

Thoughts of a
blind beggar
*REFLECTIONS FROM
A JOURNEY TO GOD*

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PART ONE

Vigils

The Praises to Be Said at All Hours

Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty,
Who is, and Who was, and Who is to come.

And let us praise and glorify Him forever.
O Lord our God, You are worthy to receive
praise, glory and honor and blessing.

And let us praise and glorify Him forever. . . .
Bless the Lord, all you works of the Lord.

And let us praise and glorify Him forever.
Sing praise to our God, all you His servants
and you who fear God, the small and the great.

And let us praise and glorify Him forever.
Let heaven and earth praise Him Who is glorious.

And let us praise and glorify Him forever.
Every creature in heaven, on earth and under the earth;
and in the sea and those which are in it.

And let us praise and glorify Him forever.
Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

And let us praise and glorify Him forever.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever.

And let us praise and glorify Him forever.

All powerful, most holy, most high God: all good, supreme
good, totally good. You Who alone are good, may we give You
all praise, all glory, all thanks, all honor, all blessing, and all
good. So be it! So be it! *Amen.*

Saint Francis of Assisi
—*Early Documents*, Volume I, page 161



The Messiness of Life

We live in a world that is filled with pain. The planet is covered with people who are overwhelmed by suffering. Wars, monstrous acts of terrorism, famine, economic injustice, chronic poverty, drug addiction, disease and natural disasters are killing people every day. We are impotent when it comes to making the pain go away. Life is hard and messy and painful. Hurt abounds and hope is in short supply. Jesus did not clean up every mess or relieve all the pain He encountered. He simply told us to take the pain and the mess of our lives and place them before God. Even then, the answers to the riddles of our lives are not always perceivable or even obtainable. Jesus teaches us to live with the questions, to live with the pain. Peace, He suggests, is found in faith. God is bigger than we are; and we, in our weakness, need to lean on the strong arm of God. Cures and answers may not come to light, but faith, hope, and love change who we are and how we deal with the messiness and pain of life.

The Blind Beggar

Be like the blind beggar at Jericho,
seated at the side of the road,
and stretch out open hands
to the silence of God.

Humility is the heart of Christianity,
and the gateway to prayer.

Without prayer, God dies in our hearts.

Prayer is being present.

Cup of Coffee

Each day needs to be a pilgrimage
into my own heart.

“This day is yours, Lord,”
I say each day upon rising.
Yet, before I even finish
my first cup of coffee,
the day has become mine.

God never shouts to be heard over our noise.
Only silence gives God a chance to speak.

The soul that waits on God,
patiently and unhurriedly,
will eventually be filled
with the realization he or she
is infinitely loved.

First Step

I need to stand before God
in a stance of constant conversion.

The acknowledgment of our own weakness
is the first step toward an acknowledgment
of Christ's strength.

In condemning others,
I am avoiding the more difficult task
of knowing myself.

Still Life

Contemplation requires
tranquility and patience.

The art of contemplating divine truths
grows out of the art of remaining still.

To be a contemplative is
to be receptive to the divine Word.

Standing in Line

Even in a crowd I stand alone before God.

Solitude can be found while standing
in line at a supermarket or bank.

Within each of us, without exception,
there is a longing to pass beyond finite things.

Kindness is essential to restore
our interior Garden of Eden.

Kiss the Joy

Desires rob us of freedom.

Dependence on reason is unreasonable.

Don't try to possess the object of your delight . . .
kiss the joy as it flies.

Sanctify the present moment.

God Knows

Only God understands God.

Even when your plans do not work out,
God's plan does.

The sacred dwells in the secular.

Undivided

A pure heart is an undivided heart.

Only the pure of heart
see God in everything.

The glorious presence of God
radiates through all creation.

In the garden of the human spirit
there is a tiny blade of understanding
urging us to look hard at everything
and seek God in all that we see.

Knock, Knock

Physical solitude is nothing
without an inner solitude.

Seek God in the ordinary events of daily life.

No moment is insignificant.
Incarnation may break through at any time.

Seek, knock, ask, plead.

Radiant Love

God speaks to us even in the smallest
and most ordinary events of daily life.

God's love does not shout, it whispers.

Be still and hear God whisper
soft words of fondest love.

Listen . . . don't think.

Love should radiate, not dominate.

Not Fickle

My awareness of God's mysterious presence
within me

helps me become more aware
of the same presence within others.

To love others as Jesus loves them
is an extremely difficult,
if not impossible,
task, yet it must be
our primary goal as Christians.

The key to attaining happiness
is to give it away.
But we love hanging onto
what we've got.

Divine love is not fickle.
It has only one desire:
total self-giving.

Happiness grows only in the garden
of unconditional love.

Charity is the art of knowing
how to do the will of God.

Mine

Self-indulgence leads to spiritual dryness.

Desires give birth to desires.

Consume less.

Everything belongs to God.
Nothing belongs to us.

Enjoy without owning.

God alone calms and satisfies all our desire.

First Fruit

I am not my own horizon.
Jesus is always leading me
to travel beyond myself
to the Father.

Humility is the first fruit
of honesty with oneself.
True humility plunges one
into adoration of God.

Humility takes training.

Humility increases with self-knowledge.

Life and Death

Cling to yourself
and you will lose yourself.

Communion with God is life;
separation from God is death.

Walk humbly behind Christ.

Humility, detachment, charity and compassion
are the cornerstones of the Christian life.

Little Ol' Me

Emptiness is the one true reality
we all are desperate to bury.

My poverty is a cry to God.

Humility is an expression of the reality
of our littleness and powerlessness.

Forgetting God

Whenever I feel a sense of self-assurance
and self-importance
I am in danger of forgetting God.

Pride prevents us from accepting God's help.

Avarice is defeated by compassion for the poor.

A Ticket to Heaven?

God reveals my sinfulness to me,
not to make me feel guilty
but to offer me forgiveness
and freedom from the bondage
of destructive behavior.

Penance paves the way for continual conversion.

Redemption isn't a ticket to heaven . . .
it simply means a soul has been redeemed
—set free—
from self-interest.

No Guts, No Glory

When it comes to following Christ
without reservation,
I know exactly what to do.
What I lack is the courage to do it.

Surrender is never easy.
When Jesus was called to his final surrender,
he sweated blood.

Virtue is attained only by hard work.
We must struggle to grow in love,

prayer, self-control, and compassion,
which are the roots of all virtue.

Heart and Soul

Transformation is not possible where we,
not God,
are secretly in control,
cavalierly pretending we “know-it-all.”

By recognizing my weakness
I become strong.

God is humble.
God lives in
our poverty and weakness.

Simplicity safeguards the spirit
from distractions and leads it to God.

Love and trust are
the heart and soul of simplicity.

Uncovered

You can't be converted
without becoming naked
and seeing clearly
all your faults and weaknesses.

Passion is an expression of
love or hunger.

Do not judge others;
instead, live with God.

The closer you come to God
the more compassion you will have
for your neighbor.

Making Headway

Stop measuring your progress.
In fact, let go of the idea of “progress.”

Look for “moments” of prayer.

Prayer helps us remember
that our life is a journey
to God.

Growth in purity is linked
to increasing our ability
to establish and maintain
solitude of soul for God alone.

Conflict Resolution

Prayer is hanging on to God,
stubbornly clinging to God.

Beg for the grace of prayer.

The universal lack of an interior life
is a key element behind the rash
of violent political and religious conflicts
that plague so many nations.

Entering the Darkness

When I pray using my mind,
I find I have nothing to say.
Prayer is a gift of the Spirit.

The more I pray,
the deeper I enter into the darkness
of the absence of evidence.

You Are What You Eat

Prayer is about loving
and being loved.

Simplicity is in harmony with contemplation.

Prayer deepens with purification of faults.

You grow into what you dwell upon.

Progress along the spiritual path
is fueled by desire.

The Bottom Line

Prayer stimulates a mindfulness of God,
which in turn stimulates acts of love and mercy.

Love is service.
It is the emptying of self.
It is losing in order to find.

Acknowledging my own weakness
increases my ability
to be more merciful toward others.

The Christian life can be reduced to this:
live the beatitudes.

Ready for God

The more you pray,
the more you will become
poor, plain and empty.
And ready for God.

Prayer consists of becoming aware.

We experience God's love
in proportion to our experience
of our own weakness.

In the shadows of our own weakness,
God extends a loving hand of help.

Shut Up

If Christ is the center of my life,
then I am not.
This is good.

Tell your ego to shut up.

Let yourself be loved;
let yourself be acted upon by God.

Contentment is the daughter of simplification.

Faith in Christ means I allow my life
to be illuminated and sustained by His life.

Letting Go

Poverty is another word for “letting go.”

Detachment makes one powerful.

To keep silence is to keep listening.

The Surest Way

The longer I walk with the poor
—and with Jesus—
the more I see the need to put to death
the idea of my own self-sufficiency.

To think of myself as separate
from God and all of creation
is an illusion.

To be in communion with those who are suffering
is the surest way to chip away
at the notion you are a separate self,
detached from the rest of creation.

Letting go of my life
is the surest way
to a life of abundance.

Eternal life is not something that happens
in the future;
it is now.

Nothing Easy

In solitude, seek God,
not consolation or ecstasy.

Spiritual life involves struggle and effort.
Anyone who wants to love
distrusts whatever is easy.

I was becoming smug about my spiritual progress
when I was knocked off my high horse
by this thought:
I still harbor aspirations beyond Christ.

Incarnate the Gospel
before you proclaim it.

Drum Beat

The loud drum beat of fear and anxiety
can be quieted by contemplation.

When Christ reveals his heart to us,
He also reveals our sinfulness.

The most deadly characteristic of sin
is its ease of repetition.

God does not seek perfection in us;
God wants repentance.

Jesus does not promise happiness.
He proclaims the beatitudes.

A Change of Mind

The spiritual life is won or lost
between the ears.

Our minds must be transformed
by Christ.

We need to change the way we think . . .
we need mind renewal!

We need to put on the mind
of Christ.

In the letter to the Romans, Paul writes,
“Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.”

Wow.

That is very radical and extremely tough.

But Paul understands that anything
that cuts against our faith
destroys the unity and fullness of life
created by God and that is God.

Does everything I do proceed from faith?

I think not.

This is trouble.

My faith must move beyond the realm
of my private life.

The Impossibility of the Cross

The Cross is a sign of eternal charity.

God’s ways are so profoundly different from ours
that it is impossible to understand them.

At the foot of the Cross,
humility, poverty, and despair
are sanctified.

Doing the Impossible

Doing God's will requires
we bring our mind, heart and will
into harmony with our faith.

The measure of our love of our enemies
is the only reliable indicator
of our spiritual progress.

Jesus is crucified again in the flesh of
thousands of innocent Iraqis suffering
from the effects of violence
perpetrated by a "Christian" nation
that chooses not to be a witness
to God's reconciling love.

The Gospel is radical and demanding.
And impossible . . . until you accept the fact
that you can't live it without Christ's help.

A Homeless Man

Faith requires we surrender
our wills.

I live in an overcrowded house
of false values.

A homeless, naked, dying man on the cross asks:
are you reasonably comfortable?

Calvary is less about the extreme suffering
endured by Christ on the cross
and more about
the extreme love
that drew Him to the cross.

At the foot of the Cross
words sink into silence
as I look up and ask,
for the love of God,
if I am ready
to follow Christ.

Doing What You Love

Salvation is discovering
who you really are.

The surest way to death
is not to discover
what you love.

Knowing what you love
helps you reorder your life
in order to do what you love.
When you are doing what you love,
you become love.

Not Optional

Test your love for God;
love wants more than anything else
to be in the presence of the beloved.

Adoration is not optional.

Be governed by eternity, not time.

There is no time—there is only
the ever-present now.

A Pure Heart

Our hearts are as great as our love.

I must empty my heart of all selfishness,
before God can fill it with love.

It is easier to be self-centered
than to be patient and loving.

We can only love truly
when our hearts are free
of the self-centered desires
of pride, ambition, and lust.

A true act of love is one
that expects nothing in return.

The more aware we become
of the Divine Presence within us,
the more we shall forget ourselves
and become more serene and pure of heart.

Love Is the Key

Jesus asks us to love as God loves—
without counting the cost
or holding anything back.

Love gives all away.

Love frees us to act for the good of another
rather than for ourselves.

God's love is unbiased and all-embracing.

It does not ask who we are
or how successful we are at what we do.

Being an instrument of peace requires us
to embrace the enemy in pardon.

To give freely what we have freely received
—namely, God’s love—
is the purest form of evangelization.
Following the example of Christ
will lead us to go poor among the poor,
without power, without purse, without provisions,
with charity and respect for those we encounter.
We must seek peace above all else
and then do good at every opportunity.
If our efforts at sharing God’s love
are warmly received, fine;
if not, we should move on.
Our lives are our sermons,
and our preaching should be benign and gentle,
spoken with meekness and humility.

Hail Mary

Mary gave God a human heart.
She gives me Christ’s heart.

Mary is a model for meekness.
Meekness is truly a divine disposition.

Hail Mary, full of grace,
help me to pray.

O most pure Theotokos,
teach me childlike
humility of heart
and purity of spirit.

Planting a Seed

God is near.
God is warm.
God is tender.

It is time we stress these softer
attributes of God.

Plant a seed of gratefulness in your heart,
so that day by day
you grow more thankful to God
for the overflowing goodness and mercy
God has lavished upon you.

Only when I am able to see my own unholiness
can I begin to see the sacredness of all creation.

Listen to the Silence

Silence allows us to live within,
helps us to concentrate on the serious,
profound inner mysteries of life.

Noise takes us out of ourselves,
and distracts and scatters our thoughts.

Silence is not simply a wordless state;
it is an attentive waiting.

Deep, spiritually-active silence
allows us to hear the unity of life.

A Gift of Grace

All opposites are united in Christ.
With Christ, there is richness in poverty,
fullness in hunger
and joy in sorrow.

We are all vulnerable and incomplete—
and in need of God's love, grace, and mercy.

All good things are
a gift of grace.

The soul loves simplicity and chastity.

Without purity, we can not "see" God.

Grace is the breath of Love.

Pilgrim's Progress

The quest for God is a journey,
a pilgrimage to the depths of the soul.

The quest requires a listening heart,
an ear quickened to the silent voice of God,
and vigilant spirit actively waiting and watching.

To be a pilgrim is to live on life's threshold,
walking on the edge of reality,
striving for what lies beyond the reality
we see with our flawed human eyes.

Make Believe Time

God is present and living in the world.
Better to see the Lord here on earth
then to try to penetrate the mysteries
of another world beyond death.

Stop brooding over the incomprehensible
which is beyond the power of understanding.

Punctuate your day with thoughts of God,
recalling God's unselfish,
self-giving love for us.

Recapture your childhood faculty
for make-believe.

Let go of your sophisticated ways.

Stand before God
in a stance of conversion.

Day by Day

Holiness seems beyond our grasp,
so we settle for mediocrity.

Transformation is a daily event.

The main thrust of one's energy
must be applied to
spiritual growth.

Pray always.

Cling to Jesus.