



Sunflower Seeds

Celebrating Everyday Spirituality



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Celebrating National Poetry Month

by MELANNIE SVOBODA SND on APRIL 17, 2017

April is national poetry month. In honor of poetry, I'd like to share four short poems with you. I'll say a word or two about a few of them. I suggest you read the poems slowly and even aloud.

The first poem is by St. John of the Cross, translated by Daniel Ladinsky:

What Is Grace?

"What is grace," I asked God.

And He said,

"All that happens:"

Then He added, when I looked perplexed,

"Could not lovers

say that every moment in their Beloved's arms

was grace?

Existence is my arms,

though I well understand how one can turn



(Source: Oldiefan)

About Sister Melannie Svoboda, SND

Sister of Notre Dame, teacher, student, author, speaker, listener, friend, poet, farm girl.



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About Sunflower Seeds

Each Monday I'll post a short reflection, a simple musing on some aspect of spirituality— the everyday kind of spirituality that



includes things like walking in the park, slicing an onion for the casserole, caring for a child, studying for an exam, reading a line from scripture, laughing at a joke, or mourning a significant loss.

Along the way I welcome your questions, comments and insights too. After all, we're all in this life—this spiritual life—together!

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away from

me

until the heart

has wisdom.”

All that happens is grace? Really? All? That bad news from the doctor? That cherished relationship that is falling apart? That disturbing headline? All is grace? It is, the poet seems to be saying, if we really believe that “existence is God’s arms.” Hmm. What could that mean? Even bad and disturbing things can elicit trust and love... The poem says it is so hard for us to believe that all is grace, that God understands how we can turn away from Him... Until our “heart has wisdom.” There’s consolation in those words and much to ponder is these few lines...

This second poem is just for fun (or is it?)...by Judith Powell:

Petition

God-man, enduring
helplessness

on Adam’s tree,

help those whose daily cross is

enduring me!



(Source: pixel2013)

And here’s one by the great Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore:

I slept and dreamt that life was joy.

I awoke and saw that life was service.

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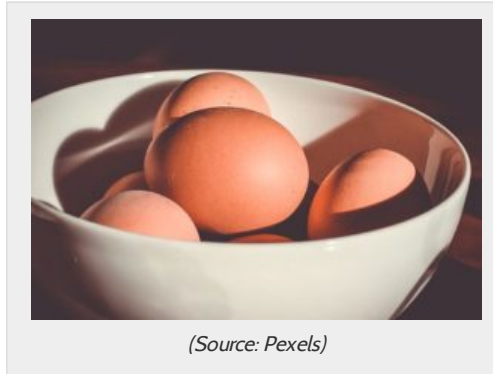
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I acted and behold, service was joy.

Tagore says so much in so few words... This beautiful Hindu poet wrote many poems like this one that seem remarkably Christian. I guess we have to remember that we Christians don't have a monopoly on love and joy and service, do we?...

And my final poem is one I really, really like... Maybe it's because my own mother used to make her dumplings in a large wooden bowl... In fact, she had three wooden bowls. After her death, each "branch" of my family got one of those treasured, "holy" bowls... This poem is by Larry Schug.



(Source: Pexels)

Mixing Bowl

Her Red Wing crockery mixing bowl
was all I wanted
of my mother's earthly possessions,
that magic place
where pies and cakes and cookies
enough to sate six boys
were conjured with a mixing
of sugar and cinnamon,
a swirling of milk and eggs,

sprinkles and spoonfuls and cupfuls

of flour and soda and salt.

Now that I do my own baking,

I treasure my mother's mixing bowl

as a peaceful, sacred place,

a small clearing in a dark forest;

where I meet her again,

my fingers touch hers

as she guides my hands

through stirring and kneading.

When a recipe calls for water,

I add tears.

Yes, we meet our deceased loved ones in all kinds of places...especially in those things they used while on earth—a mixing bowl, a hoe, a table cloth, a lunch pail... When do you feel particularly close to a deceased loved one? The last two lines remind us that grief is a mysterious thing... we never “recover fully” when a loved one dies... Tears can well up unexpectedly at any time...








I hope you enjoyed celebrating National Poetry Month with me. What did you think of these particular poems? Do you have another favorite poem that you would recommend to us?


In keeping with the joy of the Easter season, I've chosen the song “10,000 Reasons” by Matt Redman. The last time I used this song was over two years ago. It continues to be a favorite of mine.



Do you have any thoughts you'd like to share with us? I welcome them!

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John Hopkins April 17, 2017 at 6:48 am



Good morning, Sister Melannie. I agree with you; the Larry Schug poem is absolutely beautiful! The last line being particularly poignant. Yes, our loved ones

die, but mysteriously our lives still mix with theirs!

Happy poetry month!

REPLY

Melannie Svoboda SND April 19, 2017 at 3:27 pm



Yes, John, our deceased loved ones are close... and our "lives still mix with theirs." A nice way to put it—especially considering the title of the poem... Thanks for sharing. Sr. Melannie

REPLY

Mary Schneider April 17, 2017 at 10:21 am



Sr. Melannie:

These poems filled my heart with joy, and my eyes with tears. I also love the poetry of Tagore. Each poem above is beautiful. Thank you for sharing.

Mary

REPLY

Melannie Svoboda SND April 19, 2017 at 3:28 pm



I'm glad to hear you had such a sensitive response to these poems. Thanks for writing, Mary! Sr. Melannie

REPLY

Mary Nolan April 17, 2017 at 10:36 am



Thank You!

What is it about poetry...such a blessing...

Mary

REPLY

Melannie Svoboda SND April 19, 2017 at 3:30 pm



If we could explain the power and beauty of poetry, it probably wouldn't be poetry! Thanks for writing, Mary! Sr. Melannie

REPLY

Jean Canatsey April 17, 2017 at 10:59 am



I loved the poems, especially "The Mixing Bowl". I remember my mother when I pray her rosary. I remember my grandmother when I use her dishes and when I sit in the rocking chair she rocked me in.

I was also moved by the poem on grace. There is much to journal on there. As always, thank you for your reflections. Happy poetry month!

REPLY

Melannie Svoboda SND April 19, 2017 at 3:32 pm



Dear Jean, What beautiful memories you have of your mother and grandmother! And I'm glad to hear you journal. That's a beautiful way to get in touch with the most meaningful aspects of life. Thank you! Sr. Melannie

REPLY

Betty Nagel April 17, 2017 at 3:43 pm



Hi, Melannie!

I have to say that I love the Tagore poem, because every week when I help at a local food pantry, I experience the joy of serving.

I hope you find joy in your service as a prolific writer. I know that I find joy and inspiration from your writings and the occasional retreat.

REPLY

Melannie Svoboda SND April 19, 2017 at 3:33 pm



Thank you, Betty, for affirming the joy that is found in service. And thank you for your kind words about my writing. Melannie

REPLY

Michelle April 18, 2017 at 6:24 am



Thank you, I enjoyed this immensely.

REPLY

Melannie Svoboda SND April 19, 2017 at 3:34 pm

Glad to hear this, Michelle! You're welcome! Sr. Melannie



REPLY

Susan April 18, 2017 at 7:20 am

Hi Sister Melanie. I liked the second one. It gave me a little chuckle at first and then a moment of insight that those I feel I must endure could be feeling the same way about me!



REPLY

Melannie Svoboda SND April 19, 2017 at 3:35 pm

Yes, I think the poem captures a great humbling insight! Thank you for your response, Susan! Sr. Melannie



REPLY

Beverly April 18, 2017 at 10:11 am

Loved all the poetry! But the "Mixing Bowl" hit home. My Mom had a yellow pyrex bowl that she mixed kolaches in. I can still see her and still smell the wonderful aromas of "kolache day". And, yes, the poem brought tears to my eyes.



REPLY

Melannie Svoboda SND April 19, 2017 at 3:37 pm

Dear Beverly, My mother made kolaches often too. Which kind were your favorite? I loved especially apricot and plum! St. Melannie



REPLY

Karen April 18, 2017 at 4:08 pm

I have a "hoop" saw for cutting smaller branches. I call it my "grandpa" saw because of all the times I saw him with the very same type of saw in his hands, outside working in the yard. It makes me smile when I use it. Love your poetry selections and how poetry can say so much in so few words. Especially about GRACE, which always strikes me as one of those concepts that is



difficult to describe but you “know it when you see it”. Thank you for your weekly inspiration!

REPLY

Melannie Svoboda SND April 19, 2017 at 3:39 pm



Dear Karen, It is beautiful that your “hoop saw” connects you to your grandpa! Thank you for sharing this with us. Sr. Melannie

REPLY

Barb H April 18, 2017 at 7:51 pm



Love the mixing bowl poem. Thank you for sharing thoughts with us. So often you put into words exactly how I feel. Easter Blessings!

REPLY

Melannie Svoboda SND April 19, 2017 at 3:40 pm



Dear Barb, We must be on the same “wave length.” Thanks for writing!
Sr. Melannie

REPLY

Tom April 18, 2017 at 8:28 pm



Blessed Easter, Sr. Melannie. Your desire to have your mother’s mixing bowl as a precious reminder of her reminded me that I cherish my mother’s mixing spoon in the same way. To see how her years of mixing ingredients has worn down the “labor” edge of the spoon speaks volumes to me.

REPLY

Melannie Svoboda SND April 19, 2017 at 3:43 pm



Dear Tom, Thank you for sharing the memory of your mother that you connect with her mixing spoon. And thank you for emailing a picture of it to me. I’m trying to transfer that picture to this website, but so far I haven’t been able to. I’ll ask a friend. Thank you for writing! Melannie

REPLY

JoAnn Welch April 19, 2017 at 9:49 am



I am not sure of the title, but this is the one and only poem I remember...not even sure of the title!

He drew a circle that shut me out
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.
But love and I had the wit to win
I drew a circle that took him in.

I really enjoyed the short poems...thanks for sharing!!

REPLY

Melannie Svoboda SND April 19, 2017 at 3:24 pm



Dear JoAnn, The lines are from the poem "Outwitted" by Edwin Markham (1852-1940), an American poet from Oregon. I like the poem too! Sr. Melannie

REPLY

JoAnn Welch April 21, 2017 at 8:36 pm



Thanks, Sr. Melannie...

REPLY

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