



VINTAGE VOICE



Poetic Reflections

By the Rev. James Burns

One of the luxuries/blessings that retirement has afforded is time. Time to slow down. Time to take better notice of the world around me. Time to allow that world to seep into my spirituality, my prayers, my perspective — an opportunity for a new kind of dialogue with the Holy. These poems are one of the ways I have tried to express that dialogue.

Squirrel

This morning
as dawn was arriving
a jet black squirrel
ran
at full speed
up the Sycamore tree
outside my window.

At a spot
higher than the house,
he veered onto a limb
not slacking his speed,
and out near the very end
he stopped
and dislodged some hidden nugget,
and then retired
to another part of the limb
and began to eat
silhouetted against the incandescent sky.

How did he know
where that small treasure was hidden?
He did not search,
There was no serendipity,
Only certainty.
And then to sit
in a spot so perilous
(at least from my perspective)
and yet secure to him
and feast.

Watching this unfold
became my prayer
and the moment was so filled
with holiness
that I was breathless.

To know where a treasure that nourishes
can be found.
To know that peril
is only a matter of perspective.
To be
simply what we are created to be.
And secure
in that knowledge,
to sit on high
in the incandescent dawn of God's creative love,
and feast.

What more could prayer hope to be?

Moonstruck

I

In the early morning mist
a full moon hangs just over the ridge to the west.

A magic, mysterious, moonstruck
gift of grace.

I want to capture it,
hold on to it,
freeze it in my mind and heart,
put it in my pocket,
so I can pull it out
whenever I want
for the rest of the day.

But I know
that some gifts are made more real
by their transitory nature,
by their impermanence.

Like a gentle breeze
that brings a cool kiss
on a warm summer day.
It comes, imparts its blessing,
and goes. It lives,
lingers for a while,
but even memory
can't keep it from slipping away,
like the morning mist evaporating in the sun.
Leaving the moon to set
naked.

II

The days are getting shorter now.

The palette of colors
created by the morning light
is ever beautiful but changing.

Darkness grows
and I welcome it,
for it brings another form of mystery.
Light and darkness need one another
to be whole.

It's the dualities of life
that bring completion.

Time,
that vaporous thing
we think we can manage and control,
with our clocks and calendars
sets its own pace.

Perhaps it only seems to move faster
as we grow older
because the mind and heart
are so full

of memories and dreams,
people, places, things,
that there is little room
for time to pause and rest.
Little time for time to grow impatient.

And so the only correct answer to the question
"What time is it?"
is "Now."

And in that Now
a full moon hangs just over the ridge to the west
in the early morning mist.

Lent

In the southern hemisphere
the season of Lent
(Old English for spring)
begins in early autumn
not spring.
And thus
Easter falls more often than not
in winter.

There
they prepare for resurrection
in a season
where nature is beginning to die,
albeit richly,
and resurrection
takes place
in the cold darkness
of shortened days
and bare branches.

Perhaps
the people of the south
are onto something...

Easter

“Let life not separate us; and who cares about death?”
(Pablo Neruda)

What are we to make of these reports?

Empty tombs,
uncertain sightings,
fear,
disbelief,
reluctant realization,
cautious joy,
locked doors,
faith on the fence.
Banish the bunnies,
cancel the chicks,
eschew the eggs,
jettison the jelly beans,
loose the lilies!

Such an event
cannot
must not
be tamed.

A life of love
a loved life
cannot
could not
be killed!

“Nothing can separate us....”

Death
isn't defeated.
It happens to all,
even God.

It just doesn't matter
anymore.

About the Author

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