



Joining in
CREATION'S SONG

PRAYING

Mary Oliver

It doesn't have to be
the blue iris, it could be
weeds in a vacant lot, or a few
small stones; just
pay attention, then patch

a few words together and don't try
to make them elaborate, this isn't
a contest but the doorway

into thanks, and a silence in which
another voice may speak. *

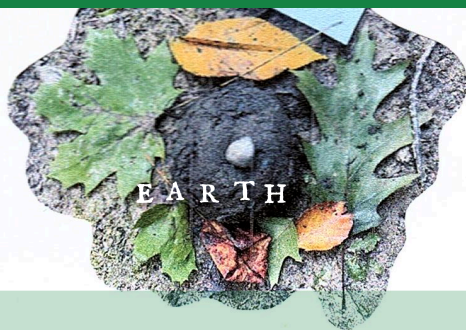


A reading from “The Priest in the Trees” by Fred Bahnson:

“Connection to the land and devotion to prayer [leaves] a spiritual presence that is palpable. Prayer transforms places as well as people ... *you can feel it when you walk into a place where people have prayed for long periods* of time. It is as if prayer has changed the molecular structure of the place. Thus altered, the woods become a kind of inner sanctum in which we are faced with *mysterium tremendum*.”

CONTEMPLATION

- * Venture out to your yard or a nearby green space and walk around for a few minutes, noticing as much as you can
- * Practice looking with “wonder-eye”, sensing what surrounds as if for the very first time
- * Read *Psalms* 104 aloud to yourself, paying special attention to vv. 10–18
- * Close your eyes and bring to your mind’s eye a landscape that you love, recalling its sights, sounds, smells, textures, & tastes
- * Localize *Psalms* 104 by rewriting vv. 10–18 about *your* beloved landscape, bringing the psalmist’s way of seeing a little closer to home

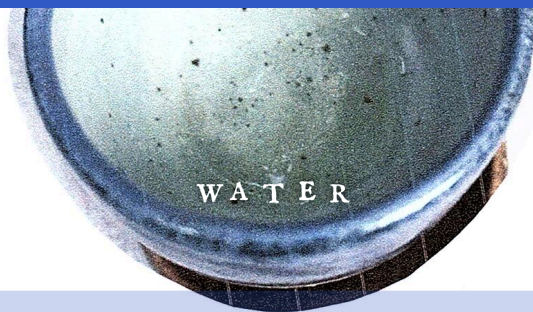


A reading from “Confessions of a Compost Heap” by Sophie Strand:

“Watching a compost heap transform into fertile soil, it can seem like decay is genesis. Decay is the first scene in a comedy of mycelial threads and millipedes and sprouting wildflowers, seeds invisibly deposited by a bird flying overhead. Sometimes I think about death as being the transition from a solitary aliveness to an anarchic polyphony of aliveness ... If I feel myself like the compost heap beginning to melt it means that I am also melting into another story. A bigger story. I don’t know what act in the play comes next, but I know what my prayer is. Make me bigger than an ‘I’. Make me good soil.”

CONTEMPLATION

- * Venture out to somewhere you can get your hands dirty—a muddy creekside, a garden bed, a patch of soil
- * Reflect: what are you rooted in? Which people or places help you grow?
- * Scoop up a handful of mud, mound it in front of you, and read your re-localized *Psalm 104* aloud
- * Reflect: how are you soil for others? Find something in your surroundings that symbolizes your answer, & place it in in your mud mound
- * Decorate your sculpture with natural elements, making it a beautiful work for passersby to stumble upon

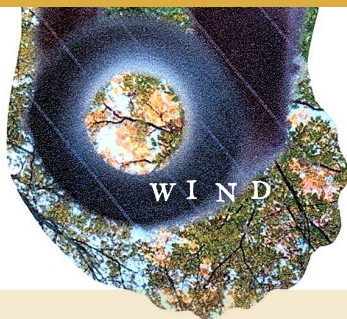


A reading from “Like the Water” by Wendell Berry:

“Like the water / of a deep stream / love is always too much / we
did not make it / though we drink ‘til we burst / we cannot have
it all / or want it all / In its abundance / it survives our thirst.
In the evening we come down to the shore / to drink our fill /
and sleep / while it flows through the regions of the dark.
It does not hold us / except we keep returning to its rich waters
thirsty. We enter / willing to die / into the commonwealth
of its joy.”

CONTEMPLATION

- * Venture out to a nearby body of water with a notebook and cup, take a seat beside it, & read *Isaiah* 55:1-13 aloud
- * Fill up your cup from the body of water and think back on a meaningful encounter you’ve had with this element
- * Observe the waters for a long while, noticing how they flow and interact with the earth
- * Reflect: How do you hope to become more like the waters you’re observing? Record these qualities in your notebook
- * Return the water you gathered to its source, thanking the Spirit for embodying the qualities of Living Water, & read *Psalms* 148 aloud



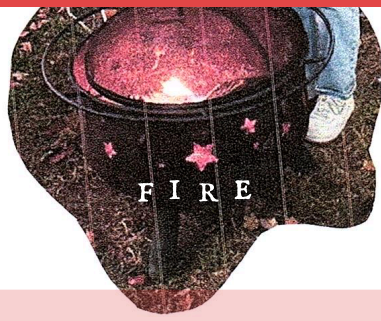
A reading from The Spell of the Sensuous by David Abram:

“Hebrew has a single word for both spirit and wind: *Ruach*. The primordially of *Ruach* and its close association with the Divine is manifest in the very first sentence of the Hebrew Bible.

‘When God began to create heaven and earth, the earth being formless and void with darkness over the surface of the deep and a *Ruach* from God sweeping over the water.’ At the very beginning of creation, before even the existence of the earth or the sky, God is present as a wind moving over the waters. Breath, as we learn in the next section of Genesis, is **the most intimate and elemental bond** linking humans to the divine; it is that which flows most directly between God and man.”

CONTEMPLATION

- * Venture out to a place where the wind blows—find a spot to lay on your back
- * Reflect: where do you go when you need fresh air?
- * Practice windwatching: observe the movements of the wind, wait for it to blow something within arms reach, & collect what came
- * Allow the collectible to remind you of a time when the Spirit breathed new life into you—what do you recall?
- * Sing *Psalm 150*, using nearby leaves or sticks to keep the beat



A reading from The Prophet by Kahlil Gibran:

“Even as Love is for your growth so is he for your pruning. Even as he ascends to your height and caresses your tenderest branches that quiver your sun, so shall he descend to your roots and shake them in their clinging to the earth. Like sheaves of corn he gathers you unto himself. He threshes you to make you naked. He sifts you to free you from your husks. He grinds you to whiteness. He kneads you until you are pliant; And then he assigns you to his sacred fire, that you may become sacred bread for God’s sacred feast.

CONTEMPLATION

- * Venture out to your yard or a nearby green space and light a fire
- * Gaze into the fire, reflect on a time when you saw something go up in flames, & read *Psalms 66* aloud
- * Take a few minutes to write a lament on a piece of paper—a sorrow or anger you would like to release
- * Read your lament aloud and toss it into the flame, offering it up in prayer
- * Light a candle in your fire and bring it inside before putting out the flame

Sing to the LORD a new song.
Psalm 96:1

