

Interfaith Devotional Gathering

At Little Pond — July 2, 2005

LISTENING)))))))

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**PART ONE —
CREATION AND THE CREATOR**

O God, I never hearken to the voices of the beasts or the rustle of the trees, the splashing of waters or the song of birds, the whistling of the wind or the rumble of the thunder, but I sense in them a testimony to Thy Unity and a proof of Thy Incomparableness; that Thou art the All-prevailing, the All-knowing, the All-wise, the All-just, the All-true, and that in Thee is neither overthrow nor ignorance nor folly nor injustice nor lying. O God, I acknowledge Thee in the proof of Thy handiwork and the evidence of Thy acts: grant me, O God, to seek Thy Satisfaction with my satisfaction, and the Delight of A Father in His child, remembering Thee in my love for Thee, with serene tranquility and firm resolve.

Dhu ‘L-Nun (died 861) Sufi

Is not sight a jewel? Is not hearing a treasure? Is not speech a glory? O my Lord pardon my ingratitude, and pity my dullness who am not sensible of these gifts. The freedom of thy bounty hath deceived me. These things were too near to be considered. Thou presentedst me with Thy blessings, and I was not aware. But now I give thanks and adore and praise Thee for Thine inestimable favors.

Thomas Traherne 1637-74

Dance, my heart! Dance today with joy. The strains of love fill the days and the nights with music, and the world is listening to its melodies: Mad with joy, life and death dance to the rhythm of this music. The hills and the sea and the earth dance. The world of man dances in laughter and

tears. Why put on the robe of a monk, and live aloof from the world in lonely pride? Behold! My heart danceth in the delight of a hundred arts; and the Creator is well pleased.

Kabir . Northern India . 15th Century

MUSIC - Xin Chi Yang , piano
Sonatina in C Major (Opus No. 1)
by Friedrich Kuhlau
III: Rondo (Allegro)

O ye people that have minds to know and ears to hear!

The first call of the Beloved is this: O mystic nightingale! Abide not but in the rose-garden of the spirit. O messenger of the Solomon of love! Seek thou no shelter except in the Sheba of the well-beloved, and O immortal phoenix! Dwell not save on the mount of faithfulness. Therein is thy habitation, if on the wings of thy soul thou soarest to the realm of the infinite and seekest to attain thy goal.

...Blind thine eyes, that thou mayest behold My Beauty; stop thine ears, that thou mayest hearken unto the sweet melody of My voice; empty thyself of all learning, that thou mayest partake of My knowledge; and sanctify thyself from riches, that thou mayest obtain a lasting share from the ocean of My eternal wealth

From the Hidden Words of Baha’u’llah

Listen, Lord—A Prayer
O Lord, we come this morning
Knee-bowed and body-bent
Before thy throne of grace.
O Lord—this morning—

Bow our hearts beneath our knees,
And our knees in some lonesome valley.
We come this morning—
Like empty pitchers to a full fountain,
With no merits of our own.
O Lord—open up a window of heaven,
And lean out far over the battlements of glory,
And listen this morning

From God's Trombones
by James Weldon Johnson

The Prayer of the heart is the source of all good,
which refresheth the soul as if it were a garden

St. Gregory of Sinai . Died 1360

Prayer reneweth the sixth day of creation
Rabbi Moshe Hakoutun

He Fumbles at Your Soul

As players at the keys
Before they drop full music on.
He stuns you by degrees,
Prepares your brittle nature
For the ethereal blow
By fainter hammers further heard,
Than nearer, then so slow
Your breath has time to straighten.
Your brain to bubble cool,
Deals one imperial thunderbolt
That scalps your naked soul.

When winds take forests in their paws
The universe is still

Emily Dickinson

What a thing it is to sit absolutely alone

In the forest, at night, cherished by this
Wonderful, unintelligible,
Perfectly innocent speech,
The most comforting speech in the world,
The talk that rain makes by itself all over
the ridges,
And the talk of the watercourses everywhere in
the hollows!
Nobody started it, nobody is going to stop it.
It will talk as long as it wants, this rain.

As long as it talks I am going to listen.

Thomas Merton

Where Everything is Music

Don't worry about saving these songs!
And if one of our instruments breaks,
It doesn't matter.

We have fallen into the place
Where everything is music.

The strumming and the flute notes
Rise into the atmosphere,
And even if the whole world's harp
Should burn up, there will still be
Hidden instruments playing.

So the candle flickers and goes out.
We have a piece of a flint, and spark.

This singing art is sea foam.
The graceful movements come from a pearl
Somewhere on the ocean floor.

Poems reach up like spendthrift and the edge
Of driftwood along the beach, wanting!
They derive
From a slow and powerful root
That we can't see.

Stop the words now.
Open the window in the center of your chest,
And let the spirits fly in and out

Jelaluddin Rumi

MUSIC—Xin Chi Yang, piano
Mazurka in F Major (Opus 63 No. 2)
by Frederick Chopin

PART TWO—

LISTENING TO EACH OTHER

The heaven of divine wisdom is illuminated with
the two luminaries of consultation and
compassion. Take ye counsel together in all
matters, inasmuch as consultation is the lamp of
guidance which leadeth the way, and is the
bestower of understanding.

Baha'u'llah

The people of the earth, the family of man,
Wanted to put up something proud to look at,
A tower from the flat land of earth
On up through the ceiling into the top of the sky.

And the big job got going,
The caissons and pilings sunk,
Floors, walls and winding staircases
Aimed at the stars high over.
Aimed to go beyond the ladders of the moon.

And God Almighty could have struck them dead
Or smitten them deaf and dumb.
And God was a whimsical fixer.
God was an understanding Boss
With another plan in mind,
And suddenly shuffled all the languages,
Changed the tongues of men
So they all talked different
And the masons couldn't get what the
hodcarriers said,
The helpers handed the carpenters
the wrong tools,
Five hundred ways of asking,
"Who are you?"
Changed ways of asking,
"Where do we go from here?"...

Some called it the tower of Babel job
And the people gave it many other names.
The wreck of it stood as a skull and a ghost,
A memorandum hardly begun,
Swaying and sagging in tall hostile winds,
Held up by slow friendly winds...

**From *The People Yes*
by Carl Sandburg**

***MUSIC—by Chris Smither*
Small Revelations**

Simple to see where we come from,
Harder is where we go,
That's the core of the treason.
The promise is never the answer,
Why do you need to know,
There ain't a rhyme or a reason,
Try to stay in the season,
Can't you stay in the season.

Passion is feeling in motion,
Compassion is standing still,
This isn't justification,
Hearing is letting it happen,
To listen's a work of will,
Beware of cheap imitations,
Thankful for small revelations,
Thankful for small revelations

Just as heavy the hammer,
Hard is the heart of stone,
Harder still is the notion,
Come here and tell me you love me,
Or just leave my heart alone,
Most of the will is the motion,
Most of the rest is devotion
Most of the rest is devotion.

***STORY*
From *Fire in Coventry*
By Stephen Verney**

Rescue
Like a bizarre and outsize bird
You teeter on your wind-whipped perch
Atop the fifth-story ledge
At eye level beyond my window.
A mad, bivious boy
Declaiming to a world
So glutted with emergencies
It has no time for yours.
Only the wind hears your urgent words.

A performer in your self-created Big Top
You lean outward in studied carelessness
Teasing the crowd milling below gaping
reproachfully under the searchlights.
If you see death as your oscillating partner
Syntonic in pink tights
Spinning toward you through the darkness
With her inviting ambiguous hoop
It is yet the mechanical sirens
Of the police and fire-cars
That cause you to freeze
In an ambivalence we recognize as our own.

You might spill like a morbid bead
But are threaded by the cord of our attention.
Muted waves of murmured concern float
upwards;
The cajoling spokesman of authority
Croons through his megaphone.
Cradling your head, you listen
As to a lullaby. Promises rise to stroke you.

Undeservingly, we win you back.
Taut with decision your slim body
Turns toward our uncertain love.
Your pale hand waves once in stiff dignity
Before you leap towards our tenuous regard
Through the net of our applause—to safety?

Restored to anonymity we may ignore you.
The crowd disperses in swift embarrassment
Not asking what it was you wished to tell us
That we would not hear.

Roger White

MUSIC—Xin Chi, Piano

Buffalo Boy's Flute—Chinese traditional

This is the Day whereon the Ocean of God's mercy hath been manifested unto men, the Day in which the Day Star of His loving-kindness hath shed its radiance upon them, the Day in which the clouds of his bountiful favor have overshadowed the whole of mankind. Now is the time to cheer and refresh the downcast through the invigorating breeze of love and fellowship, and the living waters of friendliness and charity...

Show forbearance and benevolence and love to one another. Should any one among you be incapable of grasping a certain truth, or be striving to comprehend it, show forth, when conversing with him, a spirit of extreme kindness and good-will. Help him to see and recognize the truth, without esteeming yourself to be, in the least, superior to him, or to be possessed of greater endowments...

This is the Day in which God's most excellent favors have been poured out upon men, the Day in which his most mighty grace hath been infused into all created things. It is incumbent upon all the peoples of the world to reconcile their differences, and, with perfect unity and peace, abide beneath the shadow of the Tree of his care and loving-kindness.

— **Baha'u'llah**

Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love. Where there is injury, pardon. Where there is doubt, faith. Where there is despair, hope. Where there is darkness, light. Where there is sadness, joy. O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood, as to understand; to be loved, as to love; for it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.

St. Francis of Assisi