

Heart ♥ to ♥ Heart

Angela Merici

Living Legacy

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*This month our focus on St. Angela's creative spirit turns to poetry.
There is much to appreciate and savor in the contributions that follow!*



Reflections from a Poet

Anne Therese Dillen, OSU

The struggle to find just the right words to express one's reaction to what is seen, heard, or deeply intuited, is invariably the work of the poet. Somehow, the poet probes the depths to find meaning, trying to understand one reality in its relationship to others — how they are similar: this “like” that — or how they seem to identify or describe each other in metaphor: this “is” that.

Leaves “dancing” in the wind, or waves “kissing” damp sand; pebbles like Inkblots on a darkened road — these comparisons paint mental images which broaden and intensify the original experience. The poet always seems to be reminded of something else while seeing, feeling, or hearing the initial reality.

Why, for the psalmist, do the “mountains clap their hands?” Why does someone hear “the whole earth sing?” Who can hear, in Schumann's 2nd Symphony, 3rd movement, the “weeping” of the violins, if not the poet?

In all of these observations, we can notice, I think, a certain need to gather varied experiences into a unified whole. In that sense, one can say that all is metaphor, for all that we see outwardly points to a deeper truth within. It is that deeper truth that cries out to be heard, embraced, and yes—loved. Indeed, the task of the poet!

SPACES

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The place between what's here and there —
A place created by surroundings,
Framed by what can give it form.

A space -- not empty -- precious on its own;
Relief -- its silence giving depth to sound;
Color -- soft blue backdrop for a tree;
Shape -- changing with a whisper of the wind.

Such are spaces in our lives,
Unobtrusive backstage voices,
Works of beauty in themselves,
Worthy to be framed.



Ursuline sisters and colleagues who have found poetry a source of prayer, who have been nurtured spiritually by the poetry of a particular poet, or who have written poetry themselves share the following:



“The Bustle in a House”

by Emily Dickinson

The bustle in a house
The morning after death
Is solemnest of industries
Enacted upon earth.

The sweeping up the heart
And putting Loves away
We shall not want to use again
Until eternity.

—Shared by Mary Troy, OSU

“I’m Listening”

by Sophia Demello Breyner

I’m listening
But I don’t know if what I hear
Is silence
Or God.
I’m listening
But I can’t tell if what I hear
Is the sound
of emptiness echoing
or a keen consciousness
at the edge of the universe
that watches and deciphers me.
I only know
that I walk like someone
beknown and beheld and beloved.
And because of this
I put into my every moment
Solemnity – risk.

—Shared by Christine Van Swearingen, OSU

“Recorder. . . To Remember. . .
To Pass Through the Heart Again”

By the Mississippi

Lured by haunting strains of the flute player
My weary weighted shoulders sink in soft grass.
The Mississippi whispers in its gentle breeze
Come, come, I will share your burden.

—Written by Elizabeth Susan Hatzenbuehler, OSU

From “Sweet Darkness”

by David Whyte

The night will give you a horizon
further than you can see.
You must learn one thing.
The world was made to be free in.
Give up all other worlds
except the one to which you belong.
Sometimes it takes darkness
and the sweet confinement of your aloneness
to learn
anything or anyone that does not bring you alive
is too small for you.

—Shared by Glenda Bourgeois, OSU

Traveling with Angela as Pilgrim

Haiku by Lois Castillon, OSU

Angela – pilgrim
Wondering, wandering, still
Waiting on God’s word

Traveling, half-moon
Verona, Venice, Brescia
Starlit, God calls her

Listening, hearing
Soft melody, now louder
An alleluia

Crescent moon, north star
Can I start a company
Lights in our dark world

Centuries later
Global women journey
In a wounded world



*From Gina Pierucci,
a colleague of Jeanette Lombardi, OSU:*

As long as I can remember, “seeing God in all things” has been a deeply intimate, spiritual, and creative practice for me...in my daily interaction and most certainly in my prayer life. What brings us closer to our Creator than all of creation and the relationship of one to the other? These past couple of years...seeing deeper the relationship among all living things and beings, I know that *Everything is Connected* and the connection among all relationships and encounters allows me to be wowed everyday with the gifts that surround me, all the blessings. More and more, I feel palpable union with everything in my world and a responsibility for protection somehow of what I can care for. Recently, I was praying, reading from a book in the garden and encountered a simple honeybee who landed on my page. I was compelled to create a tribute which became a blessing and a prayer of gratitude for that holy moment:



BEE BLESSING

I watched a beautiful little honey bee die today
Landed on my open prayer book
Brilliant in the sunlight.
I tried....I really did....
To urge it upright and to fly off again
As it should
But it struggled.
One leg or wing or some little part of it
Was left alive and fighting for flight.
It made me so full of wonder and
Sadness as this precious life dwindled.
I feel like having a little Celebration of Life.
A song. Some words.
Deserved accolade and gratitude
For its place here among us
And the struggle to fight for precious life
And make it.
It was awe-filled and wondrous
So much so that it changed me
This leaving.

From “Hymns to the Church, Litany of the Sacred Heart”

by Gertrude Von Le Fort

Now I will pray the ardour of the soul as a great litany is prayed.
Now I will raise the song of praise that is not sung but loved:
Holy Heart, divine Heart, almighty Heart.
Be loved, Love, eternal Love, be eternally loved.

—Shared by Pauline Lorch, OSU

From “Just Beyond Yourself”

by David Whyte

Just beyond yourself.
It’s where you need to be.
Half a step into self-forgetting
and the rest restored by what you’ll meet.
There is a road always beckoning.

—Shared by Elisa Ryan, OSU

From Rainer Maria Rilke:

You must give birth to your images,
They are the future waiting to be born.
Fear not the strangeness you feel,
The future must enter you
long before it happens.

—Shared by Jean Hopman, OSU



For Pondering . . .

What stirs in you as you read and ponder these poetic sharings?

What has been your experience of using poetry in prayer?