

UNSPEAKABLE JOY

And so I cross into another world
shyly and in homage linger for an invitation
from this unknown that I would trespass on.

I am very glad, and
all alone in the world, all alone, and very glad, in a new world
where I am disembarked at last.

I could cry with joy, because I am in the new world, just ventured in.
I could cry with joy, and quite freely, there is nobody to know.
And whosoever the unknown people of this unknown world may be

they will never understand my weeping for joy to be adventuring
among them
because it will still be a gesture of the old world I am making
which they will not understand, because it is quite, quite
foreign to them.

That is D.H. Lawrence. I am not too sure how I look to you this morning, but I feel just a little bit wild like a young tom cat who is not sure whether in the next moment he just may race off around the room for several minutes. I feel like all of my hair is sort of standing up. Preparing this lecture has been a fantastic experience. I want to bear testimony to an experience that probably everyone ought to have, but no more than once in their life. I was rocked yesterday when I got up to look around the room and saw my colleague David Scott sitting back of that column there. I have known David for a while, but I have never seen a look on his face like I saw when he was sitting there. I mean he was pale. And that reminded me, not long ago when I looked across and saw Larry Ward preparing for his lecture on the Other World. Once in a lifetime.

We need to talk about that chart a little bit, but it is not the chart we are talking about. And you are aware of that. I am not sure how to say - how to articulate - the language of the trek. Because of that, I want to try in whatever feeble way, to point to it. Whatever else I do this morning I do not want to describe something that happens only to a few in life, for I believe that everyone in our time knows that which those charts indicate. Now, I am certain there is no sequence in those charts. You do not start in the Land of

Mystery and then show up in the River of Consciousness and then the Mountain of Care, and then the Sea of Tranquility. Something different than that happens.

I also want to bear witness to you that one who has not discovered himself standing upon the Mountain of Care, suddenly understanding that the suffering of this world is his, has ever lived on the Sea of Tranquility. I do not know the relationship there but I know that the Sea of Tranquility is not given to one who has not stood upon the Mountain of Care, has not seen that the doom of this world is his own and then has taken up that doom.

I am intrigued by the Mountain of Care, with the interplay of passion and compassion. For with Kazantzakis, I have become clear that in my life only one thing calls forth passion from me. And I mean, only one thing. That is passion for God- not my children, not my wife, not my colleagues. I have passion for one thing and one thing only and that is God. And so does any one who has stood on the Mountain; for on that Mountain of Care, that passion for God is transmuted into compassion for the world. And your compassion is acted out in care for creation- which is passion for God. Every one knows that he lives before the God of heaven and earth. Whether he dares to invoke that awesome symbol or not, he lives before God - and to live before God is to be alive. Oh, but what life, for to be alive, really alive, is to live before the God who is God.

Thus, I want to bear testimony to you that I have passion for one thing and one thing only; to know that is to begin to be able to articulate what it means to be in the midst of the Sea of Tranquility. Now, in that sea, as you begin to get a sense of it, you do not experience the cessation of struggle and conflict. To be in that sea is not to experience giving up. No, it is like life swirls around you in furious struggle. And you are in the midst. I like David Scott's image of the eye of the hurricane. There you are in the midst - right in the midst of all of it.

"This feast unsettles me." Do you like that line out of that song, "Mystery?" It wipes me out every time we sing it. This feast unsettles me. I want to make a confession (because I believe that it is yours too). "This feast unsettles me." You see, all my life I have been something of a spiritual ascetic in a strange kind of way. What I mean by that is that my conscious life has been lived in a season of scarcity. You see in the season of scarcity you become an ascetic to survive. *You* know that. We have lived in a season of scarcity. And now, my God, there is a new time. This feast unsettles me. I want to say more about that later on. You need to hear that before we begin this little trip.

What is it called - Vital Spirit? Let me spin a bit on Vital Spirit. I call it a *new vitality*; it rules the universe, because one day everything is new. How does that happen? As it is said in the Book of Revelation: "Behold, I make all things new." One day everything is new. Just, one day, everything is new. Colleagues are new. Children are new. My feet are new. Even though I smell, one day everything is new. I call it unexpected newness. It has the feel of – well, have you walked outside in the summer on a fresh clean morning, before the sun has really gotten all the way up? And the traffic has not moved yet and, you know, the smell of the air and the feel of it on your flesh? Or have you ever walked in the desert in the afternoon in the summer after a rain storm? One day everything is new. It is just new, unexplainable, inexplicably, and the universe is vibrant.

If you looked on your chart you saw the little word *elan vital*. The universe is vibrant one day, *wildly* vibrant. Remember Walt Whitman? "I sing the body electric." One day the whole universe seems to sing or just hum. It is like electricity, just humming, singing there and you hum and sing and the deeps begin to stir in a way that maybe you have not known before. The subterranean passages of your life rumble. Great currents begin to move about. You feel like you are swimming and suddenly an undercurrent has taken you and pulled you in a new direction. And then you are "alive beyond life." Do you remember that poem of D. H. Lawrence's? Go back and read it now after you have looked into the other world. Then you are "alive beyond life."

I want to talk about that for just a moment. How does one get a hold of the poetry? I grew up in Eastern Arizona in the mountains in a copper mining area. And in the town where I lived there was, about thirty miles south of us, a dam, a hydroelectric power dam. It was built in the thirties to honor Calvin Coolidge. My friend's father was the engineer that ran the dam; we used to go out on weekends and mess around midst that monstrous dam. Now overlooking that dam and the lake behind it, was a huge rock. I mean it was fifteen hundred feet high if it was a hundred. It was just a huge boulderous mountain and there were mountains all around it.

One day, friend Tom and I decided we were going to climb it. Well, we labored for hours and hours and... my, my, my. Standing at the top of that mountain after laboring for hours to get up there...whew! I mean to tell you there was an aliveness in me there, was a vitality there... and when we got to the top of that mountain, wow, you will never guess what we did. In a wild kind of youthful ritual of manhood, we irrigated the universe. When we got back to his home, his parents (who had a pair of binoculars sitting on the shelf) said, "We really enjoyed watching you climb that mountain."

"Alive beyond life! Living where life was never yet dreamed of, nor hinted at. Here! In the other world." "Alive beyond life." I have strange passions. A passion for running, for example. It is difficult for me to pass by a well-manicured golf course without experiencing a wild urge to run. Oh, the joy! Oh, the vitality that is in that running. One day life is new; the universe sings. The deeps are stirred. You are alive beyond life. That is what it means to be in the sea and to know about life.

What are the souvenirs of that trip? What are the indicative resolves? I will articulate them like this. You have seen those silly posters? You know that they put out these days? "Live! Live life?" They kind of nauseate me. I hope that does not bother anybody. But that is the truth. They nauseate me because they do not say it. I shall live! I shall live. To hell with those damn posters. I shall live. I mean I shall bask in the deeps.

My life trembles. Have you ever stood before a hill filled with quaking aspens. Do you know what quaking aspens are? They are a white barked tree and when the wind blows through them, they shimmer and in the autumn you see a stand of quaking aspen shimmering in the distance. Oh, my, I want to tell you that these days my life feels like there is a stand of quaking aspen somewhere down in there shimmering all the time. My resolve is to shimmer.

Well, they named the next box Spontaneous Gratitude. For me, it begins something like this. Remember Auntie Mame (in the movie)? When she was on that stairway? In that bright red outfit she began walking, swooping down the stairway? "Life is a banquet!" Yeah, life is a banquet and I am undone. Can you understand that? I am undone. How do you... look, there is a feast laid out before you and I. Everywhere you look, a morsel. And, my God, I have been living off table scraps all my life. Haven't you? Life is a banquet! That is the beginning. I mean it is a feast.

It puts to shame what you and I experienced last Sunday morning. What we experienced was simply a rehearsal. An artificial DRAMA. If you had eyes to see, what you saw was, my God!, life is a banquet! Then I call it *consummate abundance*. I mean it teems. Have you ever seen those old newsreels? Where there are tuna fishermen and they're out and ultimately they run into a school of tuna and they are wildly throwing the hooks in and pulling them out as fast as they can and then they have mechanical nets that they crank up on the side of the boats and it just teems with huge fish, Life teems! Everywhere you look it reaches out and teems. The harvest is great and I am overwhelmed. *Exquisite Plenitude*.

Then there is an *invitation*. Do you remember the beginning of that song that we put to the tune of "Danny Boy." I never thought we would capture that tune, but we did. I have to think to remember the name of it now. What I remember is that the first line - or at least I remember it as the first line: "Life beckons me." Yeah, that is the invitation. Life beckons me. Then I remember that story out of the New Testament. Go out to the hedgerows and make them come in. Life is a feast. It teems everywhere you turn and there is the invitation, a beckoning. In my mind life becomes... I wanted to use the word wild Joy, but that is not enough. It is like the Kairos take over.

Oh, those posters. You can see I have got an ax about posters. One of the most fantastic places to have a course, is a Roman Catholic Retreat Center - except for the fact that you walk in the door and there are those posters. Makes me so angry. Have you ever seen them? "Celebrate life. Hmmm, the Kairos takes over. That is all there is to life. I have been invited. Now, if you knew me, like I know me, that would overwhelm you. And, you know you, like I know me. I have been invited to know all there is. Wild celebration. Let me underscore that word - wild. If you think that living on the Sea of Tranquility is a serene experience in the way that the world talks about it, you have decided to quit.

You just explode its fiesta. I mean it is wild. It is the kind of wildness that you meet when you are looking into the eyes of an animal - like a young tom cat suddenly tearing off in a wild spin around the yard with his hair on end and he stops right in front of you and you look face to face - rowrrrrrr. That is sort of what you see there. A celebration - that is all there is. My life is seized. A shock and a wild cry tears loose from my mouth. A celebration. And the souvenirs, the awesome yes to my fate, and that is not an easy yes. And yet, once you have read Psalm 51, and know that that is your Psalm, then you know the resolve that grasps your life. For you remember what the Psalmist points out; the only sacrifice, the only offering the mystery desires is your own brokenness and your own spilled-outness - and you and I have got more than enough of that to go around. The resolve that grips my life is, yes to my fate; and it always comes out something like this Y-E-S!! YES. Yes, I am resolved to feast in life, every crumb of it; every moment of it is holy, even a fly crawling up the post that holds up the ceiling. Every moment of it, I feast, that is my resolve. I resolve to see and I resolve to hear, and I resolve to feel the stirring of the deeps. Those are souvenirs that I am left with. Accept the invitation. Accept the invitation; that's my souvenir.

They call the next trip *Blissful Seizure*. One of the songs that we sing, that I do not like, is that Sousa thing that is so hard to sing. What is the name of it? Yes, Washington Post. But it has fantastic music, once you begin and the poetry is fantastic? "a wild kind of joy". I call the first part of that "rapture

walks with woe." I think that is up there in the chart, too. For you have to understand that the Joy that comes in life to man comes in the midst of the woes of his life and does not take them away. Rapture walks with woe. It is the bittersweet- the sweet bitterness of life. That is where the joy comes. It is in the midst of the real life that you have on your hands. In the midst of trials a wild kind of joy breaks through. And if I had to name an emotion there it would be the tears of joy. Do you see the paradox there? Tears of joy, the only response. Tears of joy.

The first year of religious houses, colleagues and I spent a year in Atlanta. That was one of the greatest years of my life. In that year I learned the meaning of trials and tribulations; it was with the help of Soren Kierkegaard in a little book called the Gospel of Suffering, that I gained the poetry by which to articulate the meaning of that period. One day while sitting in an airplane, towards the end of that year, I suddenly realized - I can die. I suddenly realized something had changed. Life was different. And the bittersweet joy that had been there was transmuted. I call it *Surprising Seizure*. And I am defenseless, for you see, once you have been on the Mountain of Care, you are defenseless, but standing before the woes of this world. You are defenseless before the suffering in this world - in the sense that you cannot keep it out.

In the Sea of Tranquility you are defenseless against the seizure, for it comes in the midst of woe and trial and tribulation and carts you away. You awake and birds are swooping down from some clear topped area, seeking you. I mean it is the experience of being seized. That's the rapture. That is the explosive seizure that is there in the midst of the trials and tribulations and woes.

And I am possessed by that like I'm a madman and I am the kind of madman that all men wished that they dared to be. It is madness, that is the rapture. It is holy madness. It is passion for God. That is the seizure. That is the meaning of the rapture. It passes over your life and seizes you and takes you away . And then you are struck dumb. It is the rapture silence. It is being caught off guard. It is looking open-mouthed, surprised, unable to speak. Sometimes you feel like perhaps half inarticulate cries are trying to get out. It is sort of life, if you could talk, all that would come out if you could speak would be umpf, umpf, umpf.

I remember once, a colleague and I were teaching, and we were in a hot room between courses asleep. And in the middle of the night I was awakened by the strangest sound you could imagine. I mean literally, it was sort of a yumaramufft! Wild inarticulate cries and then they stopped. And I knew he was a Godman. Do you remember the 23rd Psalm? "My cup

runneth over." Have you read Saint Teresa of Avila? Suddenly in the middle of your life there's a fountain and the living waters are flowing.

On my uncle's ranch, in central Arizona, there was an artesian well; it was always just spewing up water. And sweet! You would not believe that water could taste like that. I remember the first summer that I stayed on the ranch and really got to help with the work. I used to ride with the cow hands every day, and oh my... It reminds me of the movie Little Big Man. I wasn't just "playing" cowboy; I was "cowboy." We used to just long for the part of the day when we would come to that part of the ranch where the well was located...to drink that water. The rest of the day we would drink out of the horse troughs. But that sweet water from the artesian well was something else.

One time in your life, perhaps your cup runs over. Pouring water - living streams. My God, what do you do when your cup runs over? What *do* you do when your cup runs over? How does the next line go? "Surely goodness and mercy"- is that it? "Shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." The water bubbles up and around and through you and you feel like you are being swept off. My cup runs over. That's the souvenir, the resolve.

How does Kazantzakis put it? I am this ecstatic! I will never forget that. I mean there is a touch of that madness. That is going to always be there. And I will never be the same. I am the ecstatic. And I am resolved to drain the flagon of the bitter sweet liquid that life is. I mean every drop. Fill it again, I'll drain the flagon. "I will be a good fountain." That is the way Lawrence puts it, isn't it? "A good wellhead (yes). Blur no whisper, spoil no expression." And I'll admit the silence of the rapture to my life.

And then that box called *Final Blessings*. Now *you* have known that and so has everyone. Everything is worthwhile. I call it essential goodness. It's the time when being present to creation becomes incomparably salutary. Does that communicate to you? Life is good. How do you say that? Life is good. It is like the memory of eating hot corn on the cob with butter dripping off of it. Life is good.

Death is good. That is the next one. I call it *final home*. I can die. I can die. Which means that I can live and once you understand that, you know the secret. But, oh boy, when David referred to St. Francis yesterday. Do you remember the verse out of his song? "And thou most kind and gentle death. Waiting to hush our latest breath. Oh, Praise him, Oh Praise him. Thou leadest home the child of God. And Christ our Lord thy way has trod. Oh praise him." Death is good.

The way Kazantzakis puts it is, "Life is good and Death is good and the earth is round and firm in my hands like the breast of a woman." And then I call it beatific repose. Do you like that word repose? I do. I thought a long time before I came up with it. Beatific Repose. It is contentment. I don't know if you have ever participated in a Jewish Seder meal. The first time I did, I couldn't get up off the floor. When I lived in Atlanta, the first year of the Religious Houses, I was at a Seder meal in Jacksonville, Florida. What an experience. I wanted to say something to that rabbi, but all I could say to him was I sure appreciate being here. My God, what that man did not know was I could hardly walk out of there.

You know in the Seder meal, they rehearse the story of being a people and they go back to the beginning and rehearse the whole thing. And then the liturgist pauses after he rehearses part of the story and the people say "Dayenu". Do you know what Dayenu means? It would have been enough. It would have been sufficient. It would have sufficed. It would have satisfied us. And he begins the story about Moses taking them across the Red Sea. The sea is malcontent and this and that you have got on your hands. It is sufficient. If you have not seen that movie McCleskey mentioned today, see it, "Ivan Denisovich." One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich. Life is sufficient. I mean your real life is sufficient. If you had driven us through Week One and just let us write those documents, it would have been enough. Life is sufficient. To live in the Sea is to be content. That is happiness.

One night, when I lived in Washington D.C., I went over to the Church of the Savior - a great experiment - and did a little presentation at their coffee house, called Potter's House. And afterwards one of the people, strange friend, who was instrumental in that experiment came up and asked me a question. She looked into my face and said, "Are you happy?" My immediate response to that was something like - well you can imagine what it was. How many times have you taught a course and had somebody ask you that? Do you know what I said to her? I looked her back in the eye and in the space of time that it took for her to ask the question, I answered it...

I remember a great happening that occurred to me as I was going out on a metro visit a week or so earlier. Something relative to the category of happiness exploded my being and for the first time I had a new handle on the gospel of John. Let me read it to you. You will remember it and it will be familiar to you. "I will not leave you bereft; I am coming back in a little while. The world will see me no longer but you will see me. Because I live you will live. Then you will know that I am in the Father and you in me and I in you." Well I understand that what it is to be happy, is to live before God,

in the Word. And I looked her in the eye and I said "YES" and that's all I said. That's all there is to say. I call that Eternal Felicity.

Do you like that word Felicity? It reminds you of the Inn of the Sixth Happiness or something, doesn't it? This life, my children, this marriage, this wife, this husband, this job, this congregation, this home, Dayenu! I am content and happiness is mine. The only souvenir of that trip is resolution to go to heaven and I mean to tell you, I am resolved, I am resolved. Because you can trust life and you can welcome death and you can be God's man. I am happiness. I am happiness. Once you've known that, there is nothing else.

Jim Addington