

Call to Worship

Amy Stenson Kujawski

I am grateful for the wisdom of seventh graders. Last week, one of my students reflected on this moment in our country in her daily journal.

She was grateful for a new beginning. She was grateful to be a young kid in this country.

She was grateful for all of the people who worked hard for something in which they really believed.

In the end, she said she was hopeful. If hope was a building, she wrote, it would be a church.

Come let us worship together.

“Our Parents”

for my brother

Our parents died at least twice,
the second time when we forgot their stories,
or couldn't imagine how often they craved love,
or felt useless, or yearned for some justice
in this world. In their graves, our parent's need
for us is pure, they're lost without us.
Their honeymoon in Havana does or does not
exist. That late August in the Catskills-
we can decide to make them happy.

What is the past if not unfinished work,
swampy, fecund, seductively revisable?
One of us has spent his life developing respect
for the weakness of words, the other for what
must be held on to; there may be a chance for us.

We try to say what happened in that first house
where we were, like most children, the only
needy people on earth. We remember
what we were forbidden, who got the biggest slice.
Our parents, meanwhile, must have wanted something
back from us. We know what it is, don't we?
We've been alive long enough.

Stephen Dunn

Micah 6:6-8

How shall I bow before God on high?

Should I approach God with whole-offerings or yearling calves?
Will the Lord accept thousands of rams, or ten thousand rivers of oil? What shall I bring
when I approach the Lord?

Shall I offer my eldest son for my own wrongdoing, my children for my own sin?

God has told you what is good; what does the Lord ask of thee
but to do justice, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

“Heavy”

That time
I thought I could not
go any close to grief
without dying

I went closer,
and I did not die.
Surely God
had His hand in this,

as well as friends.
Still I was bent,
and my laughter,
as the poet said,

was nowhere to be found.
Then said my friends Daniel
(brave even among lions),
“It’s not the weight you carry

but how you carry it-
books, bricks, grief-
it’s all in the way
you embrace it, balance it, carry it

when you cannot, and would not,
put it down.”
So I went practicing.
Have you noticed?

Have you heard
the laughter
that comes, now and again,
out of my startled mouth?

How I linger
to admire, admire, admire
the things of this world
that are kind, and maybe

also troubled-
roses in the wind,
the sea geese on the steep waves,
a love
to which there is no reply.

Mary Oliver

A Few Words on the Soul by Wislawa Szymborska

We have a soul at times.
No one's got it non-stop,
for keeps.

Day after day,
year after year
may pass without it.

Sometimes
it will settle for awhile
only in childhood's fears and raptures.
Sometimes only in astonishment
that we are old.

It rarely lends a hand
in uphill tasks,
like moving furniture,
or lifting luggage,
or going miles in shoes that pinch.

It usually steps out
whenever meat needs chopping
or forms have to be filled out.

For every thousand conversations
it participated in one,
if even that,
since it prefers silence.

Just when our body goes from ache to pain,

it slips off-duty.

It's picky:
it doesn't like seeing us in crowds,
our hustling for a dubious advantage
and creaky machinations make it sick.

Joy and sorrow
aren't two different feelings for it.
It attend us
only when the two are joined.

We can count on it
when we're sure of nothing
and curious about everything.

Among the material objects
it favors clocks with pendulums
and mirrors, which keep on working
even when no one is looking.

It won't say where it comes from
or when it's taking off again,
though it's clearly expecting such questions.

We need it
but apparently
it needs us
for some reason too.

e.e. cummings

i thank You God for most this amazing
day:for the leaping greenly spirits of trees
and a blue true dream of sky;and for everything
which is natural which is infinite which is yes

(i who have died am alive again today,
and this is the sun's birthday; this is the birth
day of life and of love and wings:and of the gay
great happening illimitably earth)

how should tasting touching hearing seeing
breathing any--lifted from the no
of allnothing--human merely being
doubt unimaginable You?

(now the ears of my ears awake and
now the eyes of my eyes are opened)

Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life.
It turns what we have into enough, and more.
It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity.
It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend.
Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a
vision for tomorrow.

by Melodie Beattie

“The Cure at Troy” (excerpt)
Seamus Heaney

Human beings suffer.
They torture one another.
They get hurt and get hard.
No poem or play or song
Can fully right a wrong
Inflicted and endured.

History says, don't hope
On this side of the grave,
But then, once in a lifetime
The longed-for tidal wave
Of justice can rise up
And hope and history rhyme.

So hope for a great sea-change
On the far side of revenge.
Believe that a farther shore
Is reachable from here.
Believe in miracles
And cures and healing wells.

Call miracle self-healing,
The utter self-revealing
Double-take of feeling.
If there's fire on the mountain
And lightning and storm

And a god speaks from the sky

That means someone is hearing
The outcry and the birth-cry
Of new life at its term.
It means once in a lifetime
That justice can rise up
And hope and history rhyme.

Holy the Firm (excerpt) Annie Dillard

...Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in his Holy place? There is no one but us. There is no one to send, nor a pure heart on the face of the earth, but only us, a generation comforting ourselves with the notion that we have come at an awkward time, that our innocent fathers are all dead - as if innocence had ever been - and our children busy and troubled, and we ourselves unfit, not yet ready, having each of us chosen wrongly made a false start, failed, yielded to impulse and the tangled comfort of pleasures, and grown exhausted, unable to seek the thread, weak, and involved. But there is no one but us. There never has been.

“For the Unknown Enemy” William Stafford

This monument is for the unknown
good in our enemies. Like a picture
their life began to appear; they
gathered at home in the evening
and sang. Above their fields they saw
a new sky. A holiday came
and they carried the baby to the park
for a party. Sunlight surrounded them.

Here we glimpse what our minds long turned
away from. The great mutual;
blindness darkened that sunlight in the park,
and the sky that was new, and the holidays.
This monument says that one afternoon
We stood here letting a part of our minds
Escape. They came back, but different.
Enemy: one day we glimpsed your life.

This monument is for you.