious congregations of permanently vowed members.

### **9. Understanding ourselves as Church**

An essential element of religious life in 2010 is our ability to accept the concept that “we are church.” As people of God, we assume our priestly role and worship of the local church. We support all members of the church as equals in diverse ministries.

### **10. Developing interdependence among people of diverse cultures**

Radical demographic changes will, by the year 2010, alter the face of our local church and our congregations. Our interactions with persons of various cultures and races have uncovered our enduring racism, prejudices and intolerance and called us to deeper inculturation, interdependence, and openness to being evangelized by others.

*Joint Conference of LCWR and CMSM August, 1989*

## Five Tips For Good Vocational Discernment

### 1. Give yourself time to make a good discernment.

Think of your discernment as a journey in which you will grow personally and closer to God. The best discernments aren't rushed, but lived in openness and surrender to God.

### 2. Use the resources you have to learn more.

God wants you to use your head as well as your heart. Talk to people, find information, go to places that you want to know more about. If it is helpful, make a list of pros and cons.

### 3. Pay attention to what's going on in your heart.

Bring your experiences to prayer. You may want to keep a discernment journal.

### 4. Ask for guidance and insight by seeking a spiritual director.

A good spiritual director can help you recognize the ways God is working in your life.

### 5. Pray!

Take time each day to be still and open your heart to listen. Ask God for what you need to listen deeply for how God is calling and ask God for the courage and love to respond.

## Sending Forth Prayer

### We Are Called

*David Haas*

Come! live in the light!  
Shine with the joy and the love of the Lord!  
We are called to be light for the kingdom,  
to live in the freedom of the city of God!

We are called to act with justice.  
We are called to love tenderly.  
We are called to serve one another,  
to walk humbly with God.

Come! Open your heart!  
Show your mercy to all those in fear!  
We are called to be hope for the hopeless,  
so all hatred and blindness will be no more!

Sing! Sing a new song!  
Sing of that great day when all will be one!  
God will reign and we'll walk with each other  
as sisters and brothers united in love!

# Sending Forth Prayer

## Passover Remembered

Alla Bozarth

Pack nothing.  
Bring only  
your determination  
to serve and  
your willingness  
to be free.

Don't wait for the bread to rise.  
Take nourishment for the journey,  
but eat standing, be ready  
to move at a moment's notice.

Do not hesitate to leave  
your old ways behind --  
fear, silence, submission.

Only surrender to the need  
of the time -- to love  
justice and walk humbly  
with your God.

Do not take time  
to explain to the neighbours.  
Tell only a few trusted  
friends and family members.

Then begin quickly,  
before you have time  
to sink back into  
the old slavery.

Set out in the dark.

I will send fire  
to warm and encourage you.  
I will be with you in the fire  
and I will be with you in the cloud.

You will learn to eat new food  
and find refuge in new places.  
I will give you dreams in the desert  
to guide you safely to that place  
you have not yet seen.

The stories you tell  
one another around the fires  
in the dark will make you  
strong and wise.

Outsiders will attack you,  
and some follow you,  
and at times you will get weary  
and turn on each other  
from fear and fatigue and  
blind forgetfulness.

You have been preparing  
for this for hundreds of years.  
I am sending you into the wilderness  
to make a new way and to learn my ways  
more deeply.

Some of you will be so changed  
by weathers and wanderings  
that even your closest friends  
will have to learn your features  
as though for the first time.

Some of you will not change at all.  
Some will be abandoned  
by your dearest loves  
and misunderstood by those  
who have known you since birth  
and feel abandoned by you.

Some will find new friendships  
in unlikely faces, and old friends  
as faithful and true  
as the pillar of God's flame.

Sing songs as you go,  
and hold close together.  
You may at times grow confused  
and lose your way.

Continue to call each other  
by the names I've given you,  
to help remember who you are.  
You will get where you are going  
by remembering who you are.  
Touch each other and keep telling the  
stories.

Make maps as you go  
remembering the way back  
from before you were born.

So you will be only the first  
of many waves of deliverance on these  
desert seas.

It is the first of many beginnings --  
your Paschaltide.

Remain true to this mystery.

Pass on the whole story.

Do not go back.

I am with you now  
and I am waiting for you.

Tell me,  
what is it you plan?  
TO DO WITH YOUR ONE  
*Wild & Precious life*  
Mary Oliver



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