

Magdalen Community at Rothko Chapel

Sunday, July 16, 2006, 10:00 a.m.

*The Magdalen Community is a connective community seeking conversation
and dialogue with other spiritualities and religious traditions.*

Call to Silence and Opening Meditation

A fish cannot drown in water,
A bird does not fall in air.
In the fire of its making,
Gold doesn't vanish:
The fire brightens.
Each creature God made
Must live in its own true nature;
How could I resist my nature,
That lives for oneness with God?

---Mechtild of Magdeburg (c. 1207—c. 1282) from *Women in Praise of the Sacred* ed. Jane Hirshfield

Opening Dialogue

Solo: Goodness is our teacher.

Unison: Our first teacher is love.

Solo: Love is the source of all that we are; the Oneness in whom we live.

Unison: Can Oneness be the origin of the many?

Solo: Yes, the One source in whom we live and move and have our being. The One who is love, creation, and life.

Unison: The One whose life is wisdom, power and beauty. The One who leads us into truth.

Solo: The source and teacher, oneness and multiplicity. The fiery spark that kindles creation.

Unison: But don't look over here.

Solo: And don't look over there.

Unison: Look within. The fire of true Humanity is within us.

Solo: Let us take courage in our divine source, and fear not. Tend the fire of divinity within.
Unison: Yes, the fire is within us.

Solo: Will you release your fear? Will you sing in the blazing light of divinity within? Can you dance in the flames of divine love?
Unison: The fire of love dances in me. My voice is prayer to the source of love. My prayers rise as sparks in the night. And I am not afraid.

Readings and call to conversation

A Reading from the Gospel of Mary Magdalene

(trans. Jean-Yves LeLeoup)

Then Mary arose, embraced them all, and began to speak to her brothers: "Do not remain in sorrow and in doubt, for his Grace will guide you and comfort you. Instead, let us praise his greatness, for he has prepared us for this. He is calling upon us to become fully human. Thus Mary turned their hearts to the Good, and they began to discuss the meaning of the Teacher's words.

A Reading from The Qur'an

Read in Arabic; Reader: Fatma Betül Cavdar

Chapter 93:

*By the forenoon,
And the night when it falls calmly;
Your Lord did not forsake you or scorn you.
Surely, the last day is better for you than the First.
Your Lord shall surely give you of his bounty; and you shall be pleased.
Did he not find you an orphan, and then gave you refuge?
And find you in error, and then guided you?
And find you in need, and then enriched you?
As for the orphan, you shall not oppress him;
And as for the beggar, you shall not drive him away;
And as for your Lord's favor, you shall proclaim it.*

Chapter 94:

*Did we not dilate your breast;
And lift from you your burden;
Which had weighed down your back?
Did we not exalt your name?
Surely, along with hardship is ease.
Surely, along with hardship is ease.
So, when you have finished, toil on;
And unto your Lord, incline.*

Chapter 103:

*By the time,
Man is, indeed, a prey to perdition,
Except for those who believe, do the righteous deeds, urge each other to seek the truth and urge each other to be steadfast.*

---English translation by Majid Fakhry

A Reading from Rumi (1207—1273)

HOW DOES GOD KEEP FROM FAINTING?

*The wonder of water moving over that rock in the stream
justifies existence.*

*The swish of a horse's tail---again I am stunned
by the grandeur of the unseen One
that governs all
movement.*

*I resist looking at the palms of my hands sometimes.
Have you ever gotten breathless before a beautiful face,
for I see you there,
my dear.*

*There is a wonderful problem waiting for you
that God and I share:*

how to keep from fainting when we see each other.

In truth:

*How does God keep from fainting
looking at Himself all day?*

*Light is moving like a stream, and
the myriad celestial beings
applaud.*

Two Readings from Rabia of Basra (c. 717—801)

THE SKY GAVE ME ITS HEART

*The sky gave me its heart
because it knew mine was not large enough to care
for the earth the way
it did.*

*Why is it we think of God so much?
Why is there so much talk
about love?*

*When an animal is wounded
no one has to tell it, "You need to heal"; so naturally it will nurse
itself the best it can.*

*My eye kept telling me, "Something is missing from
all I see." So it went in search of the cure.*

*The cure for me was His beauty, the remedy---
for me was to
love.*

OUR BEAUTY

*Live with dignity, women, live dignity, men.
Few things will more enhance our
beauty as
much.*

A Reading from Hafiz (c. 1320—1389)

I HAVE COME INTO THE WORLD TO SEE THIS

*I have come into this world to see this:
The sword drop from men's hands even at the height
of their arc of anger
Because we have finally realized there is just one flesh to wound
and it is His---the Christ's, our
Beloved's.*

*I have come into this world to see all this: all creatures hold hands as
we pass through this miraculous existence we share on the way
to an even greater being of soul,
a being of just ecstatic light, forever entwined and at play
with Him.*

*I have into the world to hear this:
every song the earth has sung since it was conceived
in the Divine's womb and began spinning from
His wish,
every song by wing and fin and hoof,
every song by hill and field and tree and woman and child,
every song of stream and rock,
every song of tool and lyre and flute,
every song of gold and emerald
and fire,*

every song the heart should cry with magnificent dignity
to know itself as
God;

for all other knowledge will leave us again in want and aching---
only imbibing the glorious Sun
will complete us.

I have come into the world to experience this:

men so true to love
they would rather die before speaking
an unkind
word,

men so true their lives are His covenant---
the promise of
hope.

I have come into the world to see this:

the sword drop from men's hands
even at the height of
their arc of
rage.

Because we have finally realized
There is just one flesh
we can wound.

---from *Love Songs to God* trans. Daniel Ladinsky

Closing Dialogue

Solo: Can you live in the light of infinite mercy? Can you stand in the light that moves like a stream?

Unison: Is not such mercy too heavy to bear? Is not such light too bright for our eyes?

Solo: Did not the One who is infinite love lighten your burden with the promise of hope?

Unison: Did not the One who is infinite give us her refuge and offer his breast?

Solo: Indeed it is so: will you widen your heart to the size of the sky, and proclaim the Lord's favor on the one and the many?

Unison: We will proclaim the One who is many, the One who seeks mercy and justice and draws us to peace.

Solo: Will you incline to the truth and encourage each other to be steadfast?

Unison: We will encourage each other to seek truth and be steadfast in mercy.

Solo: Will you trust in the One who is many, and forbear to wound the one flesh that is all?

Unison: Surely, the hardship of mercy is ease.

Solo: Will you live in the covenant of love that bears the dignity of God?

Unison: We will know ourselves as God. We will know ourselves as peace.

*As an expression of appreciation to The Rothko Chapel for use of this sacred space,
your love offering in the box marked "Magdalen Community"
will be gratefully received.*



*For more information about the Magdalen Community, please contact Bridgitt Ayers,
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