

Remembering Joseph Harry

A Prayer for the Jellema-Harter Gathering

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The Season of Advent 2004

With full attention, awareness,
let us be conscious of our life, with breath, with spirit.
That consciousness has been present
from the beginning of the human story.
The ancient poet expressed it in words
borrowed by the biblical writer when he wrote of One
in whom “we live and move and have our being.”

In these moments we open our minds and hearts
to that Mystery breathing through us,
that Sacred Mystery before whom we stand in awe
as we remember we are children of the stars,
our being the emergence of a cosmic drama of billions of years
in an expanse of space we cannot fathom.

Humility befits us
that the sacred source of Being
should find expression in us,
that we should be the conscious bearers
of this incredible unfolding of Being.

Sometimes it is a glimpse
of the starry heavens in the dark stillness;
sometimes the glistening whiteness of new fallen snow
catching the sun’s radiance;
sometimes the rush of a love
that wells up from our depths;
sometimes it is a pain so overwhelming,
a grief so deep we can scarcely breathe,
a sadness that permeates every pore of our being.

This is such a time,
for we remember a life conceived in love,
anticipated with such joy and growing expectation,
a life as yet all mystery, full of potential,
this fragile child in the womb,
Joseph Harry.

At such a time, time stands still
and we become aware as never before
of the mystery of Being from which our lives emerge.
And those ultimate questions rise within us –
Who am I?
Why am I here?
What is my life?
What is the end of it all?

Questions out of the depths,
questions not reducible
to mathematical equation or scientific formula;
questions without verifiable answers;
questions not to be answered so much as to be lifted up,
to be contemplated.

Is not our life a question you put to us, O God?
And daily, weekly, monthly,
as seasons come and go,
we are living out our answers.

Sometimes it seems we can begin to shape an answer;
sometimes we simply must admit we haven't a clue;
sometimes our faith shines brightly
and we have a kind of settled serenity about us;
and sometimes the pieces of the puzzle
we painstakingly fit together
are scattered again, revealing no rhyme or reason.

God of all mercy, God of all grace,
it is as natural as breathing
that we turn in these moments to you.
Where else?
To whom else should we turn?

We come to the limit of our understanding;
we come to the limit of our capacity to make sense
of this fragile and vulnerable drama that we live.
We do not know; we do not comprehend;
our minds shut down, weary of thinking.

We turn to you –
not for cliché, some pious platitude
that trips too easily off the tongue.

No, dear God, we turn to you
because we can live without all the answers,
if only we sense that in the darkness and the pain
we are not abandoned, not alone,
if only we sense your presence and your grace,
your compassion and your care
in the concrete community of human bonds of love.

Here we are, deep Mystery of Being,
becoming conscious in your presence.
We trust, even though we know so little.
We trust in your gracious grasp
of the disparate strands of our lives
because we keep encountering rumors of angels,
moments of clarity, flashes of insight,
experiences of deep love and grace
beyond anything we could arrange.

In this season of Advent, we wait,
wait in expectation.
Mystery beyond our capacity to comprehend,
grant to these who grieve
an Epiphany of transcendence
as they gather to embrace one another
in love and solidarity.

Heal hearts so recently resonant with expectation
and mantle them— parents, grandparents, friends – with peace,
assuring them that
all will be well;
all will be well;
all manner of things will be well –
for *Alles is Gnade* – All is Grace.
Amen.

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