

*I read scriptures,  
poems, books,  
governed my mind,  
kept pious thoughts,  
focused my heart.  
No one realizes the Divine  
in any of these ways.  
We fool ourselves every day.  
When love comes  
love demands  
we become love,  
no limits -  
it's that simple.*

## MULLAH NASRUDDIN'S INFIDEL FEET

Mullah Nasruddin was excited to be visiting an old friend. After being apart for many years their friendship just blossomed again. His friend's kind heart and tender ways were a joy. They laughed and joked, talked for hours about the merciful and compassionate ways of Allah.

His friend was so hospitable he positioned Nasruddin's bed so his head would face the east and Mecca and his feet away out of respect for the Prophet.

There was only one problem. Nasruddin was all his life a fitful sleeper, tossing, turning through the night, his blankets disheveled, his feet sticking out in the cool air.

The next morning, his friend appeared upset with him. Nasruddin inquired into what was the problem. "This morning I came to your room and your feet, lacking all respect and devotion, were facing toward Mecca. This cannot happen in my house! If you cannot be respectful to Allah you must leave. It pains me to say this for I love your companionship."

Nasruddin apologized explaining his sleeping problem. He made a little joke about his feet and their wayward way. They had taken him on many a journey to faraway lands, apparently even in his sleep. His friend did not laugh.

That night Nasruddin spoke to his body, "You must be peaceful this one night. He is my friend and I don't wish to upset him," and to his feet, "My little wayward ones, I count on you to do what is right for our friend." He made his blankets tight about, "I rely on you to do the loving thing and help this body stay still!"

The next morning when his friend peeked in, Nasruddin's blanket was on the floor and his feet were again facing Mecca. Nasruddin woke hearing his friend cry out angrily, "This will not do. I cannot believe that you, of all people, fail in your devotion to Allah."

Suddenly Nasruddin grabbed his feet yelling and wrestling with them. The whole household was drawn by the noise of this crazy man screaming and fighting with his own feet, "You must not face toward Allah! Face away, you disrespectful infidels!"

This tumult went on for hours until his host finally yelled, "Nasruddin, what are you doing? Stop this craziness now!"

Nasruddin who was now trying to bite at his foot howled back, "I cannot. You must help me. Everywhere my feet point I see the holy one moving through all creation: in the air, on earth, the sea, the desert, the mountains, even in people. You must help me! Tell me where Allah is not."

## **INTEGRATED SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY**

The fourth order is an integrated spiritual community, whose companions are from diverse faiths traditions and maintain practice within their own faith systems; or they are not affiliated with religious traditions at all. Together we practice a living unity and experience the great mystery, oneness and compassion of God.

The fourth order does not represent any particular religion or denomination. Words to describe us might be multi-faith or interfaith or trans-faith. We call ourselves by all these names as we continue to discern our community calling.

The prefix trans means on the other side of, above and beyond, across. In this context our multi-faith community seeks to go together beyond the differences of our faiths to the source of the experience of compassion, accompaniment and presence at the heart of all faiths. This is our form of service to the world.

Transfaith practice occurs when wisdom and understanding learned through the multifaith experience are drawn on by community members to enhance the practice of radical awareness of God's presence within ourselves, in others and in all creation.

Francis founded his life on a radical relationship to the life and teachings of Jesus. He experienced the Jesus of the Gospels as the fulfillment of Wisdom. In a famous moment from his life, he publicly stripped himself naked of the social clothing and conventional wisdom that demanded he distort or minimize divine love. He returned this old clothing to his human father.

We of the fourth order acknowledge that a tribalism of exclusion has frequently dominated many faith systems. Conversion has often meant becoming acculturated or institutionalized in a politic of religion.

We affirm that the Spirit of life blows where it will and that nothing can contain or stop it. We affirm and respect the presence of that Spirit in all creation and in one another. Companions of the fourth order, no matter what their faith, take off that social and institutional clothing which demands certain kinds of religious affiliation in order to receive the grace of God. We return it to its human fathers. We must be as bold as Francis was bold and we must live our lives with the same honesty.

## COMING INTO SILENCE

Read this simple prayer three times and allow yourself to slip into humming at the end of the reading and then into silence. Feel the hum of great silence move through you.

Great silence, may we hear you this day.  
Great humming sound, may we feel you this day.  
Great seed and hidden source, illuminate our hearts and way today.  
May we honor ourselves and each other, as children of the unseen source.  
May we walk in deep peace and know all creation, as our deepest relations.  
May we honor all creation, as the manifestation of the unseen source.  
May we live in loving kindness and simplicity.  
May we live in holy freedom, responsibility and obedience  
to that seed and hidden source.  
Great silence, may we hear you this day.  
Great humming sound, may we feel you this day.  
Great seed and hidden source, illuminate our hearts and way today.

## SOUND

Take time in silence throughout your day to hear the great hum moving through you, arising when it will.

## CONTEMPLATIONS

### On Unity

So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth. - **Baha'u'llah**

He who experiences the unity of life sees his own Self in all beings, and all beings in his own Self, and looks on everything with an impartial eye. - **Buddha**

All things are our relatives; what we do to everything, we do to ourselves. All is really One. - **Black Elk**

I know that my unity with all people cannot be destroyed by national boundaries and government orders. - **Leo Tolstoy**

Unity to be real must stand the severest strain without breaking. - **Mahatma Ghandi**

Love thy neighbor as thyself: Do not do to others what you would not wish be done to thyself: Forgive injuries. Forgive thy enemy, be reconciled to him, give him assistance, invoke God in his behalf." - **Confucius**

What is hateful to you; do not to your fellow man. This is the law: all the rest is commentary." - **Rabbi Hillel, Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 31a.**

I pray, Father, that they may be one. - **Jesus**

### **No Force in Unity**

Do not force others, including children, by any means whatsoever, to adopt your views, whether by authority, threat, money, propaganda, or even education. However, through compassionate dialogue, help others renounce fanaticism and narrow-mindedness.<sup>i</sup>

- Thich Nhat Hanh

### **STORY**

1. Tell a story about a time you experienced separation and what your part was in it?
2. Is there value in separation? (see the Bly poem above) If so, can you hold this paradox? How?
3. Tell a story about a time you were surprised by unity.
4. What is the institutional or cultural clothing you need to take off?

### **Other Reflections: Five Good Questions from Roshi Bernie Glassman**

1. What keeps us feeling separate from each other?
2. What keeps us thinking we know the right way?
3. What keeps us from seeking our unity, from appreciating everything that is?
4. What are the peacemaking forms that will keep all beings experiencing their interdependence?
5. How do we penetrate the unknown, bear witness, and heal ourselves and all creation?<sup>ii</sup>

### **BUDDHIST BLESSING**

May you be purified in body, speech and mind  
by the most precious jewel light  
arising from the supreme field of gems,  
the Lord of Compassion, the practices of freedom  
and the community of living and dead that uphold you now.

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<sup>i</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh. *Interbeing: Fourteen Guidelines for Engaged Buddhism*. Parallax Press, 3 Sub edition. Berkeley 1987.

<sup>ii</sup> Glassman, Bernie, *Bearing Witness: A Zen Master's Lessons in Making Peace*. Harmony/Bell Tower. New York 1998.