

DAILY SPIRIT  
JOURNAL

VOL. II

Quotes & Reflections  
for 365 Days

*universal spirit journey pondering*

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JOHN P. COCK

# What Readers Are Saying

*... about the reflections in this book –  
daily sent to an e-mail list via  
[tranScribebooks@triad.rr.com](mailto:tranScribebooks@triad.rr.com)  
or read online at*

[www.reJourney.blogspot.com](http://www.reJourney.blogspot.com), with this heading:

## **Journey Reflection**

**commune with spirit . . . intercommune with good creation . . .  
give thanks for being**

I am enjoying your daily reflections. As I lose my vision, I find that quotes like these restore my inner sight. ~Anne Adkins, North Carolina

What you are doing with your daily reflections is a 21<sup>st</sup> century successor to preaching in the streets and fields – a manifestation of “popular preaching.” Most of the time it is profoundly and wonderfully moving. ~Charles Hahn, Indiana

Your blog is a wise friend who rekindles inner spirit: always offering food for thought, hope, and inspiration. I sometimes read it several times a day and pin up some of the reflections at my desk at work. ~Megha Merani, Dubai

First thing in the morning for my online reading I head to the Journey Reflection for the day. It is good grounding

for my life, for whatever the day will bring, and context for taking in the turmoil of the world. ~**Beret Griffith**, Minnesota

Some eight months ago I had no idea what a treat I was in for. It has been such a valuable daily pleasure reconnecting and connecting with old and new favorite teachers: Wilber, De Mello, Berry, Krishnamurti, Fox, and Tillich. Your daily sharings enrich my journey. ~**Suzanne Morrison**, Tennessee

I find a calming source in the daily blog. I have one quote from an archived blog in my daily diary, another is taped to a kitchen cabinet. I do appreciate the discipline to produce every single day a quality, thoughtful piece of writing and an image that is always illustrative and provocative. Either one could stand on its own – together they are awesome! ~**Beth Engleman**, Pennsylvania

I always marvel at your daily production of language that makes sense, conveys meaning, and helps bind us all together. ~**David Reese**, Oklahoma

I begin my mornings with meditation, then journal writing, and then John Cock's daily reflections. It is amazing and delightful to see what is there each day for pondering the spirit journey in the midst of the world. ~**Roseanne Sands**, North Carolina

# Daily Spirit Journal

To fears.

Journey far & deep

8.24.06

# Daily Spirit Journal

Quotes & Reflections  
for 365 Days

Volume II

John P. Cock

transcribe books

*Daily Spirit Journal (Volume II)*  
*Quotes & Reflections for 365 Days*

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*Dedicated*  
to all journers  
on the great spirit journey

and especially

*Preston, Clara, Sidney, & Dylan*

newborns  
since volume one

If you are going to take care of yourself, every morning, not every other morning, you are going to get yourself spiritually dressed. . . . Some of you will fall flat on your faces and then wonder what in the world caused it. It was caused way back there when you let this or that or the other reflection go by. . . . [W]ring the profound meaning out of every situation. That is taking care of yourself.

~**Joseph W. Mathews**

“On Taking Care of Yourself,”

*Bending History*, pp. 276 ff.



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***Practical spirituality happens where we are*** – at work, with the family, in church, at the movies, at the beach, in a meeting, at school, in the shower, in bed. ***Practical spirituality happens in what we're doing***, whether seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling, dialoguing, dreaming, writing, calculating, walking, swimming, or making love. ***Practical spirituality happens in what we're reflecting on***, praying, cogitating, mulling, and brooding over, weighing up, deciding, contemplating, meditating. ***Practical spirituality happens in what we're being*** – confused, joyful, sorrowful, despairing, provoked, called, resistant, surrendering.

We are spiritual in and throughout our everyday, real lives. That's not to say we are not blind to, unaware of, or willfully closed to *spirit* more times than not, but we *are* spiritual nonetheless, whether we are saying *yes* or *no* or *don't know*. We *are* spiritual because of the always already present *spirit* that we will never get away from – our dance partner for life. Because of this fact, life is a sacramental spirit journey from dust to dust.

~**John P. Cock**

*Our Universal Spirit Journey*, pp. 204-05

# Preface

This is the second volume of *Daily Spirit Journal*. Since August 19, 2004, my ear is cocked, my eye is on watch, my imagination spins. I am always doing my job.

With the completion of this second volume, I have added over 850 daily reflections (all archived) to my Internet blog [www.reJourney.blogspot.com](http://www.reJourney.blogspot.com) and have also sent most of them to a growing e-mail list. Thousands of persons from over 115 nations in the twenty-four global time zones have clicked onto the blog.

The intent or aim of the reflections is

- to daily reflect on the deeper dimension of life
- to be a secular-spiritual articulation for all
- to provide the biggest possible context for our human/non-human creation
- to occasion an eye-opening, even an *aha*, experience
- and, of course, to stimulate motivation for the day

Why and how I do it? I wrote the following in an online “comment” to someone who asked:

Blogging is a journey reflection for me personally as well as for you and others, I trust.

I find quote material in books, magazines, newspapers, common memory pieces, and my own books; from what pops up online; movies and

conversations; and colleagues' e-mails and sent-in quotes. For example, this week's quotes include ones from a colleague, Bonhoeffer, Tommy Lee Jones, and Nikos Kazantzakis.

I interpret the quote, then try to bring it to resolution with an image of intent – like meditation writers have done in three steps: scripture, commentary, and prayer. I'm writing little vignettes daily on the third testament, believing that holy scriptures are a drop in the bucket compared to all spiritual wisdom swirling in our universe.

The last months of inserting visual images within the blogs has been fascinating for me and has drawn much good feedback.

A colleague working in the city of Tbilisi wrote to thank me for the reflection today. That motivates me to keep doing the Daily Spirit Journal.

Thanks for asking.

I have been experimenting with daily meditation, off and on, most of my life. This way is most satisfying. It keeps me at attention, like a life reporter always looking for a meaningful story. And more, I am part of a local-global dialogue network. Sharing reflections daily makes my solitary exercise a community one – even if virtual, I see many faces. Through the daily blog, daily e-mails, and this book and the first volume, I directly do my personal reflection with many others. A great job to have.

August 2006

John P. Cock  
Greensboro, NC  
USA

# Journal Guide

To help us dialogue with what is written herein, we might ask such questions as these:

- In what situation might someone say this quote?
- What real life situation does this quote bring to mind?
- What is the truth about life this quote/reflection is trying to communicate?
- Under what circumstances would I share this one? With whom? Why?

Grounding the quotes/reflections in our own life experiences may enhance meaningful dialogue.

On any page, around the edges and spaces in between, feel free to jot down anything at all in this daily journal. Expanded reflections may flow forth.

Go to [www.reJourney.blogspot.com](http://www.reJourney.blogspot.com) and the archives on the sidebar by year/month to see a visual image with any day's reflection.

Even participate in the age-old practice of memorizing bits to reflect upon during the day and later.

Finally, relish the moments of reflection.

~jpc (my initials, used throughout)

Set aside regular times for meditative thinking, recollection, and silence. As a practical matter, it is good to rise early enough to set the tone of your upcoming day by enjoying leisurely moments – a graceful caress, a ritual shower of purification, a consecrated breakfast. . . . Practice or omit whatever formal rituals you like – meditation, prayer, tai chi, chanting, reading of texts – that will remind you to enter the day with a spirit of gratitude and devotion.

~**Sam Keen**

*Hymns To An Unknown God*, p. 267

# September

## September 1 No Cripple

Aretha Robinson, Ray Charles' mother: "Always remember your promise to me. Never let nobody or nothing turn you into no cripple." He made that promise as a boy when she sent him away to the blind school, and later in his drug rehab in a dream, both finally giving him the power to stop heroin completely.

I ask myself what is trying to turn me into a cripple and what promises I have made to remain the free person I am created to be. ~jpc

## September 2 Spirit Is Happening

*from the heart of creation  
whether it be  
dinosaur or the latest e-  
vent that invades consciousness  
whether it be  
a birth or catastrophe  
spirit is happening  
whether it be now or then  
in eternity*

~jpc, *At One with the Heart of Creation*, p. 66

\*\*\*\*\*

Good Labor Day weekend to you. The following four quotes come from *One Taste: The Journals of Ken Wilber*, pp. 276-79.

### **September 3 Great Big Egos, Plugged In (I)**

The great yogis, saints and sages accomplished so much precisely because they were not timid little toadies but great big egos, plugged into the dynamic Ground and Goal of the Kosmos itself. . . .

[T]he sage who engages life with gusto, lives it to the hilt, grabs each wave of life and surfs it to the end. This deeply, profoundly disturbs us, frightens us, because it means that we, too, might have to engage life, with gusto, on all levels. ~Ken Wilber, *One Taste*

### **September 4 They Started Revolutions (II)**

Saint Teresa was a great contemplative? Yes, and Saint Teresa is the only woman ever to have reformed an entire Catholic monastic tradition (think about it). Gautama Buddha shook India to its foundations. . . . [T]hese men and women started revolutions in the gross realm that lasted hundreds, sometimes thousands, of years, something neither Marx nor Lenin nor Locke nor Jefferson can yet claim. And they did not do so because they were dead from the neck down. No, they were monumentally, gloriously, divinely big egos, plugged into a deeper psychic, which was plugged straight into God. ~Ken Wilber, *Ibid.*



### **September 5 Transcending Ego (III)**

There is certainly a type of truth to the notion of transcending ego: it doesn't mean destroy the ego, it means plug it into something bigger. . . . The small ego does not evaporate; it remains as the functional center of activity in the conventional realm. As I said, to lose that ego is to become a psychotic, not a sage.

Transcending the ego thus actually means to transcend but include the ego in a deeper and higher embrace. . . . And that means we do not get rid of the small ego, but rather, we inhabit it fully, live it with verve, use it as the necessary vehicle through which higher truths are communicated. Soul and Spirit include body, emotions and mind; they do not erase them. ~Ken Wilber, *Ibid.*

### **September 6 Ego, a Manifestation of Spirit (IV)**

Put bluntly, the ego is not an obstruction to Spirit, but a radiant manifestation of Spirit. . . . It is not necessary to get rid of the ego, but simply to live it with a certain exuberance. . . . The big Self is indeed no small ego, and thus, to the extent you are stuck in your small ego, a death and transcendence is required. Narcissists are simply people whose egos are not yet big enough to embrace the entire Kosmos, and so they try to be central to the Kosmos instead. ~Ken Wilber, *Ibid.*

## **September 7 Everything Else Is Commentary**

A certain non-Jewish “wise-guy” came to scoff at the Torah. . . . Hillel . . . responded. “No problem! The main idea of the Torah is ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ Everything else is commentary. Now, if you’re really interested, go and study the commentary.” <http://www.ou.org/about/judaism/hillel.htm>

And Jesus replied, “Tell me who is *not* your neighbor.”  
~jpc

## **September 8 State of Grace**

When we experience consciousness of the unity in which we are embedded, the sacred whole that is in and around us, we exist in a state of grace. At such moments our consciousness perceives not only our individual self, but also our larger self, the self of the cosmos. The gestalt of unitive existence becomes palpable. ~Charlene Spretnak, *States of Grace*, p. 24

How many times do you guess you’ve experienced the consciousness of unity? What difference does it make?  
~jpc

## **September 9 Six Senses**

The most precious element in life is wonder . . . which we may call the religious element in all life, even in a flea: the

sense of wonder. That is our sixth sense. ~D. H. Lawrence

Then it is more true to say wonder is the first sense, followed by the other five. ~jpc

## **September 10    Celestial Existence**

There are two ways of reaching the house next door. One is to travel all the way round the globe; the other is to walk a few feet. There are two ways of finding the heavens. One is to journey upwards and upwards. . . ; the other is to realize . . . our planet is already one of the company of celestial bodies. ~Alan Watts, *Behold the Spirit*, p. 72

## **September 11    A Day of Rededication: 9/11**

We travel together, passengers on a little space ship, dependent on its vulnerable reserves . . . ; all committed for our safety to its security and peace; preserved from annihilation only by the care, the work, and I will say, the love we give our fragile craft. . . . No craft, no crew can travel with such vast contradictions. On their resolution depends the survival of us all. ~Adlai Stevenson, Geneva, July 9, 1965

And from a poem, "Ode to a Nation," by an Amy:

*immortal spirit  
prevails, breaking through the  
haze, signal of future to come*

## **September 12    The Great Blue Heron**

Now, many times when I am contemplating the Mystery of Life, or when my husband or I have important decisions to make, the great blue heron appears and reminds us to be strong, determined, self-reliant and true. He demonstrates the freedom that will come from being able to stand alone, as he swooshes onto the pond and then takes off spreading his huge wings wide as he soars above the pond and the trees unencumbered, free to fly.  
~Roseanne Sands, from forthcoming book

## **September 13    Our Reality-Situation**

The anthropocentric [“considering human beings as the most significant entity of the universe,” *m-w dictionary*] worldview has become as untenably anti-scientific as it is anti-religious. It distorts all perceptions of our reality-situation. ~Frederick Franck, *What Matters*, p. 19, via Herman Greene

## **September 14    The Question**

“The Christ decision [is] an election for or against life itself. The negative answer [is] at bottom a rejection of human existence as it is constituted” [Joseph Mathews]. . . . The twist here is that we humans are seldom aware of existence as it is constituted; we cover it up because it is bad to us the way it is, essentially. Some dynamic of life must come along and uncover what

we cover up. ~jpc, *The Transparent Event*, p. 180

The “Christ question” is not “Do you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?” The question is not “Would you rather have life or not?” The question is “Do you love life, and your life, the way it is?” The answer is not “Maybe” or “I’m not sure.” It is “Yea/Nay” (Jesus) or “Either/Or” (Kierkegaard). Our answer is our basic confession about life. ~jpc

### **September 15    The Art of Progress**

The art of progress is to preserve order amid change, and to preserve change amid order. Life refuses to be embalmed alive. ~Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p. 515, via T.C. Wright

It seems obvious to preserve order in the Katrina situation. What change needs to happen to enhance new life in that situation to keep from embalming the living? ~jpc

### **September 16    “The Great Transformation”**

In our global world, we can no longer afford a parochial or exclusive vision. We must learn to live and behave as though people in remote parts of the globe were as important as ourselves. The sages of the Axial Age did not create their compassionate ethic in idyllic circumstances. Each tradition developed in societies like our own that were torn apart by violence and warfare as

never before; indeed, the first catalyst of religious change was usually a visceral rejection of the aggression that the sages witnessed all around them. ~Karen Armstrong, *The Great Transformation: The Beginning of our Religious Traditions*

### **September 17    Secret Formula for a Long Life**

At age 85, **John Wesley** reflected in his journal (from Percy L. Parker, pp. 405 ff.) on why he had enjoyed such a long and energetic life:

*To what cause can I impute this, that I am as I am? . . .*

*4. To my having constantly, for about sixty years, risen at four in the morning?*

*5. To my constant preaching at five in the morning, for above fifty years?*

*6. To my having had so little pain in my life; and so little sorrow, or anxious care?*

### **September 18    Love Is a Profound Relationship**

Worldly wisdom thinks that love is a relationship [among humans]. Christianity teaches that love is a relationship between: a person – God – a person, that is, that God is the middle term. ~Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, p. 107

There are three kinds of relationships, according to Tillich: with all others, with self, and with the *ground of being* –

and without experiencing the last in the first two, all relationships are shallow, manifesting less than authentic love. All this is what the wedding band symbolizes. ~jpc

### **September 19    My Religion and My Patriotism**

[M]y religion and my patriotism, derived from my religion, embrace all life. I want to realize brotherhood or identity not merely with the beings called human, but I want to realize identity with all life, even with such things as crawl on earth. . . . [A]ll life in whatever form it appears must be [and is] essentially one. ~**Gandhi**, *Young India*, 4-4-1929, p. 107

### **September 20    Melting Pot of Salvation**

[We all need the fundamentalists,] non-fundamentalists, mystics, ecosystem activists, unprogrammable artists, agnostic humanitarians, incorrigible writers, truth-telling musicians, incorruptible scientists, organic gardeners, slow food farmers, gay restaurateurs, wilderness visionaries, pagan preachers of sustainability, compassion-driven entrepreneurs, heartbroken Muslims, grief-stricken children, loving believers, loving disbelievers, peace-marching millions, and the One who loves us all in such a huge way that it is not going too far to say: [we all] need [each other for our] salvation. ~**David James Duncan**, "What Fundamentalists Need for Their Salvation," *oriononline.org*, July-August, 2005

## **September 21 “I Didn’t Forget You”**

**Simon Wiesenthal**, dead at 96, hunted down Adolf Eichmann and the man who arrested Anne Frank – and so many other Nazis.

“You’re a religious man,” Wiesenthal told his friend. “You believe in God and life after death. I also believe. When we come to the other world and meet the millions of Jews who died in the camps and they ask us, ‘What have you done?’ there will be many answers. You will say, ‘I became a jeweler.’ Another will say, ‘I smuggled coffee and American cigarettes.’ Another will say, ‘I built houses.’ But I will say, ‘I didn’t forget you.’” ~Adam Bernstein, *washingtonpost.com*, 9/20/05

## **September 22 God Has No Name**

Thesis 90: “God” is only one name for the Divine One. There are an infinite number of names for God and Godhead, and still God “has no name.” ~**Matthew Fox**, quoting Meister Eckhart

What is your most meaningful name for “God that has no name”? ~jpc

## **September 23 What Split?**

What I have learned from Thomas [Berry] is that the split between the sacred and the profane is artificial. ~**Bob**



**Powell**, June 2005, Greensboro, NC

Friend Bob, via friend Thomas, puts his finger on the essence of Christianity, Judaism, and all religions. As far as we know, the sacred – along with everything else – is only found in the profane universe. Holiness happens here and now, as Moses and Jesus came to remind us. A good definition of “profane”: holiness happens outside the temple. We go to the temple to ritualize what’s really going on in this awe-filled, profane world outside. ~jpc

### **September 24    The Transformed Ego**

[T]he ego occupies himself with his My: my . . . [kind], my race, my works, my genius. ~**Martin Buber**, *I and Thou*, trans. Kaufmann, pp. 112-14

The transformed ego, in response to *spirit*, occupies itself with “Our”: our universe, our earth, our great work, our mutual genius. ~jpc

### **September 25    Sheer Gift**

If I live to be a hundred, I will have had over 36,000 days as sheer gift – none that I created or earned. So let me open the gift of life, pick it up, get into it, and go to the dance, admission free. Let me not moan or groan ever again. Let me forever forget the phrases “isn’t fair” and “if only.” Just give me a prayer blanket with “Thank You!” writ large upon it. ~jpc

## September 26    A System of Mutuality

Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible; but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary. ~Reinhold Niebuhr, *nytimes.com*, "Forgetting Reinhold Niebuhr," Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., 9/18/05, via Terry Bergdall

We humans concoct ways to live together in mutuality with each other. Democracy is one of those ways. Now is the time to concoct a way to live in mutuality with the rest of nature as well. What might we call that system? Thomas Berry calls it "biocracy." ~jpc

## September 27    Whence Strength?

You're not born with strength. Strength comes from what you've been through. ~Shelethia Murray, "Finding Hope, Fighting Drugs," *news-record.com*, 9/11/05, via llc

*Spirit* matures us through our spirit journeys. ~jpc

## September 28    I Know

*There is nothing but water in the holy pools.  
I know, I have been swimming in them.  
All the gods sculpted of wood or ivory can't say a word.  
I know, I have been crying out to them.  
The Sacred Books of the East are nothing but words.  
I looked through their covers one day sideways.*

*What Kabir talks of is only what he has lived through.  
If you have not lived through something, it is not true.*

~**Kabir**, "Five," trans. Robert Bly

So how come we know so much about death and what is beyond? ~jpc

**September 29**

**Guided by the Disasters of My Life**

I got pushed by the disasters of my life onto the course, the course that I wouldn't have chosen. ~**Karen Armstrong**, BBC World Service: "The Interview," by Carrie Gracie, August 30, 2005, via Dharmalingam Vinasithamby

We, along with a couple of thousand others, heard Karen Armstrong last night here in Greensboro. I was heartened that so many are responding to her spirit journey, as though they too had joined a convent of tradition which they later left, renouncing a god that did not make sense to them, and that they too are putting their spiritual lives back together and seeing the possibility of a meaningful journey. She helps us see that *spirit*, or whatever you call it, is leading us on an incredible course, often seemingly against our choice. ~jpc

**September 30    Real Grin**

*You aren't much, I said  
one day to my reflection  
in a green pond,  
and grinned.*

~**Mary Oliver**, "The Moths," from *Dream Work*

Let's call it the grin of reality. We're not much, but we are as much as bees and honey, goats and goat's milk. All together, we're some kind of creation, reflections of the great reality. So the grin is the grin of deep relatedness.

~jpc

# October

## October 1    **Flashes and Sparks**

Reality is a lightning flash that quivers imprisoned in every stone. ~**Hermann Hesse**, *Reflections*

The universe is a series of leaping sparks – everything else is interpretation. ~**Loren Eiseley**, *The Night Country*

## October 2    **Holiness, Universality, and Unity**

Tillich (*Systematic Theology*, III, pp. 165-72) says that *holiness, universality, and unity* (from the Apostles' Creed) are the “paradoxical predicates” of the church. The church declares that the divine *spirit* is present in all creation, communing with and uniting all. Isn't it awesome to be a member of such a body, instead of a body where some kind of spirit blesses only the “righteous” and humans, and where membership seems to be based on race, nationality, class, and sexual orientation? What a difference between the church of holiness, universality, and unity and an exclusive club. ~jpc

## October 3    **Transparent Butterfly**

The butterfly counts not months but moments and has time enough. ~**Rabindranath Tagore**

## **October 4 Willing To Give Up . . .**

“How does one become a butterfly?” she asked.  
“You must want to fly so much that you are willing to give up being a caterpillar.” ~anonymous

## **October 5 Change Is Painfully Good**

If nothing ever changed, there'd be no butterflies.  
~anonymous

## **October 6 Transformation**

*Farewell, farewell, lost soul!  
you have melted in the crystalline distance.  
it is enough! I saw you vanish into air.*

~D.H. Lawrence, from “Butterfly,”  
*The Complete Poems*, p. 696

## **October 7 The Word Today**

English essayist . . . W.E.H. Lecky wrote of human concern for the other as an “enlarging circle of sympathy” which he saw unfolding progressively in human history to potentially include all of humanity. . . . Lecky saw the result of such development to be what modern ethicist Peter Singer calls the expanding circle: “At one time the benevolent affections embrace merely the family, soon the circle expanding including first a class, then a nation, then

a coalition of nations, then all humanity [Lecky].” . . .  
“The possibility of another kind of social world has come into view” [*Five Gospels*]. The circle of possible social duties, of concern and empathy, of post-conventional inclusiveness stands poised at the edge of expansion.  
~Harry S. Coverston, Fall 2005 Jesus Seminar Papers, via David Zollars

The question is not only what Jesus actually said 2000 years ago – that we have hardly caught up with yet – but what Jesus is saying today. Who is the neighbor? ~jpc

## **October 8    The Unexpected Universe**

[O]ut of such desolation emerges the awesome freedom to choose – to choose beyond the narrowly circumscribed circle that delimits the animal being. In that widening ring of human choice . . . ~Loren Eiseley, *The Unexpected Universe*

The unexpected universe is surely encountering us lately through natural disasters, warring, and terrorism, not to mention personal and close-at-home crises. Out of such desolation emerges awesome freedom, not only for those at the center of the crises, but for all of us who know about them. We can hunker down and delimit our relations, or we can widen the ring of our care. I believe the wind of *spirit*, accentuating our human freedom, is blowing us together these days in strange ways – that is, if we choose to respond. ~jpc

**October 9 Far More Pleasure**

*There is far more pleasure  
in writing bad poems  
than in reading the best.*

~**Hermann Hesse**, *Reflections*

True. Poetry is soul food, and you know the tomatoes you helped grow this summer, even if they were not as pretty in shape and color, were more tasty to you than the ones you bought at the grocery store. ~jpc

**October 10 Who Is “You”?**

*I love you  
because it's been so good  
for so long  
that if I didn't love you  
I'd have to be born again  
and that is not a theological statement  
I am pitiful in my love for you*

~**Nikki Giovanni**, “Resignation”

Who is the “you” that you love that much? How does that relationship affect your life? ~jpc

**October 11 It Is Necessarily So**

*It ain't necessarily so*



*It ain't necessarily so  
De things dat yo' liable to read in de Bible  
It ain't necessarily so. . . .*

~George and Ira Gershwin, "It Ain't Necessarily So,"  
*Porgy and Bess*

It is not true because the bible says so. The bible says so because it's essentially true. The Old and New Testaments are commentary on truth, reflecting humans' deep experience of reality. All holy scriptures communicate interpretations of truth. None communicates absolute truth, but, thank goodness, enough is revealed for wholeness and fulfillment. In that sense, it *is* necessarily so. ~jpc

## **October 12    Leaving It All On the Field**

We can live any way we want. People take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience – even of silence – *by choice*. The thing is to *stalk your calling*. . . . I think it would be well, and proper, and obedient, and pure, to *grasp your one necessity* and not let it go, to *dangle from it limp wherever it takes you*. . . . *Seize it and let it seize you up aloft even, till your eyes burn out and drop; let your musky flesh fall off in shreds, and let your very bones unhinge and scatter, loosened over fields, over fields and woods, lightly, thoughtless, from any height at all, from as high as eagles.* ~Annie Dillard, *Teaching a Stone to Talk* (italics added)

This quote is especially for all of us who are considering “retirement.” Joel Pack – who teaches college in Virginia close to Hollins College, where Annie attended and fell in love with and married her creative writing professor – sent me this quote today: “Here is a test to find whether your mission on earth is finished: If you’re alive, it isn’t.” So please read Annie’s quote again and especially the part after “till.” Being around Thomas Berry, Bishop J. K. Mathews, and the fathers of Ruth Gilbert and Lynda Cock – all over 90 – I sense they are living out Annie’s exhortation. To extend her metaphor, they’re “leaving it all on the field,” to use a sports term, which was probably borrowed from warriors on the field of battle. We’re all going to be buried on the field anyway, whether we’re there by choice or carried there. ~jpc

**October 13    Tell Me**

*Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?  
Tell me, what is it you plan to do  
with your one wild and precious life?*

~Mary Oliver, from “The Summer Day”

**October 14**

**Sin Is Refusal To Be Who We Really Are**

Sin is the refusal to be consciousness. . . . To use theological language, sin is only rebellion against God. That happens when you refuse the resentment you are, when you refuse

the suffering you are, when you say, “I have had enough of this,” which means, “I am going to do my best to get myself out of the profound depths of consciousness. I have had enough of it.” . . . Sin is refusing to be fulfilled. It is refusing to endure drained-out-ness. It is refusing to have hope. Do you see that this is precisely the point and the only point where, to use the images of the Persians, Satan attacks? ~Joseph W. Mathews, *Bending History*, p. 279-80

We could say sin is refusal to be who we really are. Joseph has a pretty good check-list: I am my profound consciousness, my resentment, my suffering, my drained-out-ness, my fulfillment, my hope. *Spirit* happens and sometimes graces me into accepting who I really am – and I have the full life that I am. ~jpc

### **October 15 To Follow Jesus Is To . . .**

To follow in the steps of the representational Jesus is not to imitate his words or reproduce his deeds. It is to be and do as a free person. . . . It is to walk out across the uncertain, ambiguous, anxious deeps of my life in gratitude, humility and compassion. . . . [H]e lived his life as the meaning of his life, and announced the cosmic permission for all people thus to live. ~Joseph W. Mathews, *Bending History*, p. 53

Jesus shows us that faith is possible, that freedom is possible, that giving oneself is possible. Or Jesus demon-

strates the great commandment of life: faithfulness on behalf of all. ~jpc

**October 16 (1977)**

**Anniversary of the Death of Joseph W. Mathews**

I looked at my father [as I led those gathered for his last rites]. . . . I knew his unknown greatness. I knew his qualities next to genius that never found deliverance. I knew his secret sense of failure. I knew things he never knew I knew. I knew the dark nights of his soul. I knew . . . well, what I knew was his life. His spirit's journey. That was it. It was his life I knew in that moment. It was frozen now. It was all in now. It was complete. It was finished. It was offered up for what it was. This was the difference made by death.

In the name of the church, I spoke his life out loud. Not excusing, not glorifying, I spoke just of his life as I saw it then. And then I pronounced it good and great and utterly significant before the One who had given it to history, just as it was. Not as it might have been, not as it could have been abstractly considered, not as I might have wanted it to be or others felt it should have been, not even as Papa might have wanted it altered. I sealed it as acceptable to God, then, just as it was finished. ~Joseph W. Mathews, *Bending History*, pp. 33, 35

## October 17    **Isness Just Is**

[T]here is some “mysterious power” that is making you insecure and powerless to become absolutely secure. Every human being has had or can have an experience of this mysterious power. This power is an actual presence in every person’s life. So, says Bultmann, if you have experienced this power, you have had an experience of God. . . . This wonder and mystery of having an existence at all is also an experience of that Presence that Bultmann points to with the word “God.”

There is no need to ask whether this Presence is real. This ISNESS just IS. ~Gene W. Marshall, “Theological Dialogue: Marcus Borg and Rudolf Bultmann,” 10/03

## October 18    **Spirit Questions**

*Who first rocked my cradle  
or what wild thing left me  
upon my parents’ doorstep  
is a mystery. . . .*

~Loren Eiseley, *Notes of an Alchemist*

“Daddy, where did I come from?” Why does every small child ask this question, and why is s/he not satisfied with “wild thing” and stork answers? The story about where we come from is a question that opens up spirit dialogue, which is grounded in the fact of all facts, mystery. ~jpc

## **October 19    Everybody Is Right**

I have one major rule: everybody is right. More specifically, everybody – including me – has some important pieces of the truth, and all of those pieces need to be honored. ~Ken Wilber, *Collected Works*, vol. VIII, p. 49

## **October 20**

### **Appearance, Address, and Response**

Spirit in its human manifestation is a response of man to . . . Thou . . . which appears and addresses him out of the mystery. ~Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, pp. 24; 39

Turn it around: Out of the mystery, Thou appears, addresses us, and we respond, all of which means *spirit* is manifest in our lives. ~jpc

*Eternal Thou, we bow to thee this day. Namaste.*

## **October 21    Spacetime Journey**

What we are supposed to keep in mind, in our mind, is that the universe didn't burst out into pre-existent available space, it was the space that blew out, taking everything with it in a great expansive flowering, a silent flash into being in a second or two of the entire outrushing universe of gas and matter and darkness-light, a cosmic floop of nothing into the volume and chronology of spacetime. Okay?

~E. L. Doctorow, *City of God*, p. 3

Our universe, as far as we know, is the result of this ongoing, incomprehensible happening. ~jpc

*We journey on with the great host and give thanks for the incredible trip, all the way. Namaste.*

## **October 22 If Theology Seems Irrelevant**

Bonhoeffer as an older boy sitting at the table with his family: "If theology seems irrelevant, . . . then it is because it has been improperly presented. I shall change that."

~Denise Giardina, *Saints and Villains* (p. 9 of *A Reader's Guide* in back of book)

*Let us make depth understanding relevant again. Namaste.*

\*\*\*\*\*

This next week's quotes present theology at its best. ~jpc

## **October 23 Thank God**

God does not make grace dependent on the existence of religion. God is greater than the religion in which God is manifest. ~Paul Tillich, *The Irrelevance and Relevance of the Christian Message*, p. 56

*Let us thank God that authentic religion is dependent on grace. Namaste.*

## October 24    The Real Questions

[T]here does not seem to be any universally agreed upon definition of what the “Christian view” of God is. And, though Bultmann certainly considers himself a Christian (though some others may not . . .), it does not seem to me to be an overly important question. The real questions, it seems to me, are these: *What do I encounter in the existential depth of my own lived experience? At the bottom of my own frustration and despair, what do I find? And, whatever I do find, how do I choose to live before it?* (italics added)

. . . for Bultmann . . . the question is: is this power [“God is the enigmatic power beyond time, yet master of the temporal, beyond being, yet working in it.”] just “the enigma” or “fate” or is it my “Father”? Regardless of how one answers this question, until he has asked this question he has not asked about God. ~Houston A. Craighead, “Rudolf Bultmann and the Impossibility of God-Talk,” Winthrop University, published in *Faith and Philosophy*, 1/203-215, April, 1984

*O Thou, who meets us in the depths of our existence, we dare to call thee friend, even Father, as did Jesus in his darkest night. Namaste.*

## October 25    Faith Is . . .

The founding pastor of Riverside Church in New York



once wrote, “The world has tried in two ways to get rid of Jesus: first, by crucifying him, and second, by worshipping him.” Jesus doesn’t ask us to worship him. He said, “Follow me.” ~William Sloan Coffin, Jr., *Letters to a Young Doubter*, p.97, via Alice Baumbach

*Let us follow Jesus’ faith in his “Father” and Jesus’ love for his “Father’s” creation. Namaste.*

### **October 26 Earth-centered Spirituality?**

Christians are recovering an earth-centered pneumatology that experiences God’s spirit immanent in creation as the power of life-giving breath (*ruah*), the Wisdom (*logos*) continually working to transform and renew all life and the love that sustains it. Biblical images portray the Spirit as “a healing and subversive life-form – as water, light, dove, mother, fire, breath . . . wind [Mark Wallace],” and comforter of the suffering. ~Dieter T. Hessel <http://environment.harvard.edu/religion/religion/christianity/index.html>

*We celebrate spirit’s presence. Namaste.*

### **October 27 Spirit (The Holy, Numinous Other)**

. . . is always present and always escaping (p. 19) . . . is mediated by some piece of finite reality (p. 22) . . . [is] the power of being in everything that is (p.13) . . . is the eternal conquest of nonbeing (p. 74); [the bottom line for us humans:] the divine Spirit [is] working within our spirit

[creating] faith (p. 52). ~**Paul Tillich**, *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality*

*O divine spirit, work within our spirit to create faith in ultimate reality. Namaste.*

### **October 28 Present**

Beyond the beauty of the external forms, there is more here: something that cannot be named, something ineffable, some deep, inner, holy essence. . . . It only reveals itself to you when you are present. ~**Eckhart Tolle**, *The Power of Now*

*Spirit's already present. We are already present and yearn to be more nearly present this day. Namaste.*

### **October 29 Enlightenment Itself Is Evolving**

[E]nlightenment itself is evolving. I don't think that what the world needs now is more people resting in the timeless ground of being. I think we have to resist the temptation to get lost in timelessness and begin to embrace the overwhelming urgency of the evolutionary crisis we're in. ~**Andrew Cohen**, *Quote of the Week*, 10/19/05

*O Thou, enlighten us in the crisis we are in. Namaste.*

## October 30 I Am

... [T]hat I am [the one that I am] belongs to no one but myself, not to man nor angel, no, nor yet to God excepting in so far as I am one with God. ~Meister Eckhart, *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist*, D. T. Suzuki

Even though I do not belong to anyone or anything, I am the one who is one with all that is: *spirit*, my universe, mother earth, all beings, all species, all human settlements, my family, and my own innerbeing. These relationships are who I am. I am not just someone called “me, myself, and I.” ~jpc

What shall be, somehow depends on me,  
What I am, have been and now decide to be;  
And all those of Way become my we,  
And this we becomes the larger me.

~*The Singing of Those Who Care* (1980-81), p. 5

*I give thanks for the wonder of the all that I am, the largest me. Namaste.*

## October 31 We Look For

*In a shrinking world,  
we look for the  
largest context  
in which to frame  
our understanding:*

*namely, all that is.  
Taking this giant step  
we look not for  
some Other Being  
but for traces  
of the Mystery  
in ourselves.*

~**T.C. Wright**, from "Savoring the Universe II,"  
*Autumn Medley: Poems and Stories*, 10/2005,  
his last collection

*We look for the traces of thy presence this day.  
Namaste.*

# November

## November 1 “All Fall Down!” NOT

A common nursery rhyme is proof of the effect of the Black Death on children of Europe (1347-50, when over 25 million were killed by the plague, a third to a half of the population; recovery took two centuries):

*Ring a-round the rosy  
Pocket full of posies  
Ashes, ashes!  
We all fall down!*

*Ring around the rosy*: rosary beads give you God’s help. *A pocket full of posies*: used to stop the odor of rotting bodies which was at one point thought to cause the plague; also used widely by doctors to protect them from the infected plague patients. *Ashes, ashes*: the church burned the dead when burying them became too laborious. *We all fall down*: dead. <http://www.insecta-inspecta.com/fleas/bdeath/Europe.html>

The Black Death changed spirituality from appreciation of the gracious cosmos (*à la* aboriginal peoples) to how to appease a vengeful *God*. Thomas Berry says till then Christianity lived off the dual tradition of the bible and the universe as sources of revelation. After the plague the idea

of the universe as revelatory diminished. ~jpc

*O to help community Earth live out of more enlivening images than "Ashes, ashes! All fall down!" Namaste.*

## **November 2 Prayerfulness**

*I don't know exactly what a prayer is.  
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down  
into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,  
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the  
fields,  
which is what I have been doing all day.  
Tell me, what else should I have done?*

~Mary Oliver, from "The Summer Day"

*Teach us to pray this day. Namaste.*

## **November 3 thou Is Thou**

*I have heard it said,  
"Be at one with nature to be at one with humanity."  
And "Be at one with self to be at one with others."  
I'd rather say,  
"All is one . . .  
Union with any  
is union with all . . .  
In a transparent sense,  
thou is Thou."  
Somewhere it is said:*

*“If you have been united with one of the least of these, you have been united with the eternal Thou.”*

~jpc

## **November 4 Holy Communion**

Berry and Swimme in *The Universe Story*, chapter four, say comogenesis is ordered by

*Differentiation*: to be is to be different

*Autopoiesis*: to be is to be creative

*Communion*: to be is to be relational

Therefore, *uniqueness*, *creativity*, and *relationship* are the essence of the universe process that we all are. We say “communion” is the source of the other two. At-oneness with the heart of creation empowers the unfolding universe. Communion is the eternal state of things and the event of their emerging. ~jpc in collaboration with **Randy Williams**

*May communion continue. Namaste.*

## **November 5 Inklings of the Universe Story**

*We are nature, long have we been absent,*

*but now we return. . . .*

*We are seas mingling, . . . waves rolling over each other.*

*We are what the atmosphere is, transparent. . . .*

*We have circled . . . till we have arrived home again. . . .*

~Walt Whitman, from "We two, how long we  
were fooled," *Leaves of Grass*

*Each of us re-presents some story this day. Hopefully  
it helps sustains creation. Namaste.*

## **November 6    Attracted to This Human Jesus**

I first stumbled across the name Nikos Kazantzakis when I settled down to watch Martin Scorsese's production of *The Last Temptation of Christ*, a film that has raised more eyebrows and received more complaints than any other film I can remember. . . . [N]ot particularly religious myself, I was profoundly attracted to this human Jesus.

~Lewis Owens <http://www.spikemagazine.com/0399kaz.php>

A moviegoer's comment (edited): "*I used to say that Christ was described as a demi-god in the Bible because He is half-man and half-god, but I was told that He is really all-man and all-god. If the latter thesis is correct, then he must have all the perfections of god as well as all the faults of man.*"

Kaz well grounds the fact that Jesus was human, as well as the fact that Jesus turns matter into *spirit*. The book and movie help me understand better the New Testament meaning of "scandalon," e.g., scandalized by the truth: in this story, a sinner like Jesus is transparent to God. Where does that leave the rest of us? ~jpc



*We give thanks for all those who in-spire us for the great journey. Namaste.*

## **November 7 A Passion to Uplift the World**

The only way to determine the level of inner transformation or enlightenment is by its expression in the world. And enlightenment is expressed not only through the power of Presence, but even more importantly, through the spontaneous demonstration of a fiery and fearless passion to uplift, transform, and evolve the human capacity for consciousness. . . . So the enlightened self cares passionately about the world, because it is his or her own creation. ~**Andrew Cohen**, *Quote of the Week*, 8/05

*Enlightening spirit, transform our passion. Namaste.*

## **November 8 Child's Experiences of the Holy**

I was determined to avoid the mistakes I felt I'd been a victim of in my own theological education. . . . One was that I was taught theology as though I'd never been a child. I had to ignore the fact that some very powerful images of God and experiences of the holy occurred before I was five years of age. ~**James Fowler** <http://www.lifespinals.com/TheMindSpiral/Fowler/fowler.html>

*Let us never forget that we are not in charge of our experiences with the holy. Namaste.*

## **November 9    Childlikeness**

A child is not religious, not political, etc. A child is cosmological. Put one on a field and watch it run and jump. A child has an integral mind. But culture puts it in reverse: mind over child. ~Thomas Berry, Katherine Clay Edwards Library, Greensboro, NC, 6/25/05

Having an integral mind means at least running and jumping in the fields of the cosmos, which is at least as important as “getting an education.” Thomas says we can learn wonder from children. Are they not wondrous wisdom teachers? ~jpc

*In-spire childlikeness within us. Namaste.*

## **November 10    The Truth of Who We Are**

The sun, the earth, and the forests are just as much features of your own body as your brain. . . . That we do not feel this to be obvious is the result of centuries of habituation to the idea that oneself is only the envelope of skin and its contents, the inside but not the outside. The extreme folly of this notion becomes clear as soon as you try to imagine an inside with no outside, or an outside with no inside. ~Alan Watts, *yakrider.com*, 11/12/02

*Two truths approach each other.  
One comes from inside,  
the other from outside,*

*and where they meet  
we have a chance to catch sight of ourselves.*

~**Tomas Tranströmer**, trans. Robert Bly

*Let us be whole. Namaste.*

## **November 11    Freshness Deep Down Things**

*And for all this, nature is never spent;  
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;*

*. . . Because the Holy Ghost over the bent  
World broods with warm breast and with ah!  
bright wings.*

~**Gerard Manley Hopkins**, from “God’s Grandeur”

<http://eir.library.utoronto.ca/rpo/display/poem1043.html>

*Holy Ghost, continue deep down refreshment.  
Namaste.*

## **November 12    The Buddha’s Strange Smile**

As your consciousness grows and evolves into global and worldcentric modes, . . . you realize that you are not deeply and truly happy if somebody, somewhere, is suffering. The thought of others suffering starts to disturb your awareness, just a little at first, then a lot—a nagging thought that rains on your parade and keeps you from rejoicing, and you begin to act, to whatever degree you are moved,

to try to better the lot of humankind, with whatever talents and resources you have. Your happiness is not truly happy until all others can share in that joy. ~Ken Wilber <http://www.integralworld.net>

Even though Wilber's statement is a bit human-centered, it's a much bigger than usual picture of the neighbor. True happiness is not at hand according to Wilber's wisdom; nevertheless, I wonder about the strange smile on the Buddha's face. ~jpc

*Fulfill us in our care for all thy children. Give us heart and will this day. Namaste.*

### **November 13    Courage for the Struggle**

[F]rom where did that superhuman strength come which hurls us from the unborn to the born and gives us – plants, animals, men – courage for the struggle? ~Kazantzakis, p. 44 (complete text of *The Saviors of God* online at <http://www.angel.net/~nic/askitiki.html>)

The fact is we have courage for the struggle: as he suggests, plants, animals, persons – and more – experience it. ~jpc

*And still more courage will arise in us as we give what we've received. Namaste.*

## November 14 Poets' Favorite Quotes

The only way out is through. ~*Robert Frost*  
In their imperfection, they are perfect.

~*Morris West*

Enjoy life; this is not a rehearsal. ~*unknown*

Be grateful for whoever comes . . .

each has been sent as a guide from beyond.

~*Rumi*

Only those that risk going too far can possibly  
find out how far one can go. ~*T. S. Eliot*

~**TCWright** 8/10/05 e-mail of favorite quotes from  
his poet's group. We celebrate Terry's life with us and feel deep  
compassion for his present suffering. We say with the poet

*One with Tao [spirit],  
you will know the eternal,  
and need never fear you will cease to exist,  
even when your body has turned to dust.*

~**Lao Tzu**, "Lao Tzu's Tao Te Ching," edited by Timothy Freke

## November 15 Ecological Wisdom

Ecological wisdom does not consist in understanding how  
to live in accord with nature; it consists in understanding  
how to get humans to agree on how to live in accord with  
nature. ~**Ken Wilber**, *A Brief History of Everything*

Wilber writes much about “Nature” (capital “N”). He talks about the collapse to “nature” (small “n,” as in “naturalistic flatland” and “empirical nature”) as part of the “industrial ontology,” and likewise is hard on pantheists and “back to nature” Romantics. He uses the phrases “the other world is in this world” but “not of it.” His foundational statement is that *spirit* “transcends and includes” (#5 of his 20 tenets of reality) nature. ~jpc

*Let us bow to the other world at the heart of this world.  
Namaste.*

## **November 16 Religious Vision**

Religion is the vision of something which stands beyond, behind, and within the passing flux of immediate things; something which is real, and yet waiting to be realized; something which is a remote possibility, and yet the greatest of present facts; something that gives meaning to all that passes, and yet eludes apprehension. ~Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, p. 275

What would being religious look like using his understanding? Its adherents would be less absolutely sure, less belief oriented, more in wonder of *the mystery*, and more grateful for the moment and particular presence of their lives. Would they be any more dedicated to care and service? Probably. Hold religious membership? Could. ~jpc

*O to be religious at heart. Namaste.*

## November 17 Ultimate Relationship

As the story goes, a woman saw a boy barefoot in the cold of winter, took him into a shoe store and bought him shoes and socks. He asked, “Are you God?” She said, “No, but I am a child of God.” He said, “I knew you had to be related.”

Herein lies the seed of christology and the journey of Christian faith. Through his words, deeds, and presence the early followers asked Jesus, “Are you God.” He said, “No, but I am his son.” They said, “We knew you had to be related.” And he said, “And so are you his sons and daughters. That’s who we all are.” ~jpc, *The Transparent Event*, p. 278

With such dawning awareness, like with the boy, we begin to understand the power of the trinity symbol through the ever-present *spirit* in our lives. ~jpc

*We give thanks for our ultimate relationship.  
Namaste.*

## November 18 Why Use “Namaste”?

*Namasté* (“I bow to you”; pronounced “namastay”), an ancient Sanskrit blessing, has deep meaning for those of the Hindu and Buddhist religions – billions. The hands slightly pressed together at the heart, bowing the head and shoulders gently, one can say, “Namaste,”

meaning something like “You dwell in *spirit*,” and be reminded that the other is holy, to be seen not as *it* but *thou*. To authentically bow and say “Namaste” to anyone or anything could transform indifference, ill will, or even hatred. The handshake is a social greeting. “Namaste” is a spirit greeting. ~jpc

*Namaste.*

### **November 19 Thank You**

Do you think you will keep your life, or anything else you love? . . . You see the creatures die, and you know you will die. And one day it occurs to you that you must not need life. Obviously. And then you’re gone. . . . I think that the dying pray at the last not “please,” but “thank you,” as a guest thanks his host at the door. ~Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, p. 269

*We remember Vance Engleman on his memorial day.  
Namaste.*

### **November 20 What Spirituality Requires**

Spirituality does not require a divinity . . . but the need for spirituality . . . is critically important. ~Diane Ackerman, DRS, *wamu.org*, NPR, 11/7/05

We cannot live meaningfully without a spirituality, a vibrant consciousness of and actuality of relationships: with *the*



*mystery; with the cosmos, others, ourselves; with the past, present, and future; with our symbols, values, etc. ~jpc*

*... being intentional about our relationships this day. Namaste.*

### **November 21 Right Off the Tip of Your Nose**

Why scurry about looking for the truth? It vibrates in everything and every not-thing, right off the tip of your nose. Can you be still and see it in the mountain? the pine tree? yourself? ~Lao Tzu, *Hua Hu Ching*, trans. Brian Walker

*Namaste. May we see and experience truth this day.*

### **November 22 The Eternal Now**

Eternal life is not continuation of life after death. Eternal life is beyond past, present, and future: we come from it, we live in its presence, we return to it. It is never absent – it is the divine life in which we are rooted . . . in the eternal life *before* we lived on earth, *while* we are living in time, and *after* our time has come to an end. ~Paul Tillich, *The Eternal Now*, pp. 114-15; see online book: <http://www.religion-online.org/showchapter.asp?title=1630&C=1607>

*... eternal life, always now, eternally. Namaste.*

## **November 23 To Defeat Death**

You defeat death by finding that part of your own present awareness that never enters the stream of time in the first place and thus is truly Unborn and Undying. ~Ken Wilber, *Grace and Grit*, “Introduction”

Is this not the quintessence of the spiritual quest? Wilber is speaking the same truth as Tillich yesterday: eternal life is always present, now. This is what Tillich meant by “praying means elevating oneself to the eternal” [“The Eternal Now”] – being aware of the eternal, now. ~jpc

*We listen and bow to that eternal part of our present awareness . . . Namaste.*

## **November 24 Glory Remains**

I do not think of all the misery, but of the glory that remains. Go outside into the fields, nature and the sun, go out and seek happiness. ~Anne Frank (Annelies Marie Frank) 1929-45

*Happy Thanksgiving. Namaste.*

## **November 25 Gratitude Month**

*November –  
a time unique for  
its focus on*

*heartfelt gratitude,*

*the human response to  
the earth's overflowing  
generosity. . . .*

*The basis of gratitude?  
Openness to whatever  
life brings. . . .*

~TCWright, "Gratitude Month"

*We bow to the earth community's overflowing  
generosity, including our families. Namaste.*

**November 26    How Grateful I Am To Be Here!**

[I]f each and every day the Divine Voice does issue  
from Sinai,  
and if every inch of Creation is pierced by Its song  
and every dot, point, cell, particle, field is so moved by  
the Music  
that it loves to sing, swell, shrink, leap, divide, transform,  
and bear all fruit and all life and all death and all  
regeneration in response,  
Well then *ahhhhhhh!* How grateful I am to be here!  
And how carefully and attentively I want to live!

~David James Duncan [www.earthministry.org/duncan.htm](http://www.earthministry.org/duncan.htm)

*How grateful I am to be here! Namaste.*

## **November 27    Joe's Perspective on Christianity**

We seem to be in a time when religion is greatly misunderstood. For some it's a justification of massacres; for others it's an alternative to science; for others an escape from tensions; for others a basis for protest against evils; and for still others it's a grounds for exclusion of people of difference.

For Joe [Mathews] Christianity was none of the above. The Christian message poses a lucid and compelling decision about one's relation to life in this world. Accepting that message does not relieve tensions, it focuses them. Instead of protest (which supposes that someone else will fix the problem), Christianity offers the possibility of pioneering in the solution yourself. And Christianity offers participation in an inclusive community that transcends time and space. ~**John L. Epps**, general editor, *Bending History: Selected Talks of Joseph Wesley Mathews*

*We give thanks for all those who've bent history.  
Namaste.*

## **November 28    More Than Enough To Know**

No one living knows what is beyond death. All we can say truthfully is our reflection on the way life is, in our universe (over its nearly 14-billion-year journey), and the way the *mysterious power* – some call *God* – moves us

along the journey. From my vantage point, life is worth living. I love life: I see grace at its heart and I see and experience new life happening throughout creation. I therefore declare that we came from that *mysterious power*, are reunited with it all along the way, and will go on with it – in the full faith that we are never separated from that *power*. I'd say this is more than enough to know.  
~jpc

*On his memorial day, we celebrate the life, death, and resurrection of Terrence Charles Wright. Namaste.*

## **November 29 Faith Is Being Faithful**

Faith is a matter of being faithful. It's not believing without proof; it's trusting without reservation. ~William Sloan Coffin, Jr., *Letters to a Young Doubter*, p.97, via Alice Baumbach

In this moment, I trust without reservation that all is good, that my life is accepted, that the past is approved, that the future is open, and that in my free response to this *word* I am here to serve creation. I yearn to be faithful to this understanding and where it calls me. ~jpc

*Trusting without reservation. Namaste.*

## **November 30 The Ultimate Free Lunch**

Today we can argue that everything has come out of

nothing. Nobody has to pay for the universe. It is the ultimate free lunch. ~Paul Davies

What a thought. Just consider what's free. Birth: here I am, free. Breath: every breath I take, free. Sight: every sight I see, free. Every sound I hear, free. Every thought, every prayer, every decision, every loving act, FREE. On and on: dirt, food, bacteria, nerve endings, imagination, sensuality, creativity, family and community, calling, grace . . . all FREE. Our life in this universe really is one big free lunch.

Catechetical question: So what is the chief end of us creatures? Absolutely obvious answer: to give thanks without ceasing

which is also free  
and the natural therapy.

~jpc

*What a universe! Namaste.*

**Note:** Thanksgiving Day began about 14 billion years ago, not in 1621.

# December

## December 1      **Universal Ethics 101**

The fundamental fact of human awareness is this: “I am life that wants to live in the midst of other life that wants to live.” A thinking man feels compelled to approach all life with the same reverence he has for his own. Thus, all life becomes part of his own experience. From such a point of view, “good” means to maintain life, to further life, to bring developing life to its highest value. “Evil” means to destroy life, to hurt life, to keep life from developing. This, then, is the rational, universal, and basic principle of ethics. ~**Albert Schweitzer**, “Albert Schweitzer Speaks Out”

*I am life that wants to live in the midst of other life that wants to live. Namaste.*

## December 2

### **Consciousness, Even More Fundamental**

I believe we will never be able to explain consciousness – not within the current superparadigm at least. Eventually science will be forced to adopt a completely different model of reality; one in which consciousness is as fundamental as space, time, and matter – perhaps even more fundamental. ~**Peter Russell** <http://www.peterussell.com/speaker/Talks/SoC99.html>

Russell is prophesying *the* paradigm shift of our time, in league with others: Kierkegaard, Teilhard de Chardin, and Wilber, etc. Consciousness is our window onto *spirit*.  
~jpc

*We give thanks for the universal gift of consciousness.  
Namaste.*

### **December 3    Theology of the Leap**

There is no escape from the sickness unto death; therefore, something must happen. . . . You cannot derive it [actualization] from anything in you; it must be given to you. Here the doctrine of the “leap” appears in Kierkegaard. . . . Anxiety brings man before a decision, for or against actualizing himself. This decision is a leap. [Following, Tillich uses several phrases for the leap, *à la* Kierkegaard: “leap of faith,” “leap of God,” “leap into the reality of the Christ.”] ~Paul Tillich, *Perspectives on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Protestant Theology*, p. 168

For the Old Testament, New Testament, Kierkegaard, and much of 20<sup>th</sup> century theology, the power for one’s leap of faith is understood to come from outside oneself, therefore, an I-Thou experience. Those from the Eastern traditions talk about the power coming more from inside oneself, an I-I experience – for example, Wilber. ~jpc

*Any way it comes, let it, especially if it fundamentally alters consciousness for compassion. Namaste.*



## **December 4    More Essential to Life Than Fact**

There's something about us two-legged's that is deeply attracted to myths and mystics. . . . There's a big honkin' hunk of our (supposedly) finite consciousness which yearns for things not bound by time or space. . . . There's a vital part of our Hoohah which realizes that truth is more essential to life than fact. ~**Howard Hanger**, Jubilee Community, Asheville, NC

*Then we give thanks for our "hoohah." Namaste.*

## **December 5    Metaphors: Profoundly True**

[M]etaphors can be profoundly true, even though they are not literally true. Metaphor is poetry plus, not factuality minus. That is, metaphor is not less than fact, but more. ~**Marcus J. Borg**, *Reading the Bible Again for the First Time*, p. 41, via Karen Bueno

Is *spirit* a fact, a metaphor, or the truth? What about all three? ~jpc

## **December 6    A Mobile Army of Metaphors**

What then is truth? A mobile army of metaphors . . . – in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people. ~**Friedrich Nietzsche**, *The Viking Portable Nietzsche*, pp.46-7

When we start warring over whose metaphors are almightiest, we've gotten carried away. An *authentic* metaphor – as opposed to what Nietzsche says later, a metaphor of “illusion” and “lie” – *points* to truth; for example, Tillich's phrase: “*the God* who transcends the God of the religions.” Nobody has the market on *the God*. Hopefully, the God of the religions is pointing to *the God*. ~jpc (italics added)

*May we be open and hang loose. Namaste.*

## **December 7 Getting the Energy Back**

[T]he word *sloth* is a narrow translation of *acedia*, and what *acedia* meant in medieval understanding according to Thomas Aquinas was a lack of energy to begin new things. It would include cynicism, despair, depression, couch-potatoitis, and so forth.

*Zeal*, he said, is the opposite of that. *Zeal* comes from an intense experience of the beauty of things. Rediscovering the beauty of existence, and of our planet, and of our own species – I think this is where we get the energy back. ~Matthew Fox <http://www.yesmagazine.org/article.asp?ID=1323>

*Behold the beauty to be beheld. Namaste.*

## **December 8 Joseph Preston Taylor Cock**

Grandson Preston (the third “jpc” in the family now) was

born today. “Taylor” is his mother’s maiden name, which can mean to cut through all the extraneous and focus on the heart of the matter. “Joseph” reminds us not only of his two great-grandfathers but also of the Old Testament Joseph, who was a reconciler and interpreter of big dreams for that world. “Preston” comes from English “priest town,” or one who priests the local situation. But, with or without his great name, he’s already been pronounced good upon arrival and is on this day a credit to the species. ~jpc

*For unto us a child is born / another little blessed one.  
Namaste.*

## **December 9    Running Out of Time**

We are running out of time. From the perspective of the ego, that’s bad news and will give rise to fear. From a higher perspective, the *running out of time* is exactly what is needed for the new consciousness to come into this world. ~Eckhart Tolle, “The One Thing”

An authentic understanding of “crisis,” of “emerge-ncy,” of “possibility”: new consciousness grows out of an event that calls us to attention to what’s really happening; then calls for a new response from us; and in the process unites us with the *power* at the heart of consciousness. This is one way to talk about the new-life event – enlightenment event – that Christmas symbolizes. ~jpc

*New consciousness is forever coming into the world.  
Namaste.*

## **December 10    A Christmas Prayer (song)**

*I pray humanity  
would rise and join with me.  
And together we'll sing . . .*

*Joy to the world,  
peace for every boy and girl,  
hope when life is hard,  
light when everything seems dark. . . .*

~Nicholas Jonas, via Betty Pesek

**Note:** Google "Joy to the World" (free from BuzzPlant) to listen to this 12-year-old sing his song.

## **December 11    How Do We Begin To Love . . .**

How do we begin to love in such a way that births peace?

1) Tell someone in your family you love them, someone who would be shocked to hear it. 2) Call or write someone you dislike or despise and ask for their forgiveness, even if you think he or she is to blame. 3) Practice tonglen meditation regularly, breathing in the pain of particular persons, organizations, cities, nations, species, the planet, and then breathing out to them peace, acceptance, strength, and love. 4) Adopt a "leper," someone who at least

figuratively has pieces of his or her spirit rotting away.  
Christmas is the reality of love which births peace.

~jpc, 1994 Christmas letter

## **December 12 Practice Loving**

If you were to chart the changing foci of your attention during the course of the day, what would a graph look like? And if, to paraphrase Jesus, “where your attention is, there will your heart be also,” what would your pattern of attention say about you? What priority would love have in the hierarchy of your days? ~Sam Keen, *To Love and Be Loved*

Ben Hogan hit millions of balls to perfect his golf swing, hundreds daily. What do we do even a few times each day to practice loving, knowing that most of us are not that good at it? What would it take for you and me to keep loving centermost in our daily lives – oh, and during this season? ~jpc

*Practice loving this day. Namaste.*

## **December 13 Contemporary with Christ**

We can be contemporary with the Christ only in the way described by the apostle Paul, that is, insofar as the Christ is the Spirit, for the Spirit is present within and beyond the intervening centuries. ~Paul Tillich, *Perspectives on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Protestant Theology*, p. 176

When I say the “Spirit of the Christ” – or the Christ event, or the *spirit* event – changed my life, I mean what Kierkegaard meant in *Training in Christianity* by being “contemporary with Christ.” *Spirit* is key to any religion or spirituality, for it is transforming *power* – contemporary and universal – everywhere, now. ~jpc

*“O Lord Jesus Christ, would that we also might be contemporary with Thee, see Thee in Thy true form . . . not in the form in which an empty and meaningless tradition . . . has deformed Thee.” ~Kierkegaard, p. 9*

## **December 14    Our “Yes”**

*It could happen anytime, tornado,  
earthquake, Armageddon. It could happen.  
Or sunshine, love, salvation.*

*It could, you know. That’s why we wake  
and look out – no guarantees  
in this life.*

*But some bonuses, like morning,  
like right now, like noon,  
like evening.*

**~William Stafford, *The Way It Is*, p. 247**

*Our “yes” is thankful response to creation’s awesome  
power. Namaste.*

**December 15    There Comes a Yes**

*After the final no there comes a yes  
And on that yes the future world depends.  
No was the night. Yes is this present sun. . . .*

~Wallace Stevens, "The Well Dressed Man With a Beard"

This is the season of the *yes* on which "the future world depends." Within the dark emerges the *yes* of possibility. The truth be known, the *yes* radiates from the center of the *no*, and the *no* can never put it out. ~jpc

*There comes the yes, eternally. Namaste.*

**December 16    Earth's Crammed With Heaven**

*. . . Earth's crammed with heaven,  
And every common bush afire with God:  
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes,  
The rest sit round it, and pluck blackberries,  
And daub their natural faces unaware. . . .*

~Elizabeth B. Browning, *Aurora Leigh*, VII, vv. 821-22

Christ's birth symbolizes earth's crammed with heaven, revealing that this is the way it is all the time. But most of us don't see it and therefore don't take off our shoes and bow down. We would be reminded again that divinity is incarnate in the universe, the earth, and even us humans;

that history is good because the eternal is born always now. Verily, we would again be made aware of this good place, this right time, this gracious bounty, so that we pluck and daub and live the good life of celebration – aware.  
~jpc

*Eat, drink, and be merry, for today we live. Namaste.*

### **December 17    Bowing To That Power**

The meaning of the Incarnation is not only God's coming into our realm, but also God's coming into our hearts. That's what we celebrate at Christmas, the fact that the *power of God* dwells with us, that the *power of Christ* awakens us, that the *power of the spirit* comes into our hearts one way or another eternally [giving us more freedom than we will ever want]. ~jpc, *The Transparent Event*, p. 215

*As we bow to that power we would freely say,  
Namaste.*

### **December 18    The Gift Love Brings**

*Mysterious power gives life,  
takes it away, and  
loves us in between.*

Especially at Christmas *it* heals  
our broken lives with  
what we're longing for.



Acceptance is the gift *love* brings  
creating a new heart  
through *its* grace event:

In a moment . . . the great aha . . .  
I'm transformed, newborn,  
snow-pure. *Love divine.*

~jpc, 1993 Christmas letter

*Seems obvious why we give at Christmas. Namaste.*

## **December 19**

### **Christmas, a Metaphoric Celebration**

The structure of the unconscious . . . – the relationship which we have with our unconscious [and] easily the most important factor in our success in life – is that of metaphor . . . the part of language which carries the representation of the relationships and processes which determine the quality of our lives. . . . [T]he typical production of the unconscious is metaphoric: dreams, poems, dances, songs and stories. ~**John Grinder**, “An Interview with John Grinder” in *NLP World*, Vol 4, No 1, March 1997, p. 46

Christmastide seems basically metaphoric, and that may be why it's so meaningful, so deep. During Christmastide, we allow ourselves to indulge in dreams, poems, dances, songs, and stories. ~jpc

*We give thanks for our metaphoric celebrations.  
Namaste.*

## December 20 Christmas Reflections

- smells (turkey)
- sounds (bells)
- cultural trappings (Santa Claus)
- early memories (Christmas morn, asking, "Can I get up now?")
- youth memories (caroling all over town)
- memories as parent (Jero and his flying angel)
- memories as grandparent (first grandchild's first Christmas)
- pieces of seasonal poetry ("Twas the night...")
- lines of a carol ("Silent Night, Holy Night...")
- secular song ("I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas")
- what do you look forward to most?
- when do you start getting the spirit?
- what is so awesome about the season?
- why so full of emotion?
- why so full of meaning?
  
- in a phrase, what is the message of Christmas for you this year?

~jpc, 1996 Christmas letter

*What a season, huh? Namaste.*

**December 21    Word of the Season: “New”**

[I]n the midst of the old creation there is a New Creation, and . . . this New Creation is manifest in Jesus who is called the Christ. . . Reconciliation, reunion, resurrection – this is the *New Creation*, the *New Being*, the *New state of things*. . . The message of Christianity is not Christianity, but a *New Reality*. . . [that] has appeared, it still appears; it is hidden and visible, it is there and it is here. Accept it, enter into it, let it grasp you. ~Paul Tillich, *The New Being*, p. 24 (italics added)

“For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creation” (Galatians 6:15). The letter of the law is not the new creation: neither a literal nor a liberal interpretation of the scripture counts for anything; neither Christianity nor some other religion counts for anything relative to bringing the new creation. The new creation is not under the control of us humans. It is absolutely gracious, which the law, interpretations, religions, and humans are not. ~jpc

*We give thanks for new life. Namaste.*

**December 22    “A New Earth Alive”**

Hidden, hidden yet appearing  
Earth is risen into view  
Come of age.  
Changing, transformed life remaining,

This world's vision born anew  
Now in its time.  
See it, oh, oh, believe it, oh, oh, oh, be it,  
A new earth alive. . . .

~*The Singing of Those Who Care* (1980-81)  
(Tune: "Feelings")

*We would be the new Earth that is and is always  
coming to be. Namaste.*

## **December 23    New Creation**

In Christ . . . the new creation is here (2 Cor. 5:17). The message of Christmas is that all creation is new, like in the beginning. The new is always at hand. New vision and story are birthing: a new understanding of what is, who we are, and what is possible. ~jpc, 1996 Christmas Letter

Our global human civilization seems to be tyrannized by the old. We tell ourselves real reality is only what is. Especially through the media that helps broadcast the "bad" story, we say most everything is getting worse. Such a story is the anti-Christmas message, that the new is a mirage, and, even if new possibility appears, it will soon be the slain victim of the Lord of Impossibility. ~jpc

*May this life-sucking, sinful story be transformed in  
us today. Namaste.*

## **December 24    Be Born In Us Today**

When we let the *word* in, it makes all the difference in the way we see, feel, and act. It makes all the difference in how we respond to and touch creation, be it the poor, the lonely, the marginalized, the victimized, the dying. . . . If we have done it unto “one of the least of these,” we have lived the *word*: *Christ* has entered history and become flesh again, even incarnate in us. . . . What a difference for creation – and us – when we become the birthplace of the *word*. ~jpc, from 1999 Christmas letter

*“Be born in us today.” Namaste.*

## **December 25    We Pray in Jesus’ Name**

*We celebrate the birth of Jesus  
with that first community of faith,  
made up of diverse worshippers –  
wise men, shepherds, and animals –  
who journeyed toward a star.*

*We celebrate the Jesus word  
with the followers of Jesus in history,  
who have embodied new life,  
demonstrated new community,  
and have championed grace and peace.*

*We give thanks the word’s in history  
and has come to and belongs to all,  
because the word rises out of the way life is:*

*meaning, all is good, the past is approved,  
each is accepted, and the future is open.*

*We celebrate the word's  
pronouncement that all creation  
is new and going somewhere,  
not old and going out of being.  
The word fills us with hope.*

*So, on this holy day,  
in this holy place,  
with these holy ones,  
we give heartfelt thanks  
. . . especially in Jesus' name. Amen*

~jpc, from 2005 Christmas letter

## **December 26    Must Not Go Away**

These mythical, mystical characters and stories have formed the foundations for empires, kingdoms and wars. They have ignited the passion of lovers and stirred wonder into children's dreams. They have given hope to the despairing, distraction to the anxious, and have put many a baby to sleep. For the past several hundred years, Western Civ has tried to dismiss myths and mystics as superfluous. . . . But myths and the mystics have not gone away. ~Howard Hanger

What about the movie *Big Fish*? Even the rational, skept-

tical son finally gets into it and is saved from his righteous unbelief. The son (who ends up writing the story) says, “In telling the story of my father’s life, it’s impossible to separate fact from fiction, the man from the myth.” His father (Albert Finney) says, “The story of my life” is “unbelievable” and therefore “interesting.” Interesting like Santa Claus is for little kids. We adults can’t live without myths either, the ones that inspire. ~jpc

*We give thanks for the transformative power of myth.  
Namaste.*

## **December 27    Be Home**

And I believe that you will find, if your practice matures, that Spirit will reach down and bless your every word and deed, and you will be taken quite beyond yourself, and the Divine will blaze with the light of a thousand suns, and glories upon glories will be given unto you, and you will in every way be home. ~Ken Wilber, “Bodhisattvas Will Have to Turn to Politics,” interview with Frank Visser

“If your practice matures” does not finally mean that the blessing of *spirit* is dependent upon our practice, but it does mean we can shut down in our self-conscious reception of *spirit’s* power – say “no” unintentionally or intentionally to *spirit*. Then “the Divine” is not as likely to blaze its glories unto us. But, even then, *spirit’s* coming is hardly beyond hope. *Spirit* is always coming, which is the meaning of “the second coming,” else it makes no

sense. *Spirit* is always “comin’ for to carry me home” (in a profound sense, *spirit* is the “homing device” of creation). ~jpc

*Come, holy spirit, and make us at home, here and now, forevermore. Namaste.*

## **December 28    The Covenant of the Universe**

[F]inally, a reversal has begun, and the reality and value of the interior subjective numinous aspect of the entire cosmic order is being appreciated. . . . All our human affairs . . . have their meaning precisely insofar as they enhance this . . . subjective intercommunion within the total range of reality. ~Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*, pp. 135-36

What will create the new era for our earth community is not so much what technology and science [and academia] will do, but what authentic intercommunion does. Thomas says intercommunion, “the ontological covenant of the universe,” (*The Great Work*, p. 148) is the new spirit mode indicated for all constituent parts [everything] within our universe. ~jpc, *Motivation for the Great Work*, p. 159

*Intercommuning with good creation is the natural way. Namaste.*

## **December 29    Peace Method**

Gandhi’s message during his fast in Calcutta, on behalf of



all of India and Pakistan: over my dead body will this cultural and religious violence continue. He was a dead man, having decided what he would live and die for. He tapped into awesome *power* to defy the masses in the violence of the masses and made his part of the world stand still, literally.

What is the difference between Gandhi's power during his fasts and that of the terrorists today who blow themselves up, along with the innocents around them, as many as 3,000 at a time? What is their message? Gandhi abhorred terrorist and military methods. His meaning of "pro-life" dwarfs the word's usage today. ~jpc

*Love life enough to bring peace on Earth. Namaste.*

## **December 30 Power Is at Hand**

In the *Gandhi* movie, during the Calcutta fast:

Hindu man: "I'm going to Hell! I killed a child! I smashed his head against a wall."

Gandhi: "Why?"

Hindu man: "They killed my son! The Muslims killed my son!" [indicates boy's height]

Gandhi: "I know a way out of Hell. Find a small child [indicates same height], a little boy whose parents have been killed, and raise him as your own . . . only be sure that he is a Muslim, and that you raise him as one."

Awe stops the Hindu man's world. Wild-eyed, he finally nods *yes* and his life is transformed. All this is occasioned by the *mysterious power* through a frail little man lying on a cot, near death. Was it a miracle? Depends on how you look at it. The source of that *power* is universal, always there. A great deal of the time the *power of spirit* comes to us as the possibility to decide . . . and sometimes *it* erupts through us into spontaneous compassion. ~jpc

*Either way, miraculous power is at hand. Namaste.*

### **December 31    Still Free**

[E]verything can be taken away from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way. ~Viktor Frankl, one who spent life in a Nazi concentration camp and lived to write about it

The worst that could happen to us is that we have to die, and since that is already our unalterable fate, we are free. ~Carlos Castaneda, *The Wheel of Time*, p. 247

What an image to end the old year and start the new one: we are free by design and fate, and we can do nothing to negate this most essential fact and most precious gift of our humanness. Even our rejection of the fact and gift of our freedom does not change the fact or gift. Freedom still is, unalterable from the beginning – and always new. ~jpc

*At the end of 2005 and the beginning of 2006, we are still free, and always will be. Namaste.*

**Note:** use remainder of page for 2005 reflection (see next page):

# January

## January 1 Past Year-New Year Reflection

*Before starting reflection below, review your reflections done one year ago (end of 2004). Then, look at the 2005 year in pictures from some news source. Using the guide below, list your reflections in your journal or computer file (whatever you can review next year). I wish all a great new year. ~jpc*

2005

- 5 Planetary events of the past year
  - 15 Events I participated in (maybe by months)
  - 5 People I remember (beyond family/friends)
  - 5 Places I visited, near and far
  - 5 Books/poems/articles I read
  - 5 Movies/TV shows/plays/sport events I saw
  - My key family event of the past year
  - My key personal event of the past year
  - Key community event of the past year
  - My key struggle of the past year
  - My key creation of the past year
  - What I learned about myself during the past year
  - What I learned about life during the past year
  - My name for past year: *The Great Year of* \_\_\_\_\_
-

2006

Who I am going into 2006 \_\_\_\_\_  
3 things I'm focused on for the new year (beyond self)  
My prayer for the globe/planet for the new year  
5 things I anticipate participating in during the new year

*You must do the thing you think you cannot do.*  
~Eleanor Roosevelt

During the new year that "thing" is \_\_\_\_\_

*I give thanks for 2005. I give thanks for 2006.*  
*Namaste.*

## **January 2 Prayer for the New Year**

It is my prayer that God will replace religion with faith. Indeed, the faith-filled sons and daughters who know God through Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, and Christianity must come together in joy and mutual respect or we will crucify each other and destroy the world God made for us all.  
~Kenneth Chalker, "Prayer for New Year" (2003)

*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* ~St. Francis

My prayer is that we learn to bow to all, even our enemies, instead of neglecting, slandering, or abusing them. Three examples: bowing to those obsessed with ego and giving them a way to see beyond; bowing to those obsessed with political/religious/cultural rhetoric that divides and injecting a more inclusive context; bowing to those who abuse the earth and exploring with them effective ways for us all to care. ~jpc

(Take a few minutes to articulate your prayer.)

*Teach us to pray before we act, remembering that action is a big part of prayer. Namaste.*

### **January 3     Demanded Much More of Us**

[H]ow could we walk away from the sanctuary, from the work of tending sacred ground, and providing ordinary places in the world that are doorways into divine presence, transcendent mercy, healing and hope? This was our chosen work, but clearly it demanded much more of us than repeating the old words and rituals, unexamined. ~**Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker**, *Proverbs of Ashes*, p. 20, via Marie Fortune

The unexamined tradition can be a millstone around our necks, even drowning us. Let's get into our religious/spiritual traditions and wrestle with them until they begin to make deep sense. Then maybe we can help our particular tradition make sense to our fellow journeyers,

including those who have given up on it all, thrown it out, and given into a shallow secularism. ~jpc

*Depth sense can be ours. Namaste.*

#### **January 4 We Can Change That**

“A small group of British abolitionists in the [19<sup>th</sup>] century began a movement that said, ‘Slavery is wrong, and we’re going to change it.’ And they did,” he says. “I believe we can convince people that it’s wrong for the destitute sick of the world to die unattended. We can change that, too.” ~Michael Satchell, “Wiping Out TB and AIDS,” *usnews.com*, 10/31/05, quoting **Paul Farmer**

For my birthday, I got Tracy Kidder’s bestseller *Mountains Beyond Mountains: The Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, A Man Who Would Cure the World*, which chronicles the miracles of Dr. Farmer and associates. ~jpc

*We give thanks for heroes. Namaste.*

#### **January 5 Perpetual Revolution**

The biggest paradox about the church is that she is at the same time essentially traditional and essentially revolutionary. But that is not as much of a paradox as it seems, because Christian tradition . . . is a living and perpetual revolution. ~**Thomas Merton**

I attest to the fact that the Christian tradition is a living and perpetual revolution, within me, my colleagues, civilization, and the way we all care for creation. The revolution is in its infancy, just a few thousand years old. Some say we have at least five billion years left. ~jpc

*May we leave our mark on our religious/spiritual traditions. Namaste.*

### **January 6 Break Through**

Our 5<sup>th</sup> grade granddaughter is doing her hero assignment on Mark Wellman, a mountain climber. He fell when 22 years old (in his late 40s now) and is paralyzed from the waist down. She chose him because of his help to others with disabilities, especially through his *No Limits* organization. He says, "Everyone faces the world with different abilities and disabilities. But everyone has at least one goal in common . . . to break through their own barriers." ~Priscilla Wilson

*We all can break through. Namaste.*

### **January 7 Encounters with the Spirit**

While sharing in the lives of people, I have had numerous encounters with the Holy, Infinite One. I have witnessed resurrections, liberations, high moments of justice and mercy, and life-changing acts of forgiveness. I have seen healings that restored broken hearts, fractured minds and



shattered spirits. I have seen people who were sinking in turbulent waters suddenly walk on those waves as a result of renewed faith. I've seen waters part, revealing reliable paths to places of promise. I have seen bramble bushes of confusion and pain set ablaze with a Holy presence revealing messages of clarity and hope. I have heard angels sing of holy births even as death appears to close the eyes of cherished friends. ~**Kenneth W. Chalker**, "Praying for the Demise of Religion," 12/12/05, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, via Bill Salmon

This pastor has obviously wrestled with the deep meaning of his tradition. Maybe this is a reason the downtown congregation he shepherds is rising again. His is obviously a potent tradition (the Jesus and Wesley revolution) built on the resurrectional power of the *spirit* that always transforms death. ~jpc

*Dare to test the reality of the spirit and they will come.  
Namaste.*

## **January 8    New Stories**

The task before us is to move beyond the mythic stories that have sustained us in the past, to tell the new stories that will allow us to burn out rather than to rust out. ~signed "Slato," from blog comment

*The stories that in-spire keep the fire within. Namaste.*

## January 9    Something Very Special

[Human beings] are just an advanced breed of monkeys on a minor planet of a very average star. But we can understand the Universe. That makes us something very special. ~**Stephen Hawking**, age 64 (*The Writer's Almanac*, 1/8/06)

After he'd found out at about age 21 that he had two to three years to live with ALS, he was depressed. Soon after, as a result of some fine dreams, he said, "After all, if I were going to die anyway, it might as well do some good. But I didn't die." He's still writing and lecturing. A credit to the species. ~jpc

*We all – every creation of the universe, whether understanding the universe or not – are very special.  
Namaste.*

## January 10    Soul Exercise 2006

[T]he most important reason to do spiritual practice is to develop the soul. A lot of us naively assume that our souls are fully developed, that our capacity for integrity, authenticity, transparency, conscience, goodness, and love is already there and just needs to be realized. But that's simply not true. The soul, which I'm defining as our capacity for these deeply positive human qualities, is something that, in most of us, desperately needs to be developed. ~**Andrew. Cohen**, *Quote of Week*, 12/26/05

Just like the body is a gift, soul capacity is a gift. The development of both is up to us, and just maybe our bodies and souls are flabby after the holiday. ~jpc

*Let's work out today. Namaste.*

## **January 11 Revamp Our Values**

[S]aying that [our country] is somehow incapable of innovating its way to energy independence – that is for sissies, defeatists and people who are ready to see American values eroded at home and abroad. ~**Thomas Friedman**, “Green: The New Red, White and Blue,” *nytimes.com*, 1/6/06

To profoundly care for planet Earth through innovation we can deal with this oil-based quagmire that has become a root cause of terrorism, war, and environmental desecration. ~jpc

*Let's win this one so next generations win the wars of poverty, healthcare, and regeneration of the earth community. Namaste.*

## **January 12 The Last Stretch of My Life**

“Measles kills 2,000 children a day,” he [**Robert E. Sievers**] said, briefly tearing up, and then apologizing for it, as he described his new passion for the cause and what his \$20 million grant [from the Gates Foundation] will let

him pursue. “That’s like a World Trade Center disaster every day. This is what I want to do with the last stretch of my life.” ~Donald G. McNeil, Jr., “Better Bananas, Nicer Mosquitoes,” *nytimes.com*, 12/6/05

Ask yourself the obvious question. ~jpc

*We give thanks for the stretch, no matter how short.  
Namaste.*

### **January 13    Sacramental Universe**

I once spoke to my friend, an old squirrel, about the Sacraments—

he got so excited and ran into a hollow in his tree and came back holding some acorns, an owl feather, and a ribbon he had found.

And I just smiled and said, “Yes, dear, you understand: everything imparts His grace.” ~attributed to St. Francis (*Love Poems From God: Twelve Sacred Voices from the East and West*, by Daniel Ladinsky)

*Creation is sacred whether or not we have the understanding of a squirrel. Namaste.*

### **January 14    Human Nature?**

The Ukrainians hate the Romanians while the Poles hate the Germans

but especially the Italians who hate the blacks who  
haven't even  
moved into the neighborhood yet, while Grandma hates  
mostly  
the Russians who are Cossacks who piss on everyone's  
tomatoes  
and wag their tongues at everyone's wives. She even  
hates her Lithuanian  
blue eyes and turnip Russian nose and fat Polish tongue;  
sometimes  
she forgets what she hates most and ends up hating  
everything about herself.  
This is Rochester, N.Y., in the fifties. . . .

~Philip Schultz, from "Poem No. 1," from *Living in the Past*, via *The Writer's Almanac*, 12/28/05

*We help create human nature. Namaste.*

## **January 15    Descended or Ascended?**

I had never bargained on descent from single cells without nuclei. I could even make my peace with that, if it were all, but there is the additional humiliation that I have not, in a real sense, descended at all. I have brought them all along with me, or perhaps they have brought me. ~Lewis Thomas, "Lives of a Cell"

In awe when we consider how we got here. ~jpc

*However we got to the dance, let's dance this day.  
Namaste.*

## **January 16 Preach, Martin!**

A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual doom. ~Martin Luther King, Jr., "The Trumpet of Conscience," 1967

Why are the preachers avoiding this spiritual value? Preach, Martin, even from the grave. You grasped so deeply the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandments. ~jpc

*We give thanks you passed our way. Namaste.*

## **January 17 One with the Mystery**

The *mystery* binds everything – subjects all – through communion, whether we believe it or not. Who am I, essentially? One with *the mystery*. To some degree we are always already in communion. This is the beginning of wisdom, spiritual or secular.

This oneness is what we celebrate . . . at mother's breast, holding a loved one in life or in death, supping with friends, strolling along a wooded trail up to a mountain vista, petting our animal, sweating at a village work day, joining forces to help hurricane victims – just intercommuning with all of *mystery's* subjects, and thereby with *the mystery*. ~jpc

*We would be who we are, at one. Namaste.*

## January 18 Pups on the Journey

In the Spirit journey we never get beyond being beginners, for the Spirit journey is and remains a journey into the unknown. ~Gene W. Marshall, "Five Spirit Stages of Christian Community," p. 2

The unknown is the unknown, meaning no one knows it, though we have some hunches. And then there's the "unknown unknown" (D.H. Lawrence, "New Heaven and Earth"), as in the encounter with the *mysterious power*, especially as we reach out in the night of having "been trodden to nought in sour, dead earth, / quite to nought, / absolutely to nothing." You can take this literally or figuratively. ~jpc

*We're all just pups on the journey, where the mysterious power that loves all equally keeps creation's playing field level. Namaste.*

## January 19 Most Immature Species

Brian Swimme, Thomas Berry's gifted student, has captured Thomas' wisdom and compassion exquisitely well in *The Universe Is a Green Dragon*, where the character "Thomas" is in dialogue throughout with "Youth" . . . "to remind us that the human species is the youngest, freshest, most immature, newest species of all the advanced life forms in the planet" (p. 19). Like "Youth" I have been privileged to dialogue with Thomas

. . . and his vision of the universe [over the past eight years here in Greensboro]. ~jpc, *Motivation for the Great Work*, p. 15

*We would become a more mature species. Namaste.*

## **January 20 Freedom in Every Situation**

“In the hole” means solitary confinement. Remember the movie *Papillon*, where Henri (Steve McQueen) is put in the hole over and over. To maintain his sanity, he paces the width of his cell in the dark. When he gets to twelve paces, he encounters the wall, turns around and counts paces in the dark, back to the opposite wall. When they let him out, he counts his steps outside: “1,2,3,...,10,11,12.” “Out of the hole” he falls flat on his face encountering no wall. ~Jim Slotta

In the hole/out of the hole is everyone’s journey. Freedom is in both places, uninterrupted, though that’s not the story we tell ourselves: “We’re only free out of the hole.” We can freely decide anywhere, putting one foot in front of the other and counting paces in a cell or counting breaths if bedridden. In reality we can freely deal – or learn to deal – with being in or out of the hole during the whole journey. ~jpc

*Freedom is always our situation. Namaste*



## **January 21    Pure Jesus Tradition**

Praying for our enemies is . . . a real event, the event of reconciliation. It is impossible to lift our enemies up in the presence of God and at the same time continue to hate them. ~**Henri Nouwen**, *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life*, p. 111, via Joyce Marshall

Wouldn't it be something to go to church and spend a tenth of the service listing and praying for our enemies within the family, church, school, workplace, community, nation, and Earth community? Reckon our religious services would be different if we did what Jesus said?  
~jpc

*Give us courage to pray for our enemies as well as hold them accountable. Namaste.*

## **January 22    More Radicals of This Style**

Some people become radical out of hatred. Others become radical out of love and sympathy. I come out of the second class. I have hated very few people. ~**I.F. Stone**, *The Writer's Almanac*, 12/24/05

I guess the same would be true of radicals such as Rachel Carson, Wangari Maathai, Paul David Hewson, and Paul Farmer. ~jpc

*Bring 'em on. Namaste.*

## January 23 My Job Is Holy

Normally a simple farewell is given to such employees [a car driver in an Indian company who retired after 37 years of service] and that's the end of it. However, for this particular soul the management decided to hold a grand farewell, for he held an impeccable record of punctuality, regularity of attendance, clean habits and excellent maintenance of the cars. Cars under his care were changed every five years whereas others needed change every two years. When asked how he maintained the cars so well, he replied, "Sir, please don't call them cars. They are my 'Kamdhenu' (a holy cow which gives material and spiritual benefits) who so blessed me that I was able to educate my children." ~Vinod Parekh

*In the most practical sense, all life is holy. Namaste.*

## January 24 New Image of Work

Most of us have jobs that are too small for our spirit. Our real imaginations have not yet been challenged. ~Nora Watson character in the 1982 TV musical *Working*, from Studs Terkel's book *Working*

Or Nora could say, "I have a job *image* that is too small for my spirit." One's relationship to work, or life, makes all the difference: "It's a pile!" is one image; "It's holy!" is quite another. An image of work as holy – exemplified by parents, teachers, managers, and culture at large –

challenges and motivates. “Take this job and shove it” does not. ~jpc

*Again, all life is holy. Namaste.*

### **January 25    Hyperindividualism**

[I]n a society deeply devoted to the notion that we should do what we want to do . . . so little real art has been made about the environmental challenges of our time, because art that took on those challenges would also take on our sense of perfect individualist freedom. Hyperindividualism is what, in the end, drives global warming: the sense that we each should have a big car and a big house and a big life, that it is an imposition in any way to share with others (share our mobility with others in a bus, for instance). Hyperindividualism is also what drives so much of our social evil. ~**Bill McKibben**, “The Present Future,” *Oriononline.org*, Jan-Feb, 2006, via Jean Smith

*Intentional mutuality is possible. Namaste.*

### **January 26    GNH**

In Bhutan, happiness is a measuring stick by which all aspects of modernization are judged. The King believes that gross national happiness (GNH) is more important than the widely used measure of economic well-being, gross national product (GNP). ~**Stephan Herrera**, “Zen and the Art of Happiness,” *odemagazine.com*, issue 29

Good for Bhutan as they seriously experiment with an alternative social vehicle. ~jpc

*Let us be experimenting to create an authentically happy society. Namaste.*

**January 27**

**Authentic Version of “The Serenity Prayer”**

God, give us grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things that should be changed, and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other. ~Reinhold Niebuhr, p. 277 (below)

I don't know when or how AA [Alcoholics Anonymous] simplified the text. . . . There are, after all, several large differences between the two formulations. . . . [*C*]ourage to change what should be changed becomes, in the AA rendering, simply *courage to change what can be changed*. Goodness me, just because something can be changed doesn't mean that it must be! More important, this way of putting it reduces the scope of the imperative. . . . The shift in the text reduces a difficult, strong idea to a banal, weak one, and I suspect that this dumbing down of the prayer has contributed to its enormous popularity. ~Elisabeth Sifton (Niebuhr's daughter), *The Serenity Prayer*, p. 293, via Joyce Marshall

*We pray not for cheap grace. Namaste*

## January 28    Doing the Impossible

Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible. ~attributed to St. Francis

Bonhoeffer wrote later that ethics includes necessity, possibility, and openness to *spirit*, which at least means perceiving, figuring out, deciding, and doing "God's will." We are as free as Francis and Bonhoeffer. We too can tap into the same *power* as a Gandhi or Mother Teresa and sometimes even experience doing the impossible. We humbly bow with them and say, "*Namaste.*" ~jpc

## January 29    Whose Will?

The people who hijacked the planes on September 11, according to the notes that Mohammed Atta left behind, were preparing to meet God. So it wasn't a question of sincerity. They were quite sincere. . . . However misguided they were . . . they were committed to their cause and thought they were doing what God wanted them to do, as we've seen [with] crusaders and inquisitors and suicide bombers and people who bomb abortion clinics. ~Charles Kimball, interview by Nancy H. McLaughlin, *news-record.com*, 1/28/06

Community at all levels decides "what God wants them to do." Ethics, for goodness sake, is not just about an individual's decision or a group's decision, not even a

nation's or a religion's decision. We stand before the gaze of the whole earth community, past, present, and future. But not even then can I/we be sure "what God wants me/us to do." ~jpc

*Yet in humility and awe we can decide and be about "doing God's will" this day. Namaste.*

### **January 30    Our Depth Spirit Issue**

I have based the forty meditations in *Motivation for the Great Work* on the following presuppositions:

1. creation is good
2. devolution is as possible as evolution
3. we have all we need to care for all
4. the universe story is written
5. earth's call is sounded
6. all long to be part of a great work
7. a movement of humans is necessary
8. the great work is worth our expenditure

What it will take for us humans to care authentically for the total earth community is our depth spirit issue. ~jpc, *Motivation for the Great Work*, pp. 15-16

*Jesus' two commandments are seamless. Namaste.*

## January 31    “I Love It Here”

Back in the ghetto on the West Side of Chicago, where both of our boys went to the Fifth City Preschool, one of their favorite songs was “I Love Fifth City” (tune, “I Love the Flowers”):

*I love Fifth City,  
I love the planet Earth,  
I love this day in time,  
I love the universe.*

*I'm always ready to see this world of ours.  
I tell you, man, I like it here,  
I tell you, folks, I love it here.  
(boom di yada, boom di yada, boom di yada,  
boom di yada . . .)*

How about that set of images to live by? Substitute your own community name, for it is a great song for motivating children and enlisting them into the movement of those who care for this world of ours. ~jpc, *Motivation for the Great Work*, p. 16

*“I tell you, folks, I love it here.” Namaste.*

# February

## February 1 Deep Down Knowing

Faith is what you know to be true, whether you believe it or not. ~attributed to **Flannery O'Connor** by actor/director Tommy Lee Jones,\* *npr.org*

We are born into the primal relationship of faith. Our senses know we are sustained in being, the universe is on our side, and we can trust the power at the heart of creation—whether we want to be called “believers” or not. This kind of deep down knowing has more to do with faith than a set of learned beliefs. ~jpc

*I have faith; help thou my unfaith. Namaste.*

\* **Note:** I cannot verify this quote after a search and after asking two persons quite knowledgeable of O'Connor's works. They think it sounds like her and said T. L. Jones did his senior paper at Harvard on her works.

## February 2 Good Life and Good Death

Despite her [Flannery O'Connor] awful struggle with lupus, her having to go home to a tough mother, she was not a whiner or complainer. Her faith was tough; she just railed at the world's attempt to dilute, to make trivial Jesus' life and message. And right to the end, too — she said,



“Our purpose in life is to die a good death.” She died in an Atlanta hospital, on her back, writing on a shelf that had been set up above her, one of her best short stories, “Parker’s Back.” ~**Ida Forbis**

Reminds me of the lines of a hymn:

*For the saints of God are just folk like me,  
And I mean to be one too. (Namaste.)*

### **February 3    Cloud of Witnesses**

Over 1,600 people (four I know) from the U.S. gathered for the Politics and Spirituality Conference on January 14 at the nation’s capital, which began with the “Cloud of Witnesses”: a powerful portrayal of some contemporary, “unofficial” saints. History canonizes its saints without any institution’s permission. The book of Hebrews says, “we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses.”

**H. Richard Niebuhr** in *Faith On Earth* calls them “companions of Jesus in faith in God,” and says that through their witness we too can become companions of Jesus in faith – in God – a meaningful way to talk about the community of faith or communion of saints. ~**jpc**

*“What a fellowship.” Namaste.*

## February 4    **A Throw of the Dice**

With climate change we may be approaching the point of no return. Nature is the timekeeper. . . . One way or another, the decision will be made by our generation. Of that there is little doubt. But it will affect life on earth for all generations to come. ~Lester Brown, "What Is Plan B?" via George Holcombe [www.alternet.org/story/31679](http://www.alternet.org/story/31679)

You have a great responsibility. . . . You are a throw of the dice on which, for a moment, the entire fate of your race is gambled. Everything you do reverberates throughout a thousand destinies. ~Nikos Kazantzakis, *The Saviors of God*, p. 72

*We summon our courage. Namaste.*

## February 5    **Global Beatitudes**

Mr. President, Congress, people of faith, people of America: I want to suggest to you . . . an additional 1% of the federal budget tithed to the poor. America gives less than 1% now. . . . 1% is national security, enlightened economic self-interest, and a better, safer world rolled into one. . . . 1% is the best bargain around.

These goals – clean water for all; school for every child; medicine for the afflicted, an end to extreme and senseless poverty – these are not just any goals. . . . They are the Beatitudes for a globalised world. ~Bono, at the National

Prayer Breakfast, [www.sojo.net](http://www.sojo.net), via Randy Williams

*And an Irish rock star shall lead them/us. Namaste.*

## **February 6 Naming “God”**

Words are only symbols that point to reality; therefore, all words are poetry, even names for “God”: I Am, Abba, Father, Mother, Goddess, One, All, No Thing, Divine, God above God, Final Reality, Ultimate, Unconditioned, Almighty, Awesome, Being Itself, Self, Heart of Being, Ground of Being, Center of Being, Holy, Numinous, Source, Force, Absolute, Silence, Hidden, Abyss, Void, Emptiness, Wholly Other, Presence, Mysterious Power, Spirit, and hundreds more – words that point to the Power in life that is Verily Not I, and words that point to That Without Which true life is not. What the poetic word “God” points to is absolutely significant to all that was, is, and ever shall be. ~jpc, adapted from *Motivation for the Great Work*, pp. 59-60 (adapted)

*We bow in reverence. Namaste.*

## **February 7 Breathing the Name**

At the Spirituality and Politics conference, Fr. Rohr told us a story a Jewish Rabbi told him. The Hebrew letters for [YHWH] “Yahweh” are ones that are both consonants and vowels, and ones that cannot be said with the lips closed. To say the letters requires an inhaling and exhaling,

i.e., breath. So God is as close to us as our breathing. We are launched into the world when we take our first breath, and leave it when we give up our breath. In between, when we inhale and exhale, we are that close to God as we *say his name*. When Rohr was telling us this story, all 1400 people in the hall were absolutely quiet. I think we were all intent upon our breathing and realized we were communing at the same time. ~Ida Forbis

*Self-conscious breathing is communion. Namaste.*

## **February 8 Guidelines for Naming “God”**

YAH. . . . It is impossible to express the ineffable, indescribable, unspeakable in words. Yet we must and will keep stammering our poetry, for it is deeply human so to do. Guidelines for naming “God”:

- what is finally and only worthy of faith commitment
- what name relates all creation
- what name honors all spirit traditions
- what name communicates deeply to the ones hearing
- what name makes soul sense to the one naming

~jpc, *Motivation for the Great Work*, pp. 59-60, adapted

*O Thou. Namaste.*

## **February 9 We Remember Dietrich**

This month we celebrate Dietrich Bonhoeffer's 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday. His life and writings continue to change church and society. Like St. Paul and Martin Luther King, Jr., **Bonhoeffer** spoke powerfully from prison. From that vantage point, he wrote from Tegel Prison, April 30, 1944:

I should like to speak of God not on the boundaries of life but at the centre. . . . God is the "beyond" in the midst of our life. (*Letters and Papers from Prison*, pp. 165-66)

*"God" is at the heart of this world, full of grace and freedom. Namaste.*

## **February 10 Destinal Vision**

**Thomas Berry**, at 91, continues to stimulate deep conversation. He recited his following lines over the lunch table Tuesday, without missing a beat (Lynda asked him to say it again so she could write it down):

*In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the glory of the human has become the desolation of the Earth.*

*The desolation of the Earth is becoming the human destiny.*

*Henceforth all future human institutions, professions, programs, and activities must be judged primarily by*

*the extent to which they inhibit, ignore, or foster a mutually enhancing relationship between humans and the Earth.* ~1986 Port Burwell lecture, Ontario

*We celebrate Thomas' vision that transcends and includes all in our planetary life together. Namaste.*

### **February 11 Holy and Acceptable Sacrifice**

Free is the man [*sic*] that . . . believes in . . . *I and Thou* . . . in destiny and also that it needs him. It does not lead him, it waits for him. . . . It will not turn out the way his resolve intended it; but what he wants to come will come only if he resolves to do that which he can will. *He must sacrifice his little will, which is unfree and ruled by things and drives.* . . . [H]e no longer interferes, nor does he merely allow things to happen. . . . [He freely acts] with human spirit and human deed, with human life and human death. ~Martin Buber, *I-Thou* (combining two translations: Kaufmann, pp. 108-9, and Smith, p. 59), italics added

Through his “I-Thou” understanding, Buber pioneered in imaging every other as *subject* rather than *object*, “I-It.” For Buber this included the human thou, the non-human thou, and the “Eternal Thou.” ~jpc

*O to sacrifice the little, unfree will and its rulers and freely act on behalf of thou. Namaste.*

## February 12 That Stance of Faith

Jesus said at the end, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit." That's the paradigm of trusting faith as he agonized with that *power* that brings us in, journeys us, and takes us out. It's saying, "Blessed be, for grace and mercy reign." Ultimately it's saying, "All is good and I'm so glad to be at this point and in this circumstance on the great journey."

We know for sure that such faith is possible and is at the heart of what it means to be obedient to the *spirit* of Jesus, as he was obedient to that *power* he reverently called "Father." ~jpc

*We commend our spirits this day. Namaste.*

## February 13 Eternal Thanksgiving

The function of Christian morality and spirituality is not to earn or deserve this gift of eternal life, but rather to appreciate and express it. The saint is holy not to attain union with God, but to give thanks for it [as gift]. For this union is not, as in pantheism, a necessary and automatic and inherent fact of our being; it is an entirely free, spontaneous . . . gift of the living and loving God. ~Alan Watts, *Behold the Spirit*

"Union" is the interweaving of a state of being, a free gift, and our acceptance of the gift. But when we experience the happening of union, if we do not appreciate the fact and express our thanksgiving, woe be unto us, for we

miss the transforming power of the gift of eternal life now.  
~jpc

*Only one thing is demanded of us, eternal  
thanksgiving. Namaste.*

## **February 14 Quantum Truth**

The quantum pioneers took an astounding leap when they said that everything visible has roots in the invisible, that all things in time spring from the timeless, and that all certainties are in fact mysteries. . . . This is . . . pure, stark, quantum truth. ~Deepak Chopra, "Rebirth of the Soul," *Resurgence* magazine, issue 234, 2006

This understanding for our relationships on earth allows us to transcend and transform the daily news. ~jpc

*Clara (our soon-to-be-born granddaughter), I'm so thankful you're swirling in such quantum truth this day. Namaste.*

## **February 15 Awesome Reflection**

*The brain is wider than the sky,  
For, put them side by side,  
The one the other will include  
With ease, and you beside.*

*The brain is deeper than the sea,  
For, hold them, blue to blue,*



*The one the other will absorb,  
As sponges, buckets do.*

*The brain is just the weight of God,  
For; lift them, pound for pound,  
And they will differ, if they do,  
As syllable from sound.*

~**Emily Dickinson**, from “Part One: Life,” CXXVI

Emily, you were a bit of a quantum pioneer. How did you become so wise (though I’d like to discuss some lines with you)? Did such reflective ability help you to live through the agony of the Civil War? You knew how to help us reflect. ~jpc

*We are thankful for all our senses by which we perceive  
and reflect. Namaste.*

## **February 16    Biggest Business of All**

It is as if man [*sic*] had been suddenly appointed managing director of the biggest business of all, the business of evolution – appointed without being asked if he wanted it, and without proper warning and preparation. What is more, he can’t refuse the job. Whether he wants to or not, whether he is conscious of what he is doing or not, he *is* in point of fact determining the future direction of evolution on this earth. That is his inescapable destiny, and the sooner he realizes it and starts believing in it, the better for all concerned. ~**Julian Huxley**, “Transhumanism,” in *New*

*Bottles for New Wine*, pp. 13-17, via Michael Dowd

I don't care whether you believe in evolution or intelligent design so long as we care for the earth and everything in it (proof texts\* below) as the first priority in our politics and religions. Madness and evil are the alternatives. ~jpc

*We pray for wisdom. Namaste.*

\* **Note:** "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it." (Psalms 24:1); "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it." (I Corinthians 10:26)

## **February 17 Violent Victims**

We recently heard Charles Kimball, who describes himself as a Baptist in the South, not a Southern Baptist. He is chair of the Department of Religion at Wake Forest University and is author of *When Religion Becomes Evil*. The book lays out five warnings of how religions can violate their traditions by reading their own scriptures narrowly. He says a religion is corrupted and tends toward violence by (my examples):

- *absolute truth claims*, e.g., God's chosen people
- *blind obedience*, e.g., German church abdication to Nazism
- *establishing the "ideal" time*, e.g., Why worry about global warming? Jesus is

coming soon.

- *end justifies any means*, e.g., abortion clinic bombings
- *declaring holy war*, e.g., Crusades

In his presentation he reminded us committed to our religious traditions to step back and consider where we are: "When you are standing on the edge of a cliff, progress is not defined as one step forward." ~jpc

*O not to be victims to our creeds and ideologies.  
Namaste.*

**February 18**

### **New Urbanism and Authentic Community**

Eric Jacobsen [author of *Sidewalks in the Kingdom*] speaks passionately about things like sidewalks and storefronts. But he's not an architect or developer. He's a Presbyterian pastor. . . . New Urbanism has become a mantra for people interested in restoring urban centers and reconfiguring suburban sprawl. ~Marshall Allen [http://www.fuller.edu/news/html/jacobsen\\_washpost05.asp](http://www.fuller.edu/news/html/jacobsen_washpost05.asp), via JPC II

Maybe a trend back to parish-centered congregations? Hopefully urban designers and sensitive and responsive religious groups are pointing the way. ~jpc

*O to restore a sense of community within the urban world of humanity. Namaste.*

## February 19    **Blind Us To Integrity**

Politics are about such great things that they somehow end up being about nothing. Politics, increasingly, are about winning elections at any cost, via the violent manipulation of human opinion. . . .

The natural systems and elemental forces that give us our bodies and lives are rife with simple integrity and sincerity of purpose. The maneuverings of political factions blind us to this integrity, or make us think we can fool it. But you can't use a glib skit and laugh track to joke a polar ice cap into not melting. You can't hire a PR firm to fast-talk radioactivity out of nuclear waste. Watch a mated pair of Bullock's Orioles build their incredible hanging nest not in the thirty seconds it takes to brainwash a voter, but in the days and days needed to build it properly. Watch a female salmon turn her body into a shovel and beat it into the stone bed of a high mountain stream, smashing aside rock not for the quarter-hour it takes a commentator to make a string of partisan wisecracks, but for the three or four arduous nights and days it takes to build a redd that can house and protect living progeny. There is no disingenuous bullshitting in the life-giving operations of nature, nothing snide, nothing needlessly clever. ~David James Duncan, "No Great Things," *oriononline.org*, Jan-Feb 2006

*O for some integrity in politics. I'd vote for it.  
Namaste.*

## **February 20 This Holy Age**

There were no formerly heroic times, and there was no formerly pure generation. There is no one here but us chickens, and so it has always been. . . . In fact, the absolute is available to everyone in every age. There never was a more holy age than ours, and never a less. ~Annie Dillard, *For the Time Being*, p. 59

I was in the doctor's waiting lounge Wednesday as a guy filled everyone's hearing with the "woe is us" speech, how bad everything is. He went on to document biblically, quoting his television preacher, that the end of the world is almost here and who's to blame. What if I had stood up, hushed the noise, and said Annie's speech? ~jpc

*O to hear the right speech. Namaste.*

## **February 21 The Darkness Around Is Deep**

*For it is important that awake people be awake,  
Or a breaking line may discourage them back to sleep;  
The signals we give – yes or no, or maybe –  
Should be clear: the darkness around is deep.*

~William Stafford, "A Ritual to Read to Each Other," *The Darkness Around Us Is Deep*

At the same time we articulate that *spirit* is at the heart of every moment, we must dare to speak and act against darkness that would blind us to that fact. Hope and courage

are born of *spirit*. *Spirit* shines on in darkness . . . ~jpc  
. . . *and the darkness cannot put out its light. Namaste.*

## **February 22 Contributors to Evolution**

[T]he ego is deeply invested in the idea that there is a gradual process by which you can slowly prepare for [an] eventual leap. The ego always needs more time. ~Andrew Cohen, May 2004

We can watch and see how evolution goes. That's the way I act most of the time, as though I don't have much of anything to do with planetary community. Overwhelmed by the evolutionary role we can play, most of us humans watch. Why leap if there is no safety net? But one way or the other, plus or minus, we all contribute to evolution. I don't know about ego but I experience a lack of guts has a lot to do with not leaping. ~jpc

*Either watch or leap, but don't blame the ego.  
Namaste.*

## **February 23 Ultimately Human**

Joseph Mathews wrote that to follow in Jesus' steps was to be and do as a *free human* ("Christ of History" in *Bending History*). John Macquarrie writes that Jesus is *the authentic human* (*Christology Revisited*, p. 106). Both answer well Bonhoeffer's question (*Letters and*

*Papers from Prison*), “Who is Jesus for us today?” ~jpc

*O to be the free human being it is possible to be.  
Namaste.*

## **February 24 Everybody Computes Something**

*This is the time for you to compute the impossibility  
That there is anything  
But Grace.*

~**Hafiz**, from “Now is the Time,” p. 160,  
*The Gift*, trans. Daniel Ladinsky

Everybody computes something, but to compute it as the very quintessence of all that is. Wow! What do I compute? I am left to choose some truth among truths to live out of. Do I compute grace? Or chance? Maybe chaos? Relationships? Everybody has done some computing, but few as audaciously as Hafiz.\* ~jpc

*O that our stories about truth – nobody knows for sure – compute meaning, that they sustain and motivate us. Namaste.*

\* **Note:** Hafiz: name for one who memorizes the Koran; this Hafiz was a 14<sup>th</sup> century Sufi poet (over 5,000 poems) from Persia (Iran)

## February 25 That's Not Fair!

Eighty-six years I have served [Christ] and he never did me any wrong. How can I blaspheme my King [and say "Caesar is Lord"]? . . . He who has given me strength to face the flames will also enable me to stay unflinching at the stake. ~St. Polycarp, martyred c.155, from *All Saints*, Robert Ellsberg

I notice my grandchildren, between 7 and 10, are saying "That's not fair!" a lot lately. And I notice adults, including me, saying or implying the same. Polycarp did not say "This is not fair!" before or while he was being burned at the stake. Whom would you refer to Polycarp for counseling? ~jpc

*O to be mature. Namaste.*

## February 26 Revelation Without End

Recently I read that the future of religion depends on a "new revelation." Why do we need a new revelation? For me, the *eternal thou*, or *spirit*, has never stopped revealing, my having the ears to hear and the eyes to see. For example, I got a new revelation through Joseph Mathews' articulation of the *word*; I got a new revelation through Thomas Berry's new cosmology. *Spirit's* no less powerful today than ever. That's not quite right: *spirit* is more powerful today than ever. We have revelation without end, bounteous and transforming. ~jpc



*What has been revelation for you? Namaste.*

**February 27 To See What's To See**

What is the portent of this burning candle? Someone, anyone answer. ("It is expending itself.") Someone else, what is the portent of this candle? ("It lights up the dark.")

If we put the letters "in-" before the word "portent," then wonder, significance, and meaning are "in" everything, every moment. Or, everything is "in-portent"! ~jpc, "New Evangelism," 1973

*O to see what's to see. Namaste.*

**February 28 "My Lady!"**

Everything is holy, and the church, which happens to be stuck in the good creation, is holy, like everything else. Why is the church in being? To point to everything and every moment as significant and full of wonder. To dramatize creation's everlasting goodness. "You are holy!" is its message.

Don Quixote is being the church when he bows before the whore, Aldonza, and calls her "My Lady" Dulcinea. And guess what. It changes her life. ~jpc, *Ibid.*

*O to bear good tidings to all. Namaste.*

# March

## March 1 Welcome, Clara!

*On the day you were born  
The Earth turned, the Moon pulled,  
the Sun flared, and, then, with a push,  
you slipped out of the dark quiet  
where suddenly you could hear . . .  
a circle of people singing  
with voices familiar and clear. . . .  
they whispered into your open, curving ear,  
“We are so glad you’ve come.”*

~Debra Frasier, *On the Day You Were Born*

At 5:12 p.m. today, Clara Wordsworth weighed in at 9 lbs./1 oz.; 21 in. long. Daddy Jeremiah, Mommy Veronica, and we grandparents – from Spain and USA – stood in awe and gave great thanks for the mystery of birth and life. ~jpc

*She is so much to love. Namaste.*

## March 2 Evolutionaries All

To seek to use or abuse what exists is one style. In the evolutionary sweep of things, such style *deforms*. A more radical style *transforms*, one that understands that what

exists is part of the good creation and that the future belongs to all. Both styles are powerful.

By tendency, one style acts superior and one bows; one puts down and one affirms; one dominates and one partners; one divides and one unites; one takes and one gives; one harms and one heals. Among humans, these styles are recognizable in individuals, families, organizations, communities, institutions (e.g., economic, political, religious, educational), nations, and cultural tribes.

Human style is mostly learned and can be changed by event and disciplined intention. For good or ill, local-planetary evolution (or devolution) is directly and immediately in our hands . . . through our style . . . in every situation. ~jpc

*In sum, "Love one another." Namaste.*

### **March 3     Mythic Possessiveness**

"If the Logos in its fullness had not appeared in Jesus, no salvation would be possible for anybody." And there Justin [Martyr] steps over the line . . . and into mythic possessiveness. . . . [T]he sad thing about this proprietary stance is that (1) it separates and divides Christians from all other humans. . . ; (2) it divides Christ from all Christians, because Christ is, in the final analysis, unique; and (3) it ultimately divides God from this world altogether, since the Incarnation and the Ascension, for this earth, both

happened only once. ~Ken Wilber (*Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*, p. 642)

*Nobody possesses "the Incarnation." It comes howsoever it comes, to whomsoever it comes, and whensoever it comes, even every moment. Namaste.*

#### **March 4 Poets' Messages**

Everyone . . . wants to say in their own terms what it means to be alive. Poetry is the most common way, because the material of poetry is the stream of language that is constantly going on in our heads. It's very low tech. Anyone can do it. ~Robert Hass\*

Take the time to write. You can do your life's work in half an hour a day. ~*Ibid.*\*

I think that all poets are sending religious messages, because poetry is, in such great part, the comparison of one thing to another . . . and to insist, as all poets do, that all things are related to each other, comparable to each other, is to go toward making an assertion of the unity of all things. ~Richard Wilbur\*

\* Note: *The Writer's Almanac*, 3/1/06

#### **March 5 So Journey On . . .**

*Religions mark human journey events*

*that have just evented us again:  
Wednesday we welcomed Clara into our world;  
Thursday we sent cousin Susan out.*

*Mystified by how we come, be, and go  
. . . we journey on.  
In eternity before birth, during life, and after death  
. . . we journey on.*

*How can anything in being ever go out?  
Spirit has more room than the universes it traverses  
. . . so journey on  
. . . without end. Amen.      ~jpc*

### **March 6    “Clara” Means . . .**

[T]he better you knew Lyn, the more aware you became of Mystery. . . . Perhaps that was one of her greatest gifts to us who were her friends and colleagues: translucence to the Mystery. ~**Raymond Spencer**, eulogy at Evelyn Johnston Mathews Edwards’ memorial service, 6/13/1998

My new granddaughter’s name “Clara” means “translucent to the mystery,” best I can tell by looking up definitions and reading this quote – and especially by looking at her as I hold her. (Then it occurs to me that “Transparent to the Mystery” as a tombstone epitaph would be awesome.) ~jpc

*O to be seen through. Namaste.*

## **March 7    There Was a Twinkle**

In the midst of whatever she did, there was a twinkle, a note that indicated more, something hidden, another dimension, a mysterious quality. . . . Lyn could cling stubbornly to values many of us considered passé, but she was also relentlessly open to the new, however many sacred cows it demolished. No matter how committed she was to a project, you always knew her real commitment went further. The twinkle proved it.  
~Raymond Spencer, *Ibid.*

What we are committed to symbolizes a deeper commitment. ~jpc

*An ultimate commitment affords authentic attachment and detachment. Namaste.*

## **March 8    Filmmakers' Vocation**

JAT Robinson wrote of “mystery at the heart of reality,” paraphrasing V.A. van Peursen: “‘God’ acquires identity only as a constantly re-encountered dimension of the ordinary events of nature and history.” <http://theologytoday.ptsem.edu/jul1968/v25-2-article1.htm>

During the 78th Academy Awards, many were trying to articulate the vocation of the filmmaker or storyteller. Bishop Robinson does a good job of it: through “ordinary events” we experience mystery’s *presence*. ~jpc

*We celebrate ways to “experience our experience” of depth reality. Namaste.*

### **March 9 The Face in the Mirror**

Sartre’s play *No Exit* is quite different . . . [from] the play I am writing here today: there are mirrors, but when you look in the mirror, you see the face of the Son of Man. Lela Mosely, that means that you and I and John [his son], up there in heaven, . . . look somewhat alike.  
~**Joseph W. Mathews**, “Endlessness,” *Bending History*

In that mirror we all look like the blessed one, the perfect one, the anointed one, the chosen one. Identifying with “the Man”: this is what it means to be loved of “God.” Being the “little Christs” we are is what Luther and Mathews understood by christology. It has to do with the happening of identity, not belief in some god. ~jpc

*O to be who we really are. Namaste.*

### **March 10 What’s Not in “God’s” Image?**

The most important scientific revolutions all include, as their only common feature, the dethronement of human arrogance from one pedestal after another of previous convictions about our centrality in the cosmos. ~**Stephen Jay Gould**

Think Gould had a point? Could our human species bias be in revolution so we will have to change all publications,

even religious – new scriptural versions, hymnals, and books of rituals – like we have been trying to do in rightful response to the feminine revolution? Sure will take a lot more trees. ~jpc

*These creation rights revolutions just never stop.  
Namaste.*

### **March 11    Deep Speaketh Unto Deep**

*What's running the show  
is what's coming up from down below.*

~Joseph Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p. 142-46

Campbell says the subconscious is running the show, or it is an illusion to think our consciousness is running it, an illusion that produces the “Darth Vader” type. True guidance comes from that which is deeper than consciousness. ~jpc

*Deep speaketh unto our deeps. Namaste.*

### **March 12    High Existence**

*. . . there is a marvellous rich world of contact and  
sheer fluid beauty  
. . . and all things, and nothing, and being and not-  
being alternately palpitant,  
when at last we escape the barbed-wire enclosure*



*of Know Thyself, knowing we can never know,  
we can but touch, and wander, and ponder, and  
make our effort  
and dangle in a last fastidious fine delight. . . .*

~D. H. Lawrence, from "Terra Incognita"

Clare Graves (one from whom Ken Wilber borrows) mentioned this poem as an illustration of a higher level of existence. I am a bit put off by anyone comparatively defining higher and lower levels of existence. Graves wrote of his H-U level as that of experiencing communion. I contend that all levels of human existence – at least – do experience what Lawrence is talking about. ~jpc

*Welcome to high existence. Namaste.*

### **March 13 Spirit Movement**

At the heart of all forms and events in our universe, there is one *power* or *spirit* permeating all, allowing each to be holographic of and synchronistic with everyone and everything. . . .

The change we envision will not come from the ought of sustainability, will not come from more democratic governments, more economic prosperity, or a better educated populace. It *will* come from a more conscious spirit journey . . . of a growing movement of people around the planet. ~jpc/lle, *At One with the Heart of Creation*

*We pray for motivation and wisdom. Namaste.*

### **March 14 “Why I Am a Christian (Sort Of)”**

I joined a Christian church to be part of [the] hope for the future, to struggle to make religion a force that can help usher into existence a world in which we can imagine living in peace with each other and in sustainable relation to the non-human world. ~Robert Jensen, *alternet.org*, 3/10/06, via Richard Kroeger

Rather honest statement. Why am I the religion I am, or on the spiritual journey I am? ~jpc

*O to be part of the hope for the future. Namaste.*

### **March 15 Turning Point**

*“At that point, all I believed made no sense. It was the turning point of my life.”*

These lines I read recently. What kind of event might have precipitated them? What might have been the outcome for the speaker? The assassination of JFK was a turning point for me. What has been a turning point for you? ~jpc

*Life-changing spirit is alive and well in our time as experiences like these verify. Namaste.*

## **March 16    Events of the Day**

A colleague's personal word about the violent death of non-violent Tom Fox in Iraq; seeing the Oscar winner *Crash*, a movie full of shocking brokenness and healing in spite of; hearing of the escalation of violence in Iraq and getting clear that there is no exit plan at this stage that makes sense for all concerned; performing the last rites for our two-year-old fish, "Buddy," as we buried him under our beautiful yellow pansies; starting tax preparation and recapping the nuts and bolts of 2005; talking with one of my high school girlfriends about the death of her mother, who got down to sixty pounds but stayed chipper as she said last goodbyes; and reading a biographical sketch of the compassionate theologian Yves Congar – these are some of the events of the day that linger as I wind down and ready for dreamtime. My thought for the day is what Congar wrote about the church, which we can also say about the rest of creation and our lives: "at once holy and always in need of reformation." ~jpc

*Life is a communion, a wholeness, that we can't and don't want to escape. Namaste.*

## **March 17    A Sort of Salvation**

*"I am your own way of looking at things," she said. "When you allow me to live with you, every glance at the world around you will be*

*a sort of salvation.” And I took her hand.*

~William Stafford, “When I Met My Muse,” *The Way It Is*

Novelist Alice Hoffman said her writing started to happen when she realized she could “take everyday realities and transform them into something fabulous.” As the poem says, “every glance at the world around you will be a sort of salvation.” Salvation is always at hand, even when washing dishes. ~jpc

*O to see the way it really is. Namaste.*

### **March 18 In But Not Of**

What parishioner of any denomination [megachurch, Christian left, Christian right, and Roman Catholic are highlighted] wants to hear that the Gospels are “a deep threat to the institutional church,” since Jesus opposed “just about every form of religion we know”? ~David Gates, *Newsweek*, 3/20/06, interviewing Gary Willis, author of *What Jesus Meant*

. . . and every other institution, political, economic, cultural – even the family institution? Jesus was just plain offensive. Can’t settle in with Jesus. Can’t even quote him, e.g., “Love ‘Father’ and Neighbor – especially the ‘enemy’ – and ‘lay down your life.’” But though Jesus was not establishment in any sense, neither was he disestablishment. He was not out to “oppose” but to

transform with his “Father’s” set of values, which were/are absolutely in this world but absolutely not of it. ~jpc

*O to bow to the mysterious ways of Jesus and his “Father.” Namaste.*

We remember *George Yost* on this his memorial day. “For All the Saints who from their labors rest.” *Amen and Amen.*

### **March 19    Blink of an Eye**

The universe expanded rapidly – growing from the size of a marble to billions of light years across – within the first trillionth of a second after its cataclysmic birth, astrophysicists reported Thursday. The finding, based on data from NASA’s WMAP satellite, supports a 2-decade-old physics theory called “inflation,” which describes how the cosmos grew over 13.7 billion years from a subatomic flicker into a vast expanse of stars and galaxies. ~**Dan Vergano**, “Big Bang Unfolded in the Blink of an Eye,” *usatoday.com*, 3/16/06

A trillionth of a second and look at us 13.7 billion years later, all whirling around in our universe together! Think we’ve not all been on the same journey! Think we’re not all headed into the same future! The evolving cosmic creation, that never ends, is who we are. I’m a “creationist,” out of this understanding, and will not give that rich word over to anyone who speaks literally of seven days and 6,000 years – or even 200,000 years. ~jpc

*The big picture showers us with awe. Namaste.*

**March 20 Bill Moyers on Religion**

As part of the Bryan Series, presented by Guilford College, Bill Moyers spoke to an audience in Greensboro about the challenge of covering religion. [59 minutes] [http://www.ibiblio.org/wunc\\_archives/sot/index.php?p=613](http://www.ibiblio.org/wunc_archives/sot/index.php?p=613)

We are witnessing today a coupling of ideology and theology that threatens our ability to meet the growing [crises]. Theology asserts propositions that need not be proven true, while ideologues hold stoutly to a worldview despite being contradicted by what is generally accepted as reality. The combination can make it impossible for a democracy to fashion real-world solutions to otherwise intractable challenges. ~*Moyers on America: A Journalist and His Times, 2004*

*We must bow and dialogue whether we agree or not. Namaste.*

**March 21 “The Citadel Is Crumbling”**

Dear Huston [Smith], It was wonderful seeing you. But when you said, when asked about your health, “The citadel is crumbling,” it had a profound effect on me. . . . And when, in touch with that all-pervasiveness [Spirit], I hear that the citadel of dearest Huston is crumbling, it is simply as it is, just so, and all is still right, and all is still well, and

all is still good, and all still radiates the unending glory that we all are. ~Ken Wilber, *One Taste*, p. 22

A profound statement of faith, of understanding the way life is within the awareness that *spirit* is ever present. Even as the citadel crumbles, this is the *word* that transforms: life is good, my life is received, the past is approved, and the future is open. This is the *grace* that amazes, the *truth* that sets us free. ~jpc

## March 22 Let's Watch Our Language

I am tired of the untrue and divisive phrases “Islamic militant” or “Muslim terrorist” I read and hear in the media.

1) *We play into their strategy when we use religious labels*, since they want all to believe they are about holy war. They are simply militants and terrorists from the Middle East or Asia, or wherever. 2) To infer *that they are Islamic or Muslim is a lie* when one understands their founder and their holy book. 3) *We dare not tarnish the good name of the other 99 percent of Muslims* of the Islamic faith. Hitler was raised a Christian but we did not call him a “Christian Nazi.” Likewise, we did not call Timothy McVeigh a “Christian bomber.” History will strip the labels and record that he and Hitler were misguided, bloody terrorists, as were the nineteen men who flew planes into the World Trade Towers. For the sake of our global human community, let's all watch our language. ~jpc

*Finally, we are all children of “God,” but none of us*

*perfectly acts like it. Namaste.*

### **March 23    Fill Up Your Dash**

I heard from a colleague who had just had a birthday and had been reflecting on his incredibly full life. I responded, “Yea, feels like I’ve had about six great lives already,” which reminded me of the eulogistic remark “fill up your dash”: our birth date is certain and we think about our death date . . . there is the dash in between, the life between birth and death. ~jpc

Or consider **Joseph Campbell’s** remark: “What if you worked your whole life climbing the ladder only to discover at the end of your life the ladder was up against the wrong wall?”

*Until the day they carve it on our stone – and beyond – the dash will be there, filled full or not. Namaste.*

### **March 24    She Filled Full Her Dash**

In the summer of 1963 she was part of a group arrested in Charleston, South Carolina, after they illegally entered the side of a bus terminal reserved for whites. While in jail she was savagely beaten, emerging with a damaged kidney and her eyesight permanently impaired. ~**Robert Ellsberg**, *All Saints*, p. 117

**Fannie Lou Hamer** (1917 — 1977). Was she not



fulfilled? Was she not a credit to her flag? Usually security and safety do not help fulfill life, do not fill full the dash between birth and death. After this poor black lady, educated to the fourth grade, attended that 1962 civil rights rally, there was no stopping her until she died of breast cancer in 1977 – when she completed her dash. She said, “Christianity is being concerned about your fellow man, not building a million-dollar church while people are starving right around the corner. Christ was a revolutionary person, out there where it was happening.” ~jpc

*Clap as the saints go marching in. Namaste.*

### **March 25 Meditating Like Monks in a Cemetery**

[We live in a retirement center] made up of independent living apartments, assisted living and full nursing care. It has been quite an experience. It in many ways is like the monks of old going into the cemetery to meditate. People who live here are in all forms of living and dying. It really makes you aware of the finitude of life and challenges one’s compassion in every way. ~**Joe Slicker**

Joe declares later in his letter that they are “doing wonderfully.” He reflects that life is rich in whatever situation and that in self-conscious finitude comes heightened awareness. (In Washington, DC, we lived immediately up against a cemetery, visible from three sides of the house.) ~jpc

*Finitude raises awareness for sure. Namaste.*

## **March 26 We're All Theologians (I)**

You might remember that my take on this thing is that “god” – whatever else that may mean to whomever – is a Spirit. It/he/she IS Spirit. Jesus is Spirit incarnate. Our path to “Christian” behaviors is through full, worldwide communion with Spirit. Jesus taught/showed those around him how to do that. ~David Pope, concert pianist and about to publish

I'd say this good Lutheran layman is on the way. I agree that communion with *spirit* is what Jesus was here to declare and demonstrate. Story has it that Bultmann said, “If you put your pants on one leg at a time, you're a theologian.” ~jpc

*Good or bad theologians, the truth will judge.  
Namaste.*

## **March 27 We're All Theologians (II)**

There is no man who does not have his own god or gods as the object of his highest desire and trust, or as the basis of his deepest loyalty and commitment. There is no one who is not to this extent also a theologian. ~Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology*, pg. 3

Whatever be our relation to the official monotheism of our religious institutions, the private faith by which we live is likely to be a multifarious thing with many objects of

devotion and worship. . . . Now to have faith and to have a god is one and the same thing. . . . And this being, whatever it be, is properly termed our god. ~**H. Richard Niebuhr**, "Faith in Gods and in God," *Radical Monotheism*, p. 119

*O to be faithful to the God above gods. Namaste.*

### **March 28 Mysterious Production**

[T]he same currents that produced birds from dust and poetry from rocks produce egos from ids and sages from egos. ~**Ken Wilber**, *Integral Psychology*, p. 192

Is it crazy to think those same currents can produce peace on earth among all? ~jpc

*Let the transforming currents of grace and peace take charge. Namaste.*

### **March 29 A Distant Zone**

[Stephen Ames'] wife had half a lung removed in July after the British Open. . . . "It's hard to focus and play golf. It's next to impossible," Ames said. "When I was playing the British Open last year, I'm standing over every shot going, 'What am I doing with this golf ball?' I was in a distant zone." ~**Doug Ferguson**, AP, "Ames blows away golf's toughest field," *usatoday.com*, 3/26/06

That was then. Yesterday Ames won the fifth biggest golf tournament by six strokes. Tiger was in the distant zone this tournament, meditating on his father's possible death to cancer. ~jpc

*Spirit at the heart of creation has its way of rezoning us. Namaste.*

### **March 30 Yet Never Going Under (I)**

I was on the phone with a good friend whose mother died last week, and his father hardly comprehends the fact of her death. A month ago his older son was assaulted at gun point and his car taken; on Saturday the other son had a near-death skiing accident at Vail, demanding surgery and ICU care [where my friend was when he phoned]. Still more, my friend recently found out his job and pension are in serious doubt after some thirty years. I asked him if he felt like a target. His response, "No, I feel blessed." I told him he was strange. He laughed the laugh of a man of faith.

Before flying to Vail with his wife, my friend put his mother's funeral on hold. After seeing their son was going to make it, he flew back home late Sunday night as his wife stayed on with their son. On Monday morning he consoled his father and rescheduled his mother's service for today. We celebrate the wonder of life and death with him and his family, with all creation, and *spirit* at its heart. ~jpc

*As St. Paul said, "always 'going through it' yet never*

*'going under.'*” *Namaste.*

### **March 31    Yet Never Going Under (II)**

*I sent my friend an e-mail to remind him that he, as a Christian layman, was “a genuine minister of God” in his life and death situation, and included these holy words to explain what I meant:*

. . . we [St. Paul and his companions] want to prove ourselves genuine ministers of God whatever we have to go through – patient endurance of troubles or even disasters, being flogged or imprisoned; being mobbed, having to work like slaves, having to go without food or sleep. All this we want to meet with sincerity, with insight and patience; by sheer kindness and the Holy Spirit; with genuine love, speaking the plain truth, and living by the power of God. Our sole defence, our only weapon, is a life of integrity, whether we meet honour or dishonour, praise or blame. Called “impostors” we must be true, called “nobodies” we must be in the public eye. Never far from death, yet here we are alive, always “going through it” yet never “going under”. We know sorrow, yet our joy is inextinguishable. We have “nothing to bless ourselves with” yet we bless many others with true riches. We are penniless, and yet in reality we have everything worth having. ~**St. Paul**, II Corinthians 6:4-10, *The New Testament in Modern English*, translated, J.B. Phillips

*And I further declared to him that all of us are em-*

*powered as genuine ministers of God, and promised  
all the benefits – many unwanted – Paul lists. Namaste.*

# April

## April 1 Awake from the Rapt Sleep of Living

*And every poem and every picture  
a sensation in the eye and heart  
Something that jolts you awake  
from the rapt sleep of living  
in a flash of pure epiphany  
where all stands still  
in a diamond light  
transfixed  
revealed  
for what it truly is  
in all its  
mystery. . . .*

~Lawrence Ferlinghetti, from poem “# 46,” *A Coney Island of the Mind*

*Awakened, again and again. Namaste.*

## April 2 I'm On My Way

One of my colleagues was concerned that another meeting of religious leaders seemed to be lacking “clarity.” . . . And he added, “They seem to be searching for who they are.” How ghastly! Not knowing who they are. At their age! Most everything on my journey has made things more

*unclear. . . . Maybe the clarity in all this is not where I am going but that I'm on my way. . . . I felt a yes pass by, a clarity that passes all understanding. ~Koshin (Bob Hanson)*

*Struggling, stumbling all of life through,  
Future is waiting for you.*

~from "Journey On,"  
*The Singing of Those Who Care* (1980-81)

*We can't get off the way. Namaste.*

### **April 3    Life Is Very Simple**

Life is very simple: we are living in a world that is absolutely transparent to God and God is shining through it all the time. This is not a fable or a nice story. It is true. God manifests himself everywhere, in every thing, in people and in things and in nature and in events. You cannot be without God. It's impossible. Simply impossible. ~Thomas Merton, talking with young monks, via Joe Slicker

Everything and every event is absolutely transparent to *spirit*. So where is *spirit*? Simple: at the heart of creation. And who are we? A part of creation. ~jpc

*You cannot be without spirit. Simply impossible.  
Namaste.*



*We celebrate the life and death of Sra. Rosita, the mother of Raul Jorquera. For all the saints . . .*

#### **April 4 Procreative with Spirit**

With *spirit* at its heart, creation in totality is always procreating new creation. Cosmic “procreation” (to birth or bring forth) makes sense as we learn more about the last 13.7 billion years in our universe. Stardust has procreated us. But isn’t it paradoxical that some in the pro-life movement are against procreation in this bigger sense? For example, some religious groups have praised the movie *March of the Penguins* for displaying penguins’ superlative values but would probably not act to save them, or against their extinction. The movie’s director, Luc Jacquet, said, “It’s obvious that global warming has an impact on the reproduction of the penguins.” What would it mean to be procreative with *spirit* in care of the penguins as another indispensable part of the earth community? For me, procreation is about much more than making sure human babies make it to birth. ~jpc

*Only to be agents of inclusive procreative strategies.  
Namaste.*

#### **April 5 Unforced Meditation**

Meditation . . . cannot be forced. . . . [Y]ou shouldn’t be concerned with how deep your experience is. Consciousness is infinite. You could have a more powerful,

more profound experience of it, but it's still the same infinite current. ~Andrew Cohen, *Quote of the Week*, 3/6/06

Joe Slicker says he began self-conscious meditation in 1977, almost thirty years ago. It's like the old monk who said he participated in canonical hours for forty years, several times daily, before he began to realize their power. Though meditation is unforced, one must be present. Then such old warriors say we sometimes begin to meditate without ceasing. ~jpc

*Perpetual meditation. Namaste.*

#### **April 6 "Trustees of Absolute Wonder"**

. . . When I look at the complex, intricate immensities of  
the universe,  
consider the enormous distances within the Milky Way  
galaxy,  
and see earth as a spinning asteroid circling a minor  
star at the edge of this one of many galaxies,  
I am both humbled and amazed at the careful provision  
that has allowed [us] . . . to emerge as witnesses . . .  
of all that is.

You have made us trustees of absolute wonder,  
stewards of marvelous phenomena.  
My mind boggles at the freedom and responsibility that  
comes with being caretakers of all the billions of years  
of evolving life on space-ship earth.

The myriad of flying, swimming, crawling, creeping, walking life forms is no mean gift.

Life, here and now,  
with all its magnificent possibilities  
bespeaks a majestic wonder that I can only bow before  
and vow to treat kindly, gently, respectfully on my watch,  
ready to pass it on unharmed to those who come after me  
to the seventh generation.

~**Harold Slater**, meditation on Psalm 8

*Authentic wonder and thanksgiving evolve into authentic care. Namaste.*

## **April 7 Stop Chasing Outside Yourself**

Once, the great Ma-tzu said to me, “Your own treasure house already contains everything you need. Why don’t you use it freely, instead of chasing after something outside yourself?” From that day on I stopped looking elsewhere.  
~**Hui Hai**, in a speech to the assembly of monks (8th Century), via Andrew, *yakrider.com*

You are unique and unrepeatable. You’re the pearl of great price, the salt of the earth, a child of *spirit*. So, perfectly acceptable as you are, stop looking for anything more outside yourself. ~jpc

*We give thanks for our great being, just as it is. Namaste.*

## **April 8 Our Authentic Power**

To all who received the Word . . . power was given to become children of God. ~**St. John 1: 12** (*NT and Psalms: An Inclusive Version*)

Not only kings and popes can trace their lineage directly to God. The *word* (spoken through one of the two great theologians of the Christian New Testament) says we are all children of God, all of divine lineage. The source of that power is the *word* that comes into the world of everyone and everything. That *word* is the source of authentic power for all. Does one have to become a Christian? No, but, sure, we can bow the knee in that direction if it makes ultimate sense. ~jpc

*Of whatever faith, I say yes to that word at the heart of creation and spread my wings. Namaste.*

## **April 9 “Voice in My Head”**

You then no longer derive your identity, your sense of who you are, from the incessant stream of thinking that in the old consciousness you take to be yourself. What a liberation to realize that the “voice in my head” is not who I am. ~**Eckhart Tolle**, *A New Earth*, via *yakrider.com*, 11/18/05

That “voice,” coached by bad TV commercials and gross prejudices, is hardly the truth. Who am I? The truth is I

am a child of *spirit*, a creature of the earth community, a part of the human species, a part of many groups and communities, an *I* and a *thou* of countless relationships, and who I yearn and decide to be. ~jpc

*The “voice in my head” and “the still, small voice” are not the same. Namaste.*

### **April 10 What is your SQ?**

“SQ” (for *SasQuatch*) is the name of Nike’s new driver, the one that Tiger plays – and not too great lately. That reminds me of Danah Zohar’s 2000 book called *SQ* (for spiritual quotient). She writes, “Our spiritual intelligence grounds us in . . . purpose and meaning within the larger context of cosmic evolutionary processes.” How large is your context? How well do you relate to it all? What is your SQ? ~jpc

*Think SQ is more important than IQ? Namaste.*

### **April 11 What is Spirituality?**

[W]e are getting very close to what might in fact be an integral spirituality, a spirituality for the modern and postmodern world that includes the best of the premodern traditions as well. ~Ken Wilber, *beliefnet.com*, 3/8/04

So what is spirituality? Spirituality is about oneness and wholeness, together the very ground of life lived on behalf

of all that is. And let us never forget that spirituality is not an achievement but a gift. ~jpc

*The gift evokes thankfulness, first of all. Namaste.*

### **April 12 Healed by Wordless Speech (Ps. 19:1-4)**

In this world ablaze with sectarian violence, and divided by narrow self-interest, and filled with non-stop noise and clutter, there is a way out of our splintered, empty ways. It is through the daily sermon of nature that begins at dawn with a beauty that can move us and a power that can shake us. This silent proclamation is open to all without regard to nation, creed, race, or religion. And if we will stop, and pay attention, and recognize the universal truths contained in this wordless speech, we can be healed, and we can be whole, and we can be one. ~Jack McKinney, via Herman Greene

*Let this spring begin to heal us. Namaste.*

### **April 13 Symbols**

A friend wrote me recently: "Since I loped into the Catholic fold, Lent and Easter have become most important times of the year for me. Singing in the church choir for the Easter Triduum has become a meaningful time in the midst of those high, holy rituals. We actually wash feet on Holy Thursday, shroud the symbols and turn out the lights on Good Friday, and baptize and confirm the newbies at the

Easter Vigil.”

Yet a symbol does not have to be religious to be profound. What about Gandhi’s salt march, the Twin Towers, the Earthrise, and the wedding ring – all secular symbols?  
~jpc

*Depth symbols direct our attention toward the power at the center of creation. Namaste.*

#### **April 14    The Word and Deed**

[E]very religion struggles to have the Word become Deed. Whereas there is only one “Word” expressed in many words, there is also only one “Deed” acted out in many deeds, what we Christians would call the “cruciform deed.” The diverse religions will and should forever maintain their own poetry to describe their encounter with the Word, but it strikes me they all already agree on the Deed, which . . . plays out in some kind of life lived to serve. To illustrate [consider these contemporary] exemplars from the great religions: Mother Teresa (Christian), Elie Wiesel (Jew), Gandhi (Hindu), Dalai Lama (Buddhist) and Anwar Sadat (Muslim). ~Randy Williams

*We are one in Word and Deed. Namaste.*

#### **April 15    Life is Resurrectional**

[D]eath brings an end to the life I have known. And at the

same time it is the promise of something new. It is a call to Courage – to grasp the new and begin inventing another life. I’m thinking this is equivalent to a resurrection, one that happens Now! ~David Zahrt

At the center of death is resurrection, in this life, manifest over and over. Scripture proclaims this, for example, in these words from Mark and I Corinthians:

*His death and resurrection are ours. Before, we were No-People, enslaved. . . ; now, we are a People, free to the possibilities of life. We are a People who have come through the sea of Death, and have risen to life – genuine, authentic life – to find that we have made a Covenant with the One who brought us here. . . . As this New-People, we celebrate this New Exodus.*

*Life is resurrectional. Namaste.*

## **April 16 “Enough! the Resurrection”**

. . . Enough! the Resurrection,  
A héart’s-clarion! Awáy grief’s gásping,  
joyless days, dejection.  
Across my foundering deck shone  
A beacon, an eternal beam.  
Flesh fade, and mortal trash  
Fáll to the resíduary worm;  
world’s wildfire, leave but ash:  
In a flash, at a trumpet crash,



I am all at once what Christ is,  
    since he was what I am, and  
This Jack, jóke, poor pótsherd,  
    patch, matchwood, immortal diamond,  
Is immortal diamond.

~Gerard Manley Hopkins, from "That Nature  
is a Heraclitean Fire" [http://eir.library.utoronto.ca/rpo/display/  
poem1045.html](http://eir.library.utoronto.ca/rpo/display/poem1045.html)

*Enough! the Resurrection:  
In a flash, at a trumpet crash,  
I am all at once what Christ is,  
since he was what I am, and  
Me, Jack, joke, piece of clay,  
patch, sliver, broken piece of s \_\_\_\_,  
Am really a diamond . . .  
by "God."*

~jpc, Hopkins adapted . . .  
and you too have poetic license. . . .

*Resurrection day. Rise up! Namaste.*

## **April 17 An Easter Message**

To say that "life is good" is not a personal, social, or ecological reality, but an ontological reality, which means that life, as it is, doesn't get any better than this, however "this" shows up. The *power* at the heart of life is full of *grace*: always accepting, forgiving, and loving; always

enlivening, transforming, and resurrecting. Death is not the last frontier. Possibility, born of *grace*, is.

There is no time, place, or relationship that is not grounded in the reality of *grace*; therefore, life hates the phrase “but for the grace of God there go I.” It loves the phrase “t’weren’t for grace none would go.” In the world of *grace*, which is the only world there is, there is no such thing as the wrong time, the wrong place, or the wrong relationship. This time, this place, and this relationship are absolutely good because *grace is* (the ontic factor).

Evolutionarily, *grace* is always birthing a new ecological, social, and personal reality. If our knowing and doing are not grounded in *grace* (and most knowing and doing that I observe are not), guess what. A graceless ecology, sociality, and personality abort the good life for all concerned. ~jpc

*Grace is the heart of all. We deny it at our peril.  
Namaste.*

### **April 18    Language is Language is Language**

For Christology is not about *a* being simply, it is about being, all things, recapitulated in the Word made flesh. . . . Of everything one may ultimately say that, whether one uses man-language or God-language, it comes to the same thing in the end. . . . This means that we must be able to translate the traditional language of the cosmic Christ,

existing supernaturally as a metaphysical Being, into the worldly language of a Christic cosmos. ~JAT Robinson  
<http://theologytoday.ptsem.edu/jul1968/v25-2-article1.htm>

What is Robinson's language trying to describe? That the divine happens in the temporal. That's enough to know.  
~jpc

*The Spirit enforces the stars in their courses,  
the sun in its orbit obediently shine;  
The hills and the mountains, the rivers and fountains,  
The deeps of the ocean proclaim the divine.*

~Katherine K. Davis, adapted by jpc

*"Let all things now living a song of thanksgiving."  
Namaste.*

## **April 19 Easter Fulfillment**

On Easter we hiked for three hours in the National Forest behind our house—quite a strenuous hike up the mountains. At the top we sat on a huge rock and meditated in the serenity of Nature. Awesome. ~Roseanne Sands

Why is Easter so fulfilling? We united with our children and five grandchildren in Virginia, at the farm (Rosedale, 1790) of Lynda's sister, Diane, and her family and grandchildren. Everyone was wondrously rejuvenated just sitting, talking, and eating under the trees; and by walking, running, and playing in the fields. ~jpc

*Easter is an earthy, spirit-filled celebration. Namaste.*

## **April 20 “I’m O.K., You’re Biased”**

A Princeton University research team asked people to estimate how susceptible they and “the average person” were to a long list of judgmental biases; the majority of people claimed to be less biased than the majority of people. . . .

And yet, if decision-makers are more biased than they realize, they are less biased than the rest of us suspect. Research shows that while people underestimate the influence of self-interest on their own judgments and decisions, they overestimate its influence on others.  
~**Daniel Gilbert**, “I’m O.K., You’re Biased,”  
*nytimes.com*, 4/16/2006

*Welcome to the human race:  
we overestimate ourselves  
and underestimate the rest.  
Though everyone’s judgments are wrong,  
life miraculously goes on.*

~jpc

*Thankfully we biased are accepted. Namaste.*

## **April 21 Transparency**

All of us see life go transparent. All of us experience our ordinary images of living being transformed and deep stuff oozing and sometimes rushing in. Think of a movie clip as an example of when you have experienced that wonder.

For me, *Gandhi* had many such clips. I can't forget what I saw and experienced there: a peek of the mystery, depth, and greatness of being human. I was in touch with a high-water mark of what a human is. I felt ennobled just being a part of the same species, swelling with pride, knowing that I have capacity for compassion and courage and sacrificial service. Little wonder I also experienced fear as well as fascination as I imagined *myself* enacting such clips. ~jpc

*Spirit can do its thing in us even when we're sitting there eating popcorn. Nowhere to hide. Namaste.*

## **April 22 Communion or Consequences**

Pluralism is not just another word for diversity. It goes beyond mere plurality or diversity to active engagement with that plurality. Pluralism goes beyond mere tolerance to the active attempt to understand the other. Pluralism is not simply relativism. It does not displace or eliminate deep religious commitments, or secular commitments for that matter. It is rather the encounter of commitments. ~Diana Eck, *A New Religious America*, via R. C. Williams

Each being has its priority of commitments. The only way we can be an authentic community locally, globally, and universally is to bow to the other, repeating this mantra adapted from Buber: “*I’m willed for communion.*” ~jpc

*Communion or consequences. Namaste.*

### **April 23 Story Releases Life**

We watched “Anne Frank Remembered” (1995 Oscar-winning documentary) recently and again became aware that without the presentation of the story much of the meaning of life in the past, present, and future is not. Story makes significant our common journey. Anne’s diary, its myriad publications, all the witnesses, the documentary team, and the DVD – they tell a powerful story that did not end in death in a concentration camp but ends up in our imagination.

We are all beckoned to help tell the story that releases life – both for the ones who hear it and the ones who tell it.  
~jpc

*All stories, including yours and mine, are crucial to the utterly significant journey. Namaste.*

**Note:** In this regard, look forward to Bishop James K. Mathew’s biographical story of his brother, Joseph W. Mathews, in *Brother Joe: A 20<sup>th</sup> Century Apostle*.

## April 24 Whose Am I?

*Whose am I if none of these:  
Neither Christian, Jew, nor Moslem.  
Not of East, West, North, or South;  
Not of Nature nor the stars of Heaven.*

*Not of Europe nor the U.S. of A.;  
Not of this world nor the next.  
Neither body nor soul, I belong to spirit:  
The One I seek, call, see, and know.*

~Rumi, "Divan of Shems of Tabriz, 31," adapted by jpc

Call it "one," "father," "buddha," "allah," "christ," or "spirit," we know the One, for we have heard, seen, felt, and communed with that power and are truly satisfied by none other. ~jpc

*I belong to spirit. Namaste.*

## April 25 An Ordinary Life

On the forty-fifth anniversary of the [4/19/1943 Warsaw Ghetto] uprising, a survivor named **Irena Klepfisz** said, "What we grieve for is not the loss of a grand vision, but rather the loss of common things, events and gestures. . . . Ordinarity is the most precious thing we struggle for, what the Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto fought for. Not noble causes or abstract theories. But the right to go on living

with a sense of purpose and a sense of self-worth – an ordinary life.” ~*The Writer’s Almanac*, 4/19/06

*How many in creation are “grieving for” an ordinary life? Namaste.*

## **April 26 Instrument of Notension**

<i>knowing</i>	>	<i>attention</i>
<i>doing</i>	>	<i>intention</i>
<i>being</i>	>	<i>notension</i>

Of course there is tension, as with Jesus in Gethsemane, but there is radical communion with *spirit* at the heart of the situation, that transparentizes knowing and doing, as though one sees through and walks through walls. It is the “notension” of being at one with *spirit*, in a state of 100 percent intensity and 100 percent detachment. ~jpc

*O to be an instrument of notension. Namaste.*

**Note:** Our Dad, Peyton, would have been 100 today. He was one who lost it all during the Great Depression, but lived to make sure his children had a great chance. On his shoulders we stand and give thanks for his great journey.

## **April 27 Truth and Love Are the Answer**

He [William Sloane “Bill” Coffin, Jr.] never lost his conviction that a better world is possible if we fight hard enough. At a dinner in his honor in Washington he



had reminded us that “the world is too dangerous for anything but truth and too small for anything but love.” But as we left he winked at me and said, “Give ’em hell.” ~Bill Moyers, *commondreams.org*, 4/21/06, “Remembering Bill Coffin,” via Harry Wainwright

Another has impressed his saintliness on the American soul and left us to figure out where and how we impress ours. ~jpc

*“The world is too dangerous for anything but truth and too small for anything but love.” Namaste.*

#### **April 28 Milk Shake Wake**

After the service, we invited people to a reception in the church fellowship hall for milk shakes. . . . [M]y mother was a lifetime teetotaler and always served milk shakes instead. With that context, we invited people to share stories and memories about her. There were about hundred people there who shared stories for about a half an hour before heading to the cemetery. A mid-afternoon wake with milk shakes is just the kind of “different” approach my mother would have really enjoyed! ~Terry Bergdall, a son

*Let us celebrate life and death. Namaste.*

#### **April 29 Sharing Approaches that Work**

How to deal with global warming? There are good and

bad ways to persuade. “Action removes the doubt that theory cannot solve.”

Here are some actions that have caught my attention lately: a wind turbine company in Texas making money and providing jobs as they supply power to a million homes; hybrid car trend; refitting urban buses (GM); Portland’s integrated strategy; adapting to the future (e.g., prohibitive insurance and no government subsidies for coastal development); cancel catalogs, magazines, and newspapers to save trees (flip side: Kenya’s Nobel laureate Wangari Maathai has catalyzed the planting of 30 million trees in Africa).

A “Sharing Approaches that Work” campaign would be timely and worthy of Nobel/Pulitzer-type prizes. Suggest it to your local groups, media, companies, foundations, and governments. ~jpc

*Argue the blue and red scene / but actively pray for green. Namaste.*

### **April 30 Clinging to Such Things**

The task of a Zen master has been described as “stealing the farmer’s cow” or “snatching the beggar’s bowl,” that is, taking away a person’s most important possession. The thought of Zen, the Dharma, the Way of Buddha, your zazen practice, and the idea of yourself – it means taking away all these things. If the farmer’s cow or the

beggar's bowl is taken away, there is nothing left for them to do. As long as someone is desperately clinging to such things, it is impossible to die, that is, to truly give up your ego-self. ~**Sekkei Haradain**, in *The Essence of Zen*, *yakrider.com* 4/20/06

As life takes away our most important possessions, \* my first thought is *not* to give thanks but more likely to want to lash out at *spirit*, as did the Psalmist. That's okay. *Spirit* can take it. ~jpc

*O to be totally attached and detached. Namaste.*

**Note:** *Spirit* will never take away my ego, by the way – read again Wilber's four reflections on "ego," pp. 18-19.

# May 2006

## May 1 Jewel and Wonder

I talk with [Anne] and tell her that her being is like a jewel radiating its magnificence. She is the only Anne Slicker that has ever been and will ever be, and each moment all creation stands on tiptoe waiting for her to be Anne. I tell her as Anne she is the wonder of the world. ~Joe Slicker

Though Anne is elderly and “failing,” she is still a wonder of the world, says Joe, her loving husband, who knows the truth. ~jpc

*O to be in love with another, with the way life is, and with the power at the center. Namaste.*

## May 2 “The Ten Commandments” Poem

1. Have thou no other gods but me,
2. And to no image bow thy knee.
3. Take not the name of God in vain:
4. The sabbath day do not profane.
5. Honour thy father and mother too;
6. And see that thou no murder do.
7. Abstain from words and deeds unclean;
8. Nor steal, though thou art poor and mean.

9. Bear not false witness, shun that blot;
10. What is thy neighbor's covet not.

*These laws, O Lord, write in my heart, that I,  
May in thy faithful service live and die.*

~anonymous, 1731, via *The Writer's Almanac*

Important, but not nearly so important – nor easy to memorize – as Jesus' summary of the law: "love the Lord thy God / and thy neighbor as thyself." And for the last 2000 years we've been trying to figure out who "the Lord thy God" is and who "thy neighbor" is and what it means to love him/her/it – and them. ~jpc

*Write thy law in my heart. Namaste.*

### **May 3    Amidst Reality**

My spiritual reflection consists of always conversing with God about the many happenings and experiences in my life, especially the surprises – both miracles I like and the other kind. Depending, I thank or berate God, ask or tell him to keep it up, start fulfilling his compassionate promises or just leave me alone. I exalt, moan and whine, cajole, bargain or threaten. . . . My human life is a glorious struggle . . . amidst reality. ~**Dave Thomas**

I commend this type of relationship with *the mystery*, "amidst reality" – and where else is there but amidst reality

to have a real relationship with “God”? ~jpc

*“Where can I go from thy presence?” Nowhere, for thou art always there. Namaste.*

#### **May 4 In Any Instant**

There is no whit less enlightenment under the tree by your street than there was under the Buddha’s bo tree. There is no whit less might in heaven or on earth than there was the day . . . Peter walked on water, or the night Mohammed flew to heaven on a horse. . . . In any instant the bush may flare. . . . ~Annie Dillard, *For the Time Being*, <http://www.chrisstump.com/excerpts.htm>

In an e-mail a colleague wrote, “I’m planning on being arrested this week at the Sudanese Embassy re: the Darfur situation.” Even in such a risky instant or in a secure instant of watching a movie “the bush may flare.” ~jpc

*Watch ye therefore. Namaste.*

#### **May 5 You Call It**

All else failing, I took some of Lynda’s homeopathic pellets before going to sleep a few nights ago. A big saga of a dream played it all out in wildness: after the yellow pollen dust storm came days of rain that created a mold attack that took me captive. But an angel rescued me and brought me back to a clear day of health. When I awoke, I felt

good as I breathed freely. I really am on the road to recovery.

Was that a spiritual experience? You call it. According to our experiences, whether we see the ultimate source within, without, or a happening through all that is, let us bow and give thanks, saying “Namaste.” ~jpc

### **May 6    Never Been Tardy**

Said James Dunn: “The Supreme Court can’t ban prayer in school. Real prayer is always free.” When the fundamentalists and their obliging politicians claimed that God had been expelled from the classroom, Dunn answered: “The god whom I worship and serve has a perfect attendance record and has never been tardy.” ~**Bill Moyers**, “A Time for Heresy,” 3/22/06

Dunn’s the kind of Baptist needed today. As Mark Dove, a Methodist minister, wrote me recently, “The glimmer of hope I see in Christianity today is a small band of courageous men and women who still follow and risk their lives to build a ‘new earth’ that honors and respects all of creation.” ~jpc

*Such religious leaders give me hope. Namaste.*

### **May 7    Sola Gratia**

Theologically, are we more Augustinian (but for the grace of God we die in our original sinfulness) or Pelagian (we

are primarily made in the image of God, free to heed our impulse toward good)? Answer: Yes. We can debate that both are right and both are wrong. (Disregard the fact that Pelagius has been condemned as heretical by the mainstream theology of the church.) By *grace* we can freely say yes or no to *spirit's* guidance. The glass is neither half empty nor half full of grace, but entirely full. My experience is I'm more motivated by *original grace* than *original sin*. ~jpc

*Am I a sinner saved by grace? You bet, from the beginning, and moment by moment, to the end. Namaste.*

## **May 8    The Dialogue**

To refer to the Word of God in time (which is the only language humans now have) is always, therefore, quaint and stylistic, a manner of speaking, a metaphor, a parable. In this way, human beings can be spared the temptations to possess or control, restrict or define the Word of God. ~William Stringfellow, *Conscience and Obedience*

How can we possess and control the Word of God? Same way we possess and control the *spirit*. Absolutely impossible! The Word of God, however it comes, is revelation and dialogue that we respond to with our lives. The Word of God is not primarily a book we study, memorize, or believe in. ~jpc

*O to dialogue with the living word. Namaste.*



## May 9 Key to Christian Theology

1. God is not an object. We blaspheme when we address the *mysterious power* as he, she, or it.
2. The greatest Christian heresy is making Jesus God. (To believe Jesus is God is about getting off the hook of discipleship and swapping faith for magic.)
3. *Jesus the man* is not nearly so historical as *Christ the event*.
4. The freedom of Jesus, the faith of Jesus, and the passion of Jesus are our possibility as followers of the 100 percent human Jesus.

~jpc, adapted from *The Transparent Event: Post-modern Christ Images*, p. 277 (first used in seminar with clergy, who dialogued long and hard and ended up showing appreciation)

*Following is the key. Namaste.*

## May 10 Quantum Spirituality

Danah Zohar in *The Quantum Self*, chapter two, says Newtonian categories of space, time, matter, and causality are being replaced by being, movement, and relationship in the new physics: *being* as in emerging and returning; movement as in the dizziness of possibility; relationship as in integrally linked though separate.

Therefore, a quantum haiku for all seasons:

*imagine being  
in the actuality  
of utter oneness*

~jpc

*Namaste.*

### **May 11 All Authority Is Fallible**

Having been a grandfather for a number of years, I am not particularly impressed with patriarchal authority. I am of an age with my own formerly impressive grandfathers (one of whom was a fervent fundamentalist, or literal believer in the Bible) and I realize that my opinions are as fallible as theirs. ~Alan Watts, *yakrider.com*, 5/7/06

All authority is fallible. We can trust only *the way life is*, and that with some reservation since we also interpret the way life is. ~jpc

*O to trust infallible spirit. Namaste.*

### **May 12 Drawing It Out of Us**

The theological problem today is about finding the art of drawing religion out of people not pumping it into them. The redemption has happened. The Holy Spirit is in people. The art is to help them become what they are. ~Karl Rahner

“Amen!” to this German Jesuit theologian, who was crucial to Vatican II. Progoff’s Intensive Journal program uses part of this quote because it understands that in serious reflection one becomes aware that *spirit* encounters every person on life’s journey. Dialogue with your children and grandchildren about their journeys (more important than teaching them the 10 Commandments) in order to help them become who they are: the accepted, free, and seeing ones born to serve. ~jpc

*Reflection is key to life. Namaste.*

**Note:** We give thanks for the birth of Dylan, our grandbaby-in-love, who has been struggling but is gaining strength each day. Journey on, little one.

### **May 13    Zorba the . . . Mentor**

I saw *Zorba* again on the Turner Classics channel and saw something I’d not caught before: Boss, Zorba’s understudy in life, was the one who suggested they dance when their great mountain project literally fell down. This was much stronger than if Zorba himself had stepped up and started the victory-in-the-midst-of-death dance. We all know Zorba can dance, as though he were born knowing how; but for the one he mentored to have started the dance when life was falling down is all the more laudable. ~jpc

*O to be a guide in the life journey. Namaste.*

## May 14 Dialogue (1)

*Nez:* There is only the spirit journey. Most of us think we have another choice.

*Journer:* You gotta be kidding?

*Nez:* Nope. That's why struggle is such a big part of the journey and saying *yes* is such an *aha*.

*Journer:* So my major struggle in life is saying *yes*.

## May 15 AIDS After 25 Years Globally

[25 million have died. 40 million now have HIV/AIDS. 8,000 are dying daily. But one longtime Belgian activist, **Dr. Peter Piot**, is optimistic about the future. He even has hope in the Pope's review of the church's blanket ban on condoms.]

He says, "I've been . . . around Africa for a long time . . . and I can tell you things are changing. I see it everywhere I go. Men and women are feeling less helpless and ashamed. Whole communities are standing up to take their destinies in hand. If we can tap that energy and combine it with the resources of the rich world, I think we're going to see tremendous progress over the next few years."  
~Geoffrey Cowley, *Newsweek* 5/15/06

*100 million died in military wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.  
O that this war does not take the same toll. Namaste.*

## May 16 On the Spirit Journey

The spirit journey is deep relationships  
with human and non-human nature.  
Touching the eternal through them  
is our great fun in being alive.  
Hugging my dog  
I experience deep love.  
Eternal meaning is in that moment –  
a big feel of reality  
that my heart grasps.

Snoopy and I are on the spirit journey. ~**Charlie Brown**  
(with help from **jpc**)

*Namaste.*

## May 17 Flowers Make the Man

[Pedro Martínez, 5-0 and a big reason the Mets are winning the NL East] noticed his mind emptying itself of worries when he gardened. As he rose in the baseball ranks, and the stresses of the game began to eat at his mind and body, gardening became his salve, a claim that few other major leaguers would be willing to make.

“It has to be in you to work with flowers, but . . . you realize how it can make you untouchable,” **Martínez** said. “If something hurts, it disappears when you are in the garden. It’s about deep thinking, about letting go. Other

players need to do the same thing.” ~Juliet Macur,  
*nytimes.com*, 5/9/06

*One with flowers, one with my nature. Namaste.*

## **May 18 Swirling Dervish**

*When you wake at three AM you don't think  
of your age or sex and rarely your name  
or the plot of your life which has never  
broken itself down into logical pieces.  
At three AM you have the gift of incomprehension  
wherein the galaxies make more sense  
than your job or the government. Jesus at the well  
with Mary Magdalene is much more vivid  
than your car. . . .*

~**Jim Harrison**, from “Mother Night,” *Saving  
Daylight*, at *The Writer's Almanac*, 5/12/06

Isn't it grand to be who and how we are, a combination  
of rationality and irrationality and transrationality, in tune  
with the universe and the ground of all meaning, a swirling  
dervish of poetry and myth and images, sitting there  
dressed in the car – at a stoplight – while driving to work.  
~jpc

*O to be delighted with the ever-created and creative  
me. Namaste.*

## **May 19    No Parts at All**

Gradually, physicists began to realise that nature, at the atomic level, does not appear as a mechanical universe composed of fundamental building blocks, but rather as a network of relations, and that, ultimately, there are no parts at all in this interconnected web. ~Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics*

All is interconnected: Abraham and I, immigrants and I, Osama and I, migrating birds and I, neutrinos and I, star dust and I. ~jpc

*Rather unbelievable, wouldn't you say? Namaste.*

## **May 20    Exactly Backwards**

I think that [supernatural] understanding of Jesus is exactly backwards. It was because Jesus was fully human that people experienced in him all that God means. It will take the Christian Church at least another century or two to overcome the way we have distorted God and to rid ourselves of the primitive images with which we have surrounded Jesus; but it will happen and, when it does, Christianity will experience a burst of new life. ~J. S. Spong, via Dick Kroeger, 5/10/06

Through Jesus, followers experienced union with God, so much new life that it burst forth as the early church. Because of their profound encounters with this “very man,”

for a few hundred years they kept adding superlative upon superlative until there was nothing left to say but that he was “very God.” (Think they got a little carried away?)  
~jpc

*Happy, even ecstatic, are they who are always welcomed home free. Namaste.*

### **May 21     Dialogue (II)**

*Nez:* Salvation is not knowing the truth but living it.

*Journer:* But what if I live it wrong?

*Nez:* Just live the truth you know now.

*Journer:* Like loving the one who needs me, maybe?

### **May 22     On Her Way**

Another world is not only possible, she’s on her way. Maybe many of us won’t be here to greet her, but on a quiet day, if I listen very carefully, I can hear her breathing.  
~**Arundhati Roy**, via Gene Marshall

It’s so hard to listen, to hear her breathing. Have you heard her lately? ~jpc

*Come what may, on her way. Namaste.*



## May 23 Profound Lesson

... head lowered, she walks her bike alone  
Somewhere between her wanting to ride  
And her certainty she will always fall.  
Tomorrow, though, I will run behind,  
Arms out to catch her, she'll tilt then balance wide  
Of my reach, till distance makes her small,  
Smaller, beyond the place I stop and know  
That to teach her I had to follow  
And when she learned I had to let her go.

~Wyatt Prunty, from "Learning the Bicycle," *Balance as Belief*, at *The Writer's Almanac*, 5/15/06

*To follow and to let go. Namaste.*

## May 24 Family Night

People are asking whether this wonderful ride that is life hasn't, in fact, become a runaway train. [Poway, CA, city of 50,000] Family Focus Night is an attempt to guide everyone into the station for a reality check.

"I have three kids, and even limiting each to only one sport, it's still insane," says **Amanda Newby**, chairwoman of the town's campaign. "We just thought that by giving people an official reason to slow down and be together . . . , it would make everyone realize that maybe they should do this more often on their own." ~Marco R. della Cava,

“Calendar Is Blank on May 22,” *usatoday.com*, 5/15/06

What about a weekly family night? ~jpc

*A family that be's together stays together. Namaste.*

### **May 25    Wisdom of Women**

The wisdom of women is to join the knowing of the body to that of mind, to join soul to spirit, intuition to reasoning, feeling consciousness to intellectual analysis, intimacy to detachment, subjective presence to objective distance. When these functions become separated in carrying out the human project then the way into the future is to bring them together. ~**Thomas Berry**, *The Great Work*, via Wendy Lombard

Let the revolution roll on like a mighty river, lifting all boats.  
~jpc

*Getting the gifts of all creation into history. Namaste.*

### **May 26    Eternal Peace**

... concluding stanza of **Stanley Kunitz**' "The Long Boat":

*Peace! Peace!  
To be rocked by the Infinite!  
As if it didn't matter  
which way was home;*

*as if he didn't know  
he loved the earth so much  
he wanted to stay forever.*

~Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, "Stanley Kunitz, Poet Laureate, Dies at 100," *nytimes.com*, 5/16/06

*At home, in love with the earth, eternally at peace,  
we are rocked by the infinite. Namaste.*

**May 27 Earth's Sweet Being**

*What is all this juice and all this joy?  
A strain of the earth's sweet being in the beginning*

~Gerard Manley Hopkins, from "Spring"

"Earth's sweet being here and now" is better said. ~jpc

*Juice and joy this day. Namaste.*

**May 28 Dialogue (III)**

*Journer:* When does the spirit journey start and stop?

*Nez:* It's an eternal journey.

*Journer:* What does that mean?

*Nez:* For you, it's your whole life.

## **May 29    Victims of the Darkness**

As nightfall does not come at once, neither does oppression. In both instances, there's a twilight where everything remains seemingly unchanged, and it is in such twilight that we all must be aware of change in the air, however slight, lest we become victims of the darkness.  
~**William O. Douglas**, via Beth Engleman

This is true socially, as the quote was intended, but also ecologically and personally. ~jpc

*O to be vigilant. Namaste.*

## **May 30    See and Accept**

[Christian thinking] . . . embraces . . . the agape relationship of seeing in everything a manifestation of the divine ground of being and accepting it as such. ~**Paul Tillich**, *The Irrelevance and Relevance of the Christian Message*, p. 36

“Moving onto perfection” (John Wesley) means in this context is learning to see in all and accept in all the manifestation of the divine. That understanding replaces the old self-righteous bent. Don't worry about being perfect, but seeing perfectly. ~jpc

*See and accept, bow and love. Namaste.*

**May 31    A Book about God**

*Apprehend God in all things,  
for God is in all things.*

*Every single creature is full of God  
and is a book about God.*

*Every creature is a word of God.*

*If I spent enough time with the tiniest creature –  
even a caterpillar –  
I would never have to prepare a sermon.  
So full of God is every creature.*

~**Meister Eckhart**, Matthew Fox's *Meditations  
with Meister Eckhart*, 14, via Herman Greene

*Spirit is perfectly in all things. Namaste.*

# JUNE 2006

## **June 1 Smile Through It All**

“In golf,” he [Tim Herron, winner of Bank of America Colonial golf championship] said, “it’s how you deal with the bad.” Which is, in part, why Lumpy [his nickname] always seems to smile through it all. ~Melanie Hauser, *pgatour.com*, 5/21/06

Wise Tim knows the ups and the downs are the way life is, and dealing with the “bad” as a given part of life is dealing with his good journey called life. ~jpc

*Bring it on, the way it is. Namaste.*

## **June 2 Myth, Fact, and Truth**

Biblical scholarship no more supports the assumptions of “The Da Vinci Code” than it did either “The Passion of the Christ” or Cecil B. DeMille’s “The Ten Commandments.” ~J. S. Spong, “On Viewing ‘The Da Vinci Code,’” via Dick Kroeger, 5/24/06

We could add *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988) and the *Gospel According to St. Matthew* (1964). None re-presents the gospel unless of course it creatively changes our life perspective and style. All are art forms

worth a good group dialogue afterwards. ~jpc

*Let the truth have at us through any myth or fact.  
Namaste.*

**June 3 “The Death of a Muse”**

*The great tree is toppled.*

*I did not know  
The groaning I heard  
Was the death  
Of a muse,*

*this stranger to a landscape*

*who coaxed me  
to look out the window  
and see a moment  
of colour and motion.*

~**John Forbis**, from *Exposures*, his first book of poems

**Note:** John is my nephew, my godson, and a monk at uMariya uMama weThemba Monastery in Grahamstown, South Africa

*The word can be spoken through any part of creation,  
especially a tree. Namaste.*

## **June 4 Sunday Dialogue (IV)**

*Journer:* And heaven after death?

*Nez:* Don't even think about it.

*Journer:* Isn't heaven the message?

*Nez:* Eternity's the message and is here and now forever.

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**Note:** It is Pentecost. . . . Spirit was . . . hovering over chaos in the [beginning]. . . . We are waiting for a fire that has been burning incessantly within [eternally]. ~**Richard Rohr**, Daily Reflection, [www.cacradicalgrace.org](http://www.cacradicalgrace.org), 6/3/06, via Ida Forbis

## **June 5 *The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community***

I don't recommend a lot of books, but get this one, a new book by **David Korten**. He dedicated it to, among others, Thomas, and quotes several times from *The Great Work*. Korten speaks of the "Great Turning" as a time that will be looked back on when we "turned crisis into opportunity, embraced the higher-order potential . . . , learned to live in creative partnership with one another and the living Earth, and brought forth a new era of human possibility." He talks of "the intrinsic, omnipresent living Spirit . . . that manifests itself in every aspect of Creation" (sounds like something you might have said). ~via Randy Williams

"An epic work. Exposes the myths that divide us and



frames the stories that can bring us together.” ~**Danny Glover**, activist and actor

*The message of possibility is everywhere. Namaste.*

## **June 6 Own 10 Commandments**

Imagine writing your own 10 commandments. . . .

[*human thou*] Thou shalt treat all humans equally as members of one community of the children of God. . . .

~**Dave Thomas**

[*creational thou*] Thou shalt care for all of creation in a manner that sustains and nourishes our planet. ~**Dick Kroeger**

[*eternal thou*] “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. . . .” I would say it something like this: Abide in the *spirit*. ~**jpc**

*We all have our 10, so jot 'em down and check 'em out. Namaste.*

## **June 7 The Ultimate Dimension**

A wave does not have to die in order to become water. She is water right here and now. We also do not have to die in order to enter the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is our very foundation here and now. Our deepest

practice is to see and touch the ultimate dimension in ourselves every day, the reality of no birth and no death. ~**Thich Nhat Hanh**, on the front cover of “A Celebration of the Life of Vance Sherwood Engleman,” via Beth Engleman

*Our deepest practice is bowing to and honoring all other, experiencing the ultimate even through them, and saying, “Namaste.”*

### **June 8    Strange Cosmos**

Hurricane Katrina may actually benefit the gopher tortoise, a threatened species once common in southern Mississippi, which will also benefit hundreds of other species that rely on the gopher tortoise burrows. ~Willie Brown Preserve, *Nature Conservancy Landmarks*, Summer 2006, p. 10, via LLC

*The cosmos shows no partiality, except to all “creatures.” Namaste.*

### **June 9    What Jesus Image Next?**

I think a lot of people are looking at contemporary conflict around the world and seeing it as a kind of religious war. . . . And there is no kind of conflict that becomes more intractable than when people are convinced that they alone have access to God’s truth and the other side are the people of Satan. ~**Elaine Pagels**, from David D. Kirkpatrick’s “Wrath and Mercy; The Return of the Warrior

Jesus," *nytimes.com*, 4/4/04

I grew up looking at the Sallman's "Head of Christ," but I had to give that image up along the way. I still like the one from the *Gospel According to St. Matthew* movie the best, but finally I'm operating out of a deeper image since no physical image of Jesus is authentic. ~jpc

*Divinity's not in our own image. Namaste.*

**June 10 We Remember Brian . . .**

. . . as one delighted with life and death and one who asked the big questions as pedagogue and writer:

*Years ago, while teaching a course in Saskatoon, I stayed in an old hotel. On the day before the course started, I was poking round and found my way down to the basement. Lo and behold, there was a kind of carpenter's workshop where coffins were being made. No one was around. There was one coffin, sitting on trestles, with the lid lying slantwise across the top. Driven by some whimsy, I clambered up into the coffin, lay down, then pulled the top over me. . . . I had no profound experience. Instead, lulled by the darkness and silence, I just fell asleep. I woke some time later when a colleague came to call me to supper. I answered from inside the coffin. His fright got quite a few laughs at the dinner table.*

*Putting ourselves in our coffin or inside the urn of ashes makes for an interesting reflective exercise. In the case of the grave site, we can picture the headstone, see our name carved with the date of our birth and death. And the epitaph. What words would be inscribed in the stone to sum up the whole purpose of our life?*

~**Brian Stanfield**, *The Courage to Lead*, pp. 115-16

## **June 11    Sunday Dialogue (V)**

*Journer*: Is there meaning?

*Nez*: How many meaningful experiences have you had?

*Journer*: Hundreds . . . thousands . . . I guess.

*Nez*: So, what is your question?

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**Note**: Granddaughter Kaitlyn (10) read this today and recited 25-30 “meaningful moments” in her life, in maybe fifteen minutes—she knew she could go on and on recounting them.

## **June 12    Bow Down, Look Around**

You’re left with yourself all the time, whatever you do. . . . But you’ve got to get down to your own god and “your own temple. . . .” [I]t’s all down to you. . . . ~**John Lennon**, “Man of the Decade” interview, 12/2/69, via Megha Merani

*You got to bow down  
to your own god in your holy place  
to find the meaning of life.  
If that one won't sustain you,  
keep going, deeper. . . deeper.  
Or start looking around you  
till you see signs of the One  
in all this hallowed space.*

*You got to bow down, look around.*

~jpc

*Bow down in either paradigm of spirituality. Namaste.*

### **June 13    The Supreme Purpose**

I'm sure everything that happens to me has a purpose, even if it cuts right across our own wishes. As I see it, I am here for some purpose, and I only hope I'm living up to it. In the light of our supreme purpose all our personal privations and disappointments are trivial. ~**Dietrich Bonhoeffer**, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, May 9, 1944 letter, p. 171

What is the "supreme purpose" [another translation: "great purpose"]? In light of it, what is "my purpose"? Bonhoeffer is right in putting the personal question of purpose this way. Both would have us understand "follow your bliss" in terms of our "great purpose" for being here. ~jpc

*O to be about the great purpose. Namaste.*

**June 14 From Deep Inside**

From time to time, as we were tempted to fall head over heels in love with arcane urban theories, we could almost hear [Jane] Jacobs clucking at us from deep inside: Heavy-sounding theories are fine, but they are meaningless unless citizen activists come together to help create thriving neighborhoods. ~Harry Wiland and Dale Bell, "Reclaiming the Heart of the City," *csmonitor.com*, 5/23/06, via JPC II

What voices of your mentor from deep inside have you heard lately? ~jpc

*Do the deep dialogue. Namaste.*

**June 15 If Jesus Were Here**

*On Easter morning all over America  
the peasants are frying potatoes in bacon grease.*

*We're not supposed to have "peasants"  
but there are tens of millions of them  
frying potatoes on Easter morning,  
cheap and delicious with catsup.*

*If Jesus were here this morning he might  
be eating fried potatoes with my friend*

*who has a '51 Dodge and a '72 Pontiac. . . .*

~**Jim Harrison**, from "Easter Morning," *The Writer's Almanac*, 5/18/06

*Strange man, Jesus, hanging out with such. Namaste.*

## **June 16 Our Great War**

Quote from **General George Patton** (movie): "Thirty years from now, when you're sitting around your fireside with your grandson on your knee and he asks you, 'What did you do in the great . . . War. . . ?' you won't have to say, 'Well . . . I. . . .'"

Every time of evolutionary history has been a time of great war. Today it's a war of \_\_\_\_\_ . ~jpc

*"Granddaddy, what are you doing. . . ?" Namaste.*

## **June 17 Unite a Movement**

[A] key figure behind Greensboro's efforts to build an international civil rights museum inside the old Woolworth's building. . . . notes that "similar [sit-in] incidents" occurred earlier in Baltimore, Durham, Oklahoma City and Wichita. "You're probably going to have . . . people . . . proclaiming, 'No, I sat down in 1942,'" [he] said. "But did that unite a movement? That's the question." ~*www.news-record.com*, 6/2/06

Four students started the Greensboro Sit-in at the downtown Woolworths counter in 1960. By the end of that year, about 70,000 black students had participated in a sit-in or marched in support of sit-in demonstrators ([www.core-online.org/history/sit\\_ins.htm](http://www.core-online.org/history/sit_ins.htm)). Those four daring African American students impacted my journey then and played a catalytic role in the movement that changed the law of the land five years later. ~jpc

*What is the movement you want to unite now?  
Namaste.*

### **June 18 Sunday Dialogue (VI)**

*Journer: Why all the change?*

*Nez: That's life.*

*Journer: Is that an answer?*

*Nez: To quote a student\* of mine, "Because things are the way they are, things will *not* stay the way they are."*

---

\* Bertholt Brecht

### **June 19 Together Again**

Cracked Humpty Dumpty, with bow tie and short pants and striped socks up past his knees, is lying on the classical couch, with the psychiatrist sitting behind him out of view, jotting on his pad, when he says, "Eventually, I'd like to



see you able to put *yourself* back together.” ~cartoon by Leo Cullum, *The New Yorker*, p. 52, 5/22/06

I had three reactions: a big laugh; a “way to go” for Cullum for being so observant of our culture; and a spiritual reflection – “Mr. P., what’s wrong with the way I am, broken and cracked? I *am* together again, same as before, but different.” ~jpc

*The word about life affirms the way I am, broken yet whole. Namaste.*

**Note:** Remember with me a mentor, Lyn Johnston Mathews Edwards (1917 – 1998), on the anniversary of her death.

## **June 20    The Big Awareness**

A theological discussion about whether God preordained certain people to salvation drew thousands of attendees to two identical breakout sessions Monday . . . [before] the Southern Baptist Convention. ~Nancy H. McLaughlin, “Baptists Debate Dueling Doctrines,” *news-record.com*, 6/13/06

AASAABITS means “all are saved, always already, baptized in the *spirit!*” The mission is to go to “the perishing” who are already saved and demonstrate it to them/us, *à la* Mother Teresa. ~jpc

*O for the big awareness. Namaste.*

## **June 21 Stop and Look and Give Thanks**

You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, "I have lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along." You must do the thing you think you cannot do. ~Eleanor Roosevelt via Megha Merani (last sentence used for last two January 1 reflections)

"Stop and look" means learn to reflect on the journey, especially at birthday, New Year, anniversary times – if not quarterly, monthly, weekly, or daily. We're all on a great journey and must not miss it. The journey itself cares for us when we let it. It offers whatever we need. ~jpc

*The journey guide is always present. Namaste.*

## **June 22 Blown By Its Wind**

The Episcopalians continue to divide over leadership roles; the Southern Baptist Convention is further dividing over exiting public schools; Presbyterians are arguing about divestment of funds to Israel; most denominations are divided over sexuality and marriage, many over birth and death. Over such hot issues Christians, often hate-filled, continue to separate from each other. Meanwhile, issues of spirituality, theology, care of the earth, ministry of the laity, and consensus methods lag behind. This does not follow Jesus, Paul, Luther, Theresa, Wesley, Woolman,

and John XXIII, who were after depth reformation. *Spirit* is moving in our time, absolutely, but the institutional church struggles to discern, consense on, and be blown by *its wind*. ~jpc

*O to be who we are, one in spirit. Namaste.*

### **June 23    New Metaphor**

Final Reality does not have to be pictured as up; it can just as well be pictured as standing behind each ordinary reality and shining through it. . . . Today we are experiencing the passing of the up-there metaphor and learning to speak of the Eternal as like a brilliant light that shines through our ordinary experiences. . . . With this new metaphor we can speak once again of a dialogue between “I” and the “Thou.”. . . ~Gene Marshall, *Realistic Living Journal*, June 2006, Issue 45

This metaphor makes sense, that is, if we see that creation is good. And this is why it’s good, because Final Reality, or whatever we call it, is at its heart. ~jpc

*The light of the world is always here. Namaste.*

### **June 24    Always At Hand**

*it's 3:23 in the morning  
and I'm awake  
because my great great grandchildren  
won't let me sleep*

*my great great grandchildren  
ask me in dreams  
what did you do while the planet was  
plundered?*

~Drew Delinger, from "hieroglyphic stairway," *Yes!*  
Summer 2006, p. 47

As good as Patton's speech? This couplet by Delinger struck me:

*the moment the universe turns transparent  
and all the light shoots through the cosmos*

Is this poetry of armageddon or the second coming? ~jpc

*All I know is **the kingdom** is always at hand. Namaste.*

**June 25      Sunday Dialogue (VII)**

*Journer:* Will all be saved in some next life?

*Nez:* All are saved now.

*Journer:* So why is there so much destruction?

*Nez:* Those who don't know they're saved need your help . . . now that you know.

## June 26      **Good Universe**

Today at Lynda's cool summer lunch, Thomas waxed eloquent as usual. He talked about *identity* and *difference* in the universe as the heart of most of the contradictions we experience. We concluded that each has its/her/his identity only within universal difference – "I" am who I am only in the "di-verse" – and all this in the "uni-verse." Identity within diversity within unity. What a good universe, no matter how much it hurts. ~jpc

*Good universe. No mistake. Precious. Glad to be here.  
Namaste.*

## June 27      **The Impossible Dream**

Life is a dynamic process, self-organizing to adapt and evolve. Just as it turned scales to feathers, gills to lungs, seawater to blood, so now, too, immense evolutionary pressures are at work. . . . Still, as Earth's record attests [over 4.5 billion years], extinctions are at least as plentiful as successful adaptations. . . . The Great Turning, as a compass pointing to the possible, helps me live with radical uncertainty. It also causes me to believe that, whether we succeed or not, the risks we take on behalf of life will bring forth dimensions of human intelligence and solidarity beyond any we have known. ~Joanna Macy, "The Great Turning as Compass and Lens," *Yes!* Summer 2006, pg. 45

*And I know if I'll only be true  
To this glorious quest*

*That my heart will lie peaceful and calm  
When I'm laid to my rest*

*To dream the impossible dream. . . . \* Namaste.*

\* Note: "The Impossible Dream," from *Man of La Mancha* (1972), lyrics by Joe Darion

## **June 28 Holy Connection**

Where we exist, our connection with the infinite is made by a root metaphor or a name, a word. . . . We no longer have the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, but when we had [it] . . . , the holiest person on the holiest day at the holiest time in the holiest place would pronounce the holiest word – and this is the connection. ~**Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi** from *Tying Rocks to Clouds*, p. 5, William Elliott, via Doris Conway

Think his kind believes there is infinite meaning in the moment? ~jpc

*Holy, Holy, Holy . . . Heaven and Earth are full of Thy glory. Namaste.*

## **June 29 My, My, My!**

Wife is talking to near-hysterical husband at breakfast table, reading the newspaper and rising out of his chair. Wife: "You know the doctor told you no more op-ed." ~**Donald Reiley** cartoon in *The New Yorker*, 10/8/01

Do too many of us identify with him these days? Are those “op-ed’s” – reflections on the news – as sensational as the news? Reckon our culture is wound up tight enough? Will it all lead to personal happiness and universal peace?  
~jpc

*Before we lose it, Namaste.*

### **June 30 Convivial Dialogue (Psalming)**

Guides throughout history have said the spirit journey is a dialogue with *God/Thou/the Holy/spirit* – that ever-present *power* by whatever name. I find myself talking with *spirit* these days, as I did as a boy and even a teenager. I’m finding I can dialogue as all psalmists before (e.g., Kazantzakis’ *St. Francis*). Life becomes *convivial* (relational, good company, even celebrative). ~jpc

*“Wherefore art Thou. Fear and trembling accompany my way. Answer me. Do not let the dark overtake me!” Then I hear, “What’s it going to take, little faith, for you to always remember I am never absent?”  
Namaste.*

# JULY 2006

## July 1 Training Exotic Animals

In Amy Sutherland's article\* I became aware that I am an "exotic animal" whose behavior can be changed in kind. The article has to do with marriage – and a whole lot more. See if you agree that it could help you toward happier relationships. I read it to Lynda and she laughed and pondered hard. Who knows what she might try next.  
~jpc

*O to use hundreds of affirming treats. Namaste.*

\* "What Shamu Taught Me About a Happy Marriage,"  
*nytimes.com, 6/25/06*

## July 2 Sunday Dialogue (VIII)

*Journer: Why isn't there more peace in the world?*

*Nez: Are you at peace?*

*Journer: A little, I guess.*

*Nez: Then share your little peace and watch it grow.*



### July 3 Living Mission

We attended the “Profound Humanness” event in Asheville on Sunday, set up by the Baileys and Wainwrights and led by Charles Lingo and Marie Sharp, using Vance Sherwood Engleman’s book, *In Search of Profound Humanness*. About thirty were present, mostly from the Jubilee Community. In my group, Lori, a professor from an Oklahoma university, and Rowan, a 20-something doula, decided that the items in one cluster had to do with “living mission.” They said, “Vance is dead but his life mission, represented in his book and in our dialogue here, goes on.” Living mission is endless: Vance’s mission of non-violence grows out of Gandhi’s mission and all those before and all those who follow. ~jpc

*The “crimson line” winds on. Namaste.*

**Note:** Vance’s photo in *The Hindu*, India’s national newspaper, as he makes comments about India’s future and announces his book:

<http://www.hindu.com/1f/2005/01/16/stories/2005011600320200.htm>

### July 4 Democracy

Democracy is an infinitely including spirit. We have an instinct for democracy because we have an instinct for wholeness. ~**Mary Parker Follett**, *The New State* (1918)

Where do we get that instinct if not from the way life is? We are driven to wholeness. Our founders articulated this

well, and in spite of our poor self-image these days, the USA manifests and demonstrates wholeness pretty darn well, but not as it shall be. ~jpc

*We celebrate our wholeness today. Namaste.*

### **July 5 You Must Go On, Till . . .**

When you squeezed the agonizing creatures down in the ship, or when you threw their poor mangled remains into the sea, had you no relenting? Did not one tear drop from your eye, one sigh escape from your breast? Do you feel no relenting *now*? If you do not, you must go on, till the measure of your iniquities is full. ~John Wesley, *Thoughts Upon Slavery* (1774)

Sometimes we think John Wesley was a neurotically pious, little man. But he put a new face on piety. With his deep sense of equality he would be hard on his Methodist pastors and congregations today. Then and now, mostly the outcasts of society would flock to hear him preach. ~jpc

*We would be relenting. Namaste.*

### **July 6 A Prayer Worth Praying**

It is a prayer I still say for America today – a hope that we can live with one another in a way that reconciles the beliefs of each with the good of all. It's a prayer worth praying and a conversation worth having in this country in the

months and years to come. ~**Barack Obama**, 6/28/06,  
via Dick Kroeger [http://blogs.suntimes.com/sweet/2006/06/  
obama\\_on\\_faith\\_and\\_politics\\_an.html](http://blogs.suntimes.com/sweet/2006/06/obama_on_faith_and_politics_an.html)

“Reconcile the beliefs of each with the good of all.” This is at the heart of our pluralistic experiment in democracy globally, trying to consense on the good of all across our wild spectrum of beliefs, religious or not. Ain’t it hard, ain’t it hard? ~jpc

*O to be one people in our diversity. Namaste.*

**July 7      Dance, Dance Wherever You May Be . . .  
                 on the Journey**

*Dance like no one is watching,  
Love like you’ll never be hurt,  
Sing like no one is listening,  
Live like it’s heaven on earth*

~**William Purkey**, via Jeanette Stanfield, quote she read at husband Brian’s memorial service

*What a testament. Namaste.*

**July 8      Visionary Care**

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is to receive over \$31 billion from Warren Buffett, joining the fortunes of the first and second richest in the world. Is this good to be focusing such wealth on global and environmental needs

– sustaining, extending, and adding quality to life – while at the same time modeling for other foundations and the rich to do the same? Could be a trend. Bill insinuated in a news clip they are dedicated to ending HIV/AIDS and malaria. Where does such visionary care come from? ~jpc

*O to be universally and strategically focused in our care, as well as brave. Namaste.*

## **July 9 Sunday Dialouge (IX)**

*Journer:* How do I become a spirit giant?

*Nez:* Spirituality is not just daily practices. You must walk through fire and survive it.

*Journer:* So it's about real life?

*Nez:* Of course. One\* of my students said, “No one can go to school for you. No one can take a bath for you. No one can die for you.”

---

\* attributed to Kierkegaard

## **July 10 Agents of Spirit**

How do we highlight that the essence of facilitation is not method but spirit? In some ways I found the question confusing because it never occurred to me that facilitation was anything but spirit. ~Larry Philbrook, EarthRise

reflection, 7/1/06

If participants see a new vision of possibility, discern the underlying contradictions that suppress freedom, and plan for ways to release creativity and care, then that kind of method and its facilitation are attuned to *spirit*. ~jpc

*Agents of spirit are everywhere. Namaste.*

### **July 11 Ancestors of Every Color and Creed**

[E]verybody on Earth descends from somebody who was around as recently as the reign of Tutankhamen [ruled Egypt 1333 BC]. . . . [A]ll of us have ancestors of every color and creed. Every Palestinian suicide bomber has Jews in his past. Every Sunni Muslim in Iraq is descended from at least one Shiite. And every Klansman's family has African roots. ~citing **Steve Olson**, *Mapping Human History* (2002), *usatoday.com*, 7/2/06, from AP, 7/1/06

Who am I? In large part, I am my relationship and disrelationship to all of these ancestors and their descendants. ~jpc

*Family divided against itself cannot thrive. Namaste.*

### **July 12 Feel Okay About Yourself?**

Start as a human being in this culture, then . . . toss in being gay, toss in being HIV positive, toss in a religion

that assures you God hates you for all of that – and then look me in the eye and tell me you can feel okay about yourself. I dare you, I just dare you. ~Ken Wilber, “Integral Spirituality in Real Life” [http://www.beliefnet.com/story/167/story\\_16709\\_1.html](http://www.beliefnet.com/story/167/story_16709_1.html)

Feeling okay about myself is not something I just decide, or something I hear on a feel-good commercial, or something I say a hundred times as I look in the mirror and expect it to be so. However, sometimes it does happen that I do absolutely receive that truth from somewhere – that I am okay just the way I am – and if I really say *yes* to that truth . . . WOW (translated: Watch Out, World)!  
~jpc

*But it doesn't hurt to rehearse that truth. Namaste.*

### **July 13    Violence Only Provokes More Violence**

Gandhi has been my hero. I've read a lot by him and about him. His 200-mile march to the sea stands out. They went to make their own salt to protest the salt tax. At every village more villagers joined the march. I know I'd have joined if I'd been there. What I remember most is that they had to cross a bridge and the British were waiting on the other side. Ten people went across and the British mowed them down. Ten more went across and the British mowed them down. The next ten went across and nothing happened. The British could not keep killing these nonviolent people. If they had fought back with sticks, stones, or whatever, I am convinced the British would

have continued to mow them down. Violence only provokes more violence. ~reflection by **Phyllis Hockley**, EarthRise reflection

*O for nonviolent ways to change the local-earth community. Namaste.*

### **July 14     Sustaining Relationships**

Most human societies, especially the so-called primitive or traditional societies, have been organized . . . on natural and therefore decent principles. It is only in modern times, as I see it, that is, in the last five thousand years, that the drive to dominate nature and human nature has perverted and now threatens to destroy . . . sound, conservative, sustaining relationships. . . . ~*The Unpublished Letters of Edward Abbey*, "Cactus Chronicles," July/August 2006, [orionmagazine.org](http://orionmagazine.org)

"Sound, conservative, sustaining relationships" in this evolutionary context makes sense. Reckon the first peoples were maybe more evolved? ~jpc

*We pray for decent principles. Namaste.*

### **July 15     Heart Over Mind**

[Meditation] is not an intellectual affair, but when the heart enters into the mind, the mind has quite a different quality; it is really, then, limitless, not only in its capacity to think, to act efficiently, but also in its sense of living in a vast

space where you are part of everything. Meditation is the movement of love. ~Jeddu Krishnamurti, *yakrider.com*, 7/7/06

We've all had this experience of the heart taking over our consciousness. I saw through baby Clara's eyes her delight in the music and fireworks of the July 4<sup>th</sup> TV special. As we danced with her in the midst of it, she radiated that "different quality" of heart over mind. And she infected us. ~jpc

*On a clear day. Namaste.*

## **July 16    Sunday Dialogue (X)**

*Journer:* What are the three greatest qualities of us humans?

*Nez:* Consciousness and decision . . . and what do you think the third is?

*Journer:* Maybe creativity?

*Nez:* Good, but I'd say care next.

## **July 17    New Cosmic Grooves**

I am endlessly compelled by the notion that higher stages or levels do not preexist, that is, they are not "given" but are literally created by brave individuals who actually



venture into new, uncharted territory, laying down “Kosmic grooves” that others follow, which eventually become actual new structures or stages. ~**Andrew Cohen**, “God’s Playing a New Game,” *WIE* magazine, Issue 33

I be darn, the future is not preexistent. As we honor the past, we bow to that which transcends it. We are on the future’s cutting edge. ~jpc

*Always creating the future. Namaste.*

### **July 18    A Billion Will Die**

Tobacco alone is predicted to kill a billion people this century, 10 times the toll it took in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, if current trends hold. “In all of world history, this is the largest train wreck not waiting to happen,” said **John Seffrin**, chief executive officer of the American Cancer Society. ~*usatoday.com*, 7/10/06

I joined some fifty colleagues during the summer of 1984 in a pact to stop smoking. It took their support and six months of Nicorette gum for me to do it. What should fifty of us make a pact to do today? ~jpc

*Don’t burn your temple down. Namaste.*

### **July 19    Eternity Now and Then**

God is real to me but not definable, only “experientible.”

However, that is what gives every moment of life both its depth and its ultimate meaning. Life is a tremendous and wonderful adventure that touches eternity time after time.  
~J. S. Spong, via Richard Kroeger, 7/12/06

We live in eternity past, present, and future, because that's when eternity chooses to reveal itself, time after time. Eternity is a state of being as well as a memory, experience, and promise. ~jpc

*Eternity is real. Time is man-made reality. Namaste.*

### **July 20    Now Is the Time of We**

At this time in history, we are to take nothing personally. Least of all ourselves. For the moment that we do, our spiritual growth and journey come to a halt. The time of the lone wolf is over. Gather yourselves! . . . All that *we* do now must be done in a sacred manner and in celebration. *We* are the ones *we*'ve been waiting for.  
~anonymous, via Roseanne Sands

Some say this is from a Hopi Elder's speech, but that has been refuted. Anyhow, it's a good word. ~jpc

*Now is the time / We are the ones. Namaste.*

### **July 21    Blessed Are They**

We don't have to make money, only a difference, and particularly in the lives society counts least and puts last.

~William Sloane Coffin, Jr., via Megha Merani

Who are the endangered these days? ~jpc

*Blessed are all, for they shall inherit the earth and hopefully restore it. Namaste.*

## **July 22 The Beginning of Truth**

All great truths begin as blasphemies. ~George Bernard Shaw

Many would say that “*God* loves all equally” is a blasphemy. Is this “blasphemy” becoming truth for more and more? Yes. To say one can be closer to *spirit* than another is not true. To say *God* loves one more than another is not true. ~jpc

*Let God be God (à la Luther). Namaste.*

## **July 23 Sunday Dialogue (XI)**

*Journer:* Where do we come from?

*Nez:* From the universe, of course.

*Journer:* How do you know?

*Nez:* As one of my students\* said, “The [universe] story has its imprint everywhere. . . . If you do not know the story, in a sense you do not know yourself; you do not

know anything.”

---

\* **Thomas Berry**

## **July 24    Rebirth**

I have no desire to be reborn until I have exhausted every possibility of this life in this time on these few hundred square miles of earth I call my home. . . . ~*Unpublished Letters of Edward Abbey*, “Cactus Chronicles,” *orionmagazine.org*, July/August 2006

The way I say it: rebirth is an ongoing creation, or recreation. It’s happened to me hundreds of times. No, thousands. ~jpc

*Everyday with spirit, and many times I know it.  
Namaste.*

## **July 25    “Was the Garden of Eden Grass?”**

“The empty front lawn requiring mowing, watering and weeding previously on this location has been removed,” reads a placard set amid veggies in oval planting beds fronting the street. ~**Patricia Leigh Brown**, “Redefining American Beauty, by the Yard,” *nytimes.com*, 7/13/06, via Michael Dowd [http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/13/garden/13lawn.html?\\_r=1&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/13/garden/13lawn.html?_r=1&oref=slogin)

The article starts with a 7<sup>th</sup> grader’s essay and lays out how the grass lawn became tradition. Tradition can be changed, especially for ethical reasons. ~jpc

*What is the Garden of Eden today? Namaste.*

**July 26 As Good As It Gets**

Recite the *23rd Psalm* and accept the way it is:

I am cared for

I am sustained

I am at peace

I am restored

I am just right

I fear nothing, not even death

I am never alone

I am comforted

I feast with all creation, even my enemies

I am blessed and fulfilled

I am always at home

Goodness and mercy are mine forever

*The way it is for all when led by spirit. Namaste.*

**July 27 Profound Practice**

Every goodbye is a practice run at death. ~John Updike

Those going off to serve in Iraq know this. Many of those in New York City who said “goodbye” to each other the day of 9/11 did not realize this. “Goodbye” means something. ~jpc

*O not to be unaware about the gift of life. Namaste.*

## **July 28 Self-transcendence**

Self-transcendence makes possible awareness, freedom, and relatedness. ~Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. III, pp. 234-237

One of my most effective spiritual practices is what I call the periscope: it rises out of my head and allows me to look down on myself, helping me transcend those times when I'm obsessed with myself, my situation, my emotion, etc. It helps me be aware, related, and free – to be in my situation but not of it. ~jpc

*How wondrous is our consciousness in response to spirit. Namaste.*

## **July 29 Once You Are Real**

Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand. . . . [O]nce you are Real you can't become unreal again. It lasts for always. ~Margery Williams, *The Velveteen Rabbit*, via Megha Merani

Do you identify with this passage? When did you become "Real"? ~jpc

*O to delight in our eternal realness. Namaste.*

## **July 30    Sunday Dialogue (XII)**

*Journer:* Does everything have meaning?

*Nez:* Yes. Meaning is everywhere.

*Journer:* How do we see it?

*Nez:* With the inner eye.

## **July 31    Gift of Sight**

Neither sensory empiricism, nor pure reason, nor practical reason, nor any combination thereof can see into the realm of Spirit. ~Ken Wilber, *The Marriage of Sense and Soul*, p. 174

We are only *given* to see and understand the realm of *spirit*, the inner truth of everything and every event. ~jpc

*Sight is a gift, not our accomplishment. Namaste.*

# AUGUST 2006

## August 1 I Bud Again

*I bud again,  
After so many deaths I live. . . .*

~George Herbert, "The Flower"

When was the last time I came alive after a "death"? What is the promise in such an experience? ~jpc

*Living is such sweet mystery. Namaste.*

## August 2 Power Now

There is no less holiness at this time – as you are reading this – than there was the day . . . in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as Ezekiel was a captive by the river Chebar, when the heavens opened and he saw visions of God. ~Annie Dillard, *For the Time Being*, p. 59

Why do we doubt Annie's truth? What makes us think the past and the future are more holy? How are we depreciating the power of the *spirit* now. ~jpc

*Power-full day. Namaste.*



### **August 3 Authentic Action**

The warrior as teacher teaches three techniques: losing self-importance, assuming responsibility for one's acts, and using death as an adviser. . . . A warrior lives by acting, not by thinking about acting. ~**Carlos Castaneda**, *The Wheel of Time*, p. 49, 43

What would you add to this list describing authentic action? The first thing I would add is "action on behalf of what?" ~jpc

*Every moment is a moment of action/no-action.  
Namaste.*

### **August 4 Hopefilled**

There is always an orientation of hope because the universe is in charge. ~**Thomas Berry**, talk at Katherine Clay Edwards Library, Greensboro, NC, 6/25/05

Got to hand it to our universe: at least 13.7 billion years old, with unbelievable struggles and glories in its evolving creation all the way, not missing a day. ~jpc

*When we are aware, how can we not be hopefilled?  
Namaste.*

### **August 5 Revealed Truth**

When I was young I was sure of everything; in a few

years, having been mistaken a thousand times, I was not half so sure of most things as I was before; at present, I am hardly sure of anything but what God has revealed to me. ~attributed to **John Wesley**

For me, a central piece of revealed truth is this fact: my life has meaning and purpose in the midst of the meaning and purpose of creation. ~jpc

*How can we live without that fact? Namaste.*

### **August 6    Sunday Dialogue (XIII)**

*Journer:* How do I keep the faith?

*Nez:* Wrong question. Ask only “How do I share the faith?”

*Journer:* Doesn’t that assume I’ve got it . . . and therefore kept it?

*Nez:* Don’t you know you lose what you try to keep and keep what you give away.

### **August 7    Notable Sermon(s)**

*God preaches – a noted clergyman –  
And the sermon is never long;  
So instead of getting to heaven at last,  
I’m going all along!*

~**Emily Dickinson**, from “A Service of Song,” 1890

*When we're listening, we're going all along. Namaste.*

### **August 8    Change the World**

**Thomas Berry** said today (1/7/05) on the way to lunch, with a wry smile, "I've never wanted to change the world. I just wanted to write down a few ideas." I broke out laughing and he joined in. Thomas has surely changed the world – and my world – by helping us to see it the way it is, a wondrous universe full of grace. ~jpc

*O to change the world by helping others to see it the way it is. Namaste.*

### **August 9    Earnest Prayer**

He who prays earnestly is aware of his own situation and his "neighbor's," but he sees it under the Spiritual Presence's influence and in the light of the divine direction of life's processes. ~**Paul Tillich**, *Systematic Theology*, vol. III, p. 119, via Joyce Marshall

Just watching CNN news all day is not earnest prayer but a quite possible cause of depression. ~jpc

*Action is a key to earnest prayer. Namaste.*

### **August 10    Unique and Unrepeatable**

You're unique – just like everyone else. ~anonymous

You're different from everyone else, but you're still like everyone else in that you're unique and unrepeatable. Just to think each of the 6.5 billion humans is unique, or each of the zillion ants is unique. No creation template. ~jpc

*You are the best Mary Jane McGillicutty ever created.  
Namaste.*

### **August 11 Spiritual Edge**

One either lives out of the *spirit* or one lives out of her/his personal, human understanding. What would it mean to “abide in the *spirit*” rather than in this-worldliness and my-worldliness? Some say this is the spiritual question of our time. What would you say the spiritual question is?  
~jpc

*O to abide in the spirit. Namaste.*

### **August 12 Mystery's at the Center**

I no longer have much interest in the supernatural, or what is mistakenly referred to as “mystical” events and experience. . . . I now find the most marvelous things in the everyday, the ordinary, the common, the simple and tangible. ~*The Unpublished Letters of Edward Abbey*, “Cactus Chronicles,” *orionmagazine.org*, July/August 2006

“Mistakenly” is the key word, for “mystical events and experience” point to quite the same as the “marvelous

things in the everyday, the ordinary, the common, the simple and tangible,” that is if we understand *mystery’s* at the center and not at the boundaries of life. ~jpc

*We would be centered. Namaste.*

### **August 13 Sunday Dialogue (XIV)**

*Journer:* Do you believe in evolution?

*Nez:* Relative to what?

*Journer:* I don’t understand your question.

*Nez:* As one of my students\* wrote, “You will come to see that all evolves us.”

---

\* Rumi

### **August 14 Her Turning Point**

“They shot hundreds of bullets into him, shouting, ‘God is great!’” she [Dr. Wafa Sultan, a Syrian-American psychiatrist, Los Angeles] said. “At that point, I lost my trust in their god and began to question all our teachings. It was the turning point of my life, and it has led me to this present point. I had to leave. I had to look for another god.” ~John M. Broder, “For Muslim Who Says Violence Destroys Islam, Violent Threats,” *nytimes.com*, 3/11/06

O that authentic demythologization of Islam is beginning.  
~jpc

*Spirit encounters give courage. Namaste.*

### **August 15    Profound Song Fest**

Over 100 Jewish and Muslim religious leaders, and 100 experts in Jewish-Muslim dialogue, came together for three days of dialogue, prayer, and practical project building. . . . The mayor of Seville welcomed all of us, recalling that during the Golden Age, Seville was a place where Muslims, Jews, and Christians lived in peaceful co-existence. . . . The Chief Rabbi . . . sat next to the Imam and started to sing the most beautiful Piyutim (sacred songs) in Arabic, then in Hebrew. Before we knew it, the Rabbis and Imams were sitting in the circle together chanting sacred songs back and forth in Hebrew and Arabic for three hours! ~2<sup>nd</sup> World Congress of Imams and Rabbis for Peace, Seville, Spain, March 19-22, 2006, via George Holcombe

*O to be united in spirit. Namaste.*

### **August 16    Another Take on “Namaste”**

*In India, when we meet and part  
we often say “Namaste,”  
which means I honor the place in you  
where the entire universe resides.*

*I honor the place in you  
of love, of light, of truth, of peace. . . .*

~Ram Dass, via Alice Baumbach

*Namaste.*

### **August 17 I Ask Forgiveness**

A Christian leader in the 16th century stopped short of the horror of the concentration camps but pretty much suggested the program that Hitler implemented four centuries later. Because Jews would not convert to Christianity and admit that Jesus was the only son of God, Christians lashed out. I continue to ask forgiveness for all those who would harm and even murder those who will not believe as they do. This “sin” is near the top of the list for me. ~jpc

*Enough of such religious sin! Namaste.*

### **August 18 Living Human Population on Earth**

By 1800 – 1 billion

By 1930 – 2 billion

By 1960 – 3 billion

By 2000 – 6 billion

By 2010 – 7 billion

By 2025 – 8 billion

By 2050 – 9 billion

By these estimates, population more than tripled since my father's birth in 1906 and gross economy is six times more. What we are living through boggles the imagination and global systems. ~jpc

*What should we pray for? Namaste.*

### **August 19 Holy Humor**

Transcendence restores humor. Spirit restores humor. Suddenly, smiling returns. Too many representatives of too many movements – even many very good movements, such as feminism, environmentalism, meditation, spiritual studies – seem to lack humor altogether. In other words, they lack lightness, they lack a distance from themselves. ~Ken Wilber

Consider the “birds of the air, lilies of the field” speech by Jesus, with the punch line: “seek ye first the Kingdom.” Knowing I cannot force “the kingdom” helps me to transcend my own limited efforts and those of any movement. I can lean back on the universe and all its wisdom, learned over billions of years. I can trust *spirit* at the heart of evolving creation. Just like a young baby, I can laugh a lot as I experience the mercy of it all. ~jpc

*We would be at one with **the kingdom** as we are sustained by it and serve it. Namaste.*



## **August 20    Sunday Dialogue (XV)**

*Journer:* How can we bring peace on earth?

*Nez:* You ask a deeply spiritual and religious question.

*Journer:* I do?

*Nez:* Yes. I'm reminded of what one of my students\* said: "When we care more for God . . . than for our images of God, we are united."

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\* **Matin Buber**

## **August 21    Let the Divine Be the Divine**

[I]n earlier Christian ages the tradition considered that there were two revelatory sources, one the manifestation of the divine in the natural world and the other the manifestation of the divine in the biblical world. These needed to be interpreted in and through each other. In this context to save the Earth is an essential part of saving the pristine divine presence. ~**Thomas Berry**, "The Christian Future," unpublished paper

*Revelation comes every which way. Namaste.*

## **August 22    Best Global Solution**

So a world of liberal [as opposed to closed] sovereign states qualifies as the second-best solution, after world government, to the problems of nuclear war, economic

collapse, and global climate change. If not the best of all imaginable solutions, it is the best of all feasible ones. ~**Michael Mandelbaum**, *The Ideas that Conquered the World: Peace, Democracy, and Free Markets in the Twenty-first Century*, p. 398, via Tom Morris

How do we responsibly help create the most feasible solution? ~jpc

*Our global village needs to be open. Namaste.*

### **August 23 Which One? Both? Other?**

In **Harold Bloom's** account [*Jesus and Yahweh: The Names Divine*], Jesus, with his deep connection to the uncanny Yahweh, can seem like the last real Jew, rather than the first Christian. ~Jonathan Rosen, "So Who Is King of the Jews?" *nytimes.com*, 11/27/2005

What is the point? Jesus, among others, has revealed what it means for humans to be related to the heart of creation and therefore to creation. ~jpc

*O to be meaningfully related. Namaste.*

### **August 24 Idolatrous Mix**

[R]eligion is more frequently a source of confusion than of light in the political realm. The tendency to equate our political with our Christian [religious] convictions causes politics to generate idolatry. ~**Reinhold Niebuhr**, *Love*

*and Justice*, p. 59

Our forebearers were wise in separating government and religion. Idolatry and tyranny come in many forms because we are prone to make the relative absolute. ~jpc

*O to be wise in our relativity. Namaste.*

## **August 25    Unfolding Reality**

The science of the past hundred years has made a seminal contribution to our knowledge of the sequence of events that marked the creative unfolding of the universe and all its wonders. ~David Korten, *The Turning Point*, p. 269, via Randy Williams

This is profound knowledge, the kind of knowing that alters our interiors and changes the way we relate. My reality: I am a universal earthling living in Greensboro, NC, USA, in the year 2006, about 13.7\* billion years old and responsible for the next 5 billion years, give or take a few. How do we get used to such unfolding reality? ~jpc

*Awesomely. Namaste.*

\* **Note:** On 8/4/06, a new scientific article published online at <http://www.newscientistspace.com/article.ns?id=dn9676&print=true> says 15.8 billion years may be more nearly correct. Stay tuned as Hubble keeps revealing new data.

## **August 26    What Keeps Me Optimistic?**

Part of what keeps me optimistic is knowing I've benefited from incredible progress in technology, which has enabled me to drive a motorized wheelchair with the slightest of finger movements and use a computer by voice. I've seen the flowering of the disability-rights movement and the enactment of access regulations. Perhaps most of all, I've managed to find love and have a family. Why shouldn't my luck continue? And if other people find my story inspirational, I guess I'll just have to live with it. ~Ben Mattlin, *Newsweek*, July 24, 2006, p. 19

Is this evolution at work? Yes. ~jpc

*Let all declare the glory of creation. Namaste.*

## **August 27    Sunday Dialogue (XVI)**

*Journer*: Do you believe in miracles?

*Nez*: Depends upon your definition of "miracle."

*Journer*: What is your definition?

*Nez*: As one of my students\* said, "There are two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle."

---

\* attributed to Einstein

## August 28     Reality Is Not Bad

[T]hese days, two responses have been tempting me. One response is to *do nothing* because it's not enough anyway. After all, we have seen just about everything and nothing seems to be a real long-term solution. Is anything worth doing? Another response that tempts me is to *allow guilt to taint my joy* in life. Because I am so painfully aware of all the pain, waste, injustice, and destruction in this world, I sometimes find my joy is rendered hollow or is altogether elusive. How can I be happy when I know so much?  
~Pamela Bergdall, EarthRise reflection, 7/25/06

Pamela articulates well what we all experience. She also cites two life examples that helped give her the courage to go on, to maintain a joyous heart even with eyes wide open. We all not only experience life as seemingly impossible, but we also witness heroic deeds that prove life is possible no matter what. ~jpc

*Reality is not bad. Namaste.*

## August 29     Real-Life Questions

The wife announces to her husband, Richard, who is sitting in an armchair reading the newspaper, that their insurance man is here to determine Richard's life expectancy. The facial expressions of husband, wife, and insurance agent are profoundly funny. ~George Booth's cartoon in *The New Yorker*, 7/16/90

Imagine the dialogue:

*Agent:* "Richard, the way I figure it, you've got about nine more years left, if you're lucky. What do you think?"

*Richard:* "Think about what?"

*Agent:* "About your life."

*Richard:* "Oh."

*Real-life questions won't go away. Namaste.*

## **August 30    Divine Reality**

The phrase "the fellowship in (or of) Holy Spirit" refers to participation in . . . divine reality. ~**JAT Robinson** <http://theologytoday.ptsem.edu/jul1968/v25-2-article1.htm>

*Spirit* and *divinity* operate in the most universal sense. Therefore, restrictions and qualifications do not apply. Like *grace* and *love*, *spirit* and *divinity* are absolutely universal. ~jpc

*Good news: we are always living in divine reality. Namaste.*

## **August 31**

### **Where There Is Reconciliation and Agape**

Where there is reconciliation and agape [authentic love] there is no meaninglessness anymore. There is rather the experience of eternal life here and now. ~**Paul Tillich**,

*The Irrelevance and Relevance of the Christian Message*, p. 58

Whether it be in a church or mosque, in family, among friends or among enemies, among humans or non-humans, we're talking about the universal experience of eternal life here and now, through real reconciliation and love. ~jpc

*So be it. Namaste.*

## Books by the Author

### •*By Cosmic Design*

*Spirit Poems* (1974-2006)

•*Daily Spirit Journal* (vol. I, 2005) (vol. II, 2006)

*Quotes and Reflections for 365 Days*

### •*Journer*

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in the spirit of Herman Hesse's novel *Siddhartha*

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*Reflections and Verse on the Spirit Journey* (2004);

with Lynda Cock; foreword by Thomas Berry

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comment by Bishop James K. Mathews

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comments by Wanda Urbanska and James Dodson

### Co-Editor

### •*Bending History*

*Selected Talks of Joseph W. Mathews* (2005)

### •*Brother Joe*

*A 20th Century Apostle*; by James K. Mathews (2006)



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