

Songs of the Spirit: A Collection of Poems written During the Fast 2003 and 2004 *by Dawn Staudt*

Dawn Prayers

In the pre-dawn darkness Thou dost call me
To arise from my sleep and come to Thee.
There it is in the darkness that I find
The brilliance Thou dost reveal to my mind.
These early dawn prayers radiance bestows;
In these sacred moments, love for Thee grows.
Thou dost open my heart to let in Thy light.
And with such great thankfulness My soul takes flight.

How can it be that I am so, so blessed
To see Thy Truth, when so blind are the rest?
How can it be that in prayer Thou dost visit me?
None more insignificant could there be.
How can it be that Thou dost hear my small voice?
Why was I worthy to make Thee my choice?

This love and wonder Thou dost bring to my heart.
Each morn with the dawn again it will start.

Wandering in the Word of God

Taking time to peruse God's verses I ponder
What joy each reveals, as through them I wander.
Within my heart and soul each verse will dance and play.
Feeding my spirit throughout the long fasting day.

For at this time of year the path is extra sweet.
Hunger spurs on my heart and spirit guides my retreat
Into verses abstract with meanings once hidden;
Secrets now shed their light, as I do as bidden.

This surely is the joy for all who God obey.
New-found treasures in the Writings bless them each day.
Within their heart and soul each verse will dance and sing,
Feeding their spirits with all the bounties they bring.

Taking time to peruse God's verses we ponder
What joy each reveals, as through them we wander.

The Friends

We have such friends the whole world round
The like of which you've never found!
Some rich, some poor – it matters not;
The love of hearts was all we sought.
Some we've known for many long years;
Some so briefly, it brought us tears.
Cheerful, trustworthy and content
Friends we have on each continent!

From the dark coal mines of Poland
And the white snow fields of Iceland;
Lots of friends in Dublin and Bray,
A family gone to Paraguay.
Others in Hong Kong and Macau
Once lived near us, but they don't now.
Tanzania and Fiji, too
Ghana and even Lesotho
New Hampshire and Bulgaria
Czech Republic and Australia
We love these friends with all our heart,
Though miles and years keep us apart.

These are not 'just any old friends';
The love we have, it never ends!
Our spirits are entwined, you see,
In God's great love and unity.
Though you may think it strange to say,
'We'd die for each other any day.'
'Not possible', you think, I fear.
But, I must make it very clear:
Many gave their lives years ago
To help this love the world round grow.
Faith it was and faith it is still:
The lone gift that achieves God's will
To make mankind one family.
Heart by heart, it works easily.
Our Faith binds us to each other;
It makes us as sister and brother...

Making Memories

Feel the moment...don't let it slip away!
Treasure the love in each minute, each day.
Notice the small things; keep them in your heart.
Each little deed plays such a special part.

For you see, each small act of thoughtfulness
Builds in your heart a special tenderness.
Each smile, each kiss...each way they show they care
Builds strength and love to hold when they're not there.

Tuck away the memories bright and clear –
Each hour, each day and hold them so dear.
Special times and very special places –
Most of all, treasure the loving faces!

Each scent, each sight, each hug, and each warm night
Can be there in your memory closed tight
To open when you're very old and grey!
Hold each moment...don't let it slip away!

The ones we love most won't always be near.
One day Time will take them away, I fear.
But when they're gone, you can recall each day
Those precious gifts that didn't slip away.

Sacred Glimpses 1

Did you ever get a glimpse of reality?
Never could we understand its totality,
But I mean...just those few seconds,
When understanding your heart beckons...?
When your soul recognizes God's Splendour...?
When your heart's awakened to this life so tender?

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Often it's nature's great expanse that can reveal
God's Sovereignty for us to feel:
The slight slit of the moon
With bright stars appearing soon
On sunset's blue-black nightfall
Making you feel so infinitesimal!
Or maybe a blue jay's call
Against a brilliant winter sky
With steep jagged mountains high
Reflecting the sun's pink glow
As sunrise bathes sparkling snow.
In this beauty you rejoice,
Thankful you had made the choice
To seek nature's solitude
And feel this great gratitude.
Your heart sings the praises of God, the Creator...
Simple, yet glorious!
In your heart you know that nothing could be greater!

Sacred Glimpses 2

These are great glimpses of reality so true...
Momentarily feeling God's nearness to you.

Sometimes it's people that cause this door to open...
Just a look, a small deed or words sweetly spoken:

A small child cuddled so close

Giving you a great big dose
Of feeling needed and loved today,

Looking at you that innocent, pure way.

Surely no gift is dearer!

You know 'tis so and cuddle nearer.

A dear friend knocks at your door

Bringing flowers and so much more:

Kind words and heartfelt sharing...

Just when you so needed such caring.

Friendship is such a treasure!

A bond true without measure.

When you feel these moments in your awakened heart,

The great meaning of life within you plays its part.

Your heart and soul are once again bright and revived;

These times of love are when you thank God you're alive.

These are great glimpses of reality so true...
Momentarily feeling God's nearness to you.

Sacred Glimpses 3

Faith also brings to us life's true reality.
Sometimes it comes through death's sudden finality.
Perhaps it comes in a moment's inspiration,
As in prayer with God we hold deep conversation:
Pure hearts are touched with insight
Of God's great Love and great Might.
 'So Manifest, yet Hidden' -
 We see some, most is forbidden.
 Life's challenges sent to us
To guide our hearts in Him to trust.
Detachment from all earthly things;
 Tests spirituality brings.
At times of suffering we feel God's Hand so near,
As well as when we fast these 19 days each year.
 Our faith spurs us on and makes us strong and steadfast.
 At times like these we feel we have come home at
last.

These are great glimpses of reality so true...
Momentarily feeling God's nearness to you.

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So, you did get a glimpse of life's reality!
 Never could we understand its totality,
 But you felt it!...Just those few seconds,
 When understanding your heart beckoned!
 Your soul recognized God's Splendour
And your heart awakened to this life so tender!

Through Nature's Beauty, through Love and Faith
We come to know our rightful place.
Yes! These sacred glimpses God upon us bestows.
Blessed the heart that their preciousness knows.

The Most Great Prison

...These are Thy servants, O my Lord, who have entered with Thee in this, the Most Great Prison, who have kept the Fast within its walls...

It was dirty and dank, far from pretty
The time I went to the Fortress City,
Where the King of Kings they had imprisoned.
(To stop His Cause, so they had envisioned.)
Through the land gate and down that street I went...
Into that Prison where He had been sent.
Up the steps and into that cell...
Yes...

I entered where He had been made to dwell
For over two years in that cold, stark place,
Where the sea was all the barred windows did face.

I looked through those black bars toward the cold sea...
I felt His love...and knew He was with me.

The Most Great Prison, yes, I was once there...
And I return each year...when I read this prayer.

March 2004

Day Number Nine

Today is Day Number Nine
Within the days of the Fast.
No food or drink from dawn to dusk;
Nine gone – ten more to the last.

Most of the time it's easy...
Much easier than you'd think.
But for me TODAY is hard.
I feel I'm close to the brink!

Usually it's not so bad
If you keep yourself busy.
Despite being occupied,
I feel weak, even dizzy.

My stomach hurts from hunger...
My back feels like it will break...
My head feels dull and spaced out.
Just how much more can I take?

I want to cry but shouldn't,
As I'll eat in an hour.
In fact, I'll eat all I want –
All in sight I might devour...

But, when I say my prayers now,
That's when I actually cry.
My spirit feels in touch now.
My pain leaves me as I sigh.

How can I think I suffer
These few days, these few hours?
What about Bahá'u'lláh?
He suffered despite His powers.

Like Christ upon the high cross,
Bahá'u'lláh endured much;

Forty years a prisoner,
Though His spirit they couldn't touch.

I sure don't compare myself
To Him or to His kin,
But when I consider Them
Understanding does begin.

I know that my discomforts
Are, in fact, so very small.
Now that I have said my prayers
I just don't feel bad at all.

For You, Bahá'u'lláh

A day not fasting just doesn't feel right.
I pray because it was for You, You might
Understand and forgive me this night.
You helped me so; I think that you might.

This was the day I've worked toward for more than a year.
Through many, many tests You helped me persevere.
Intuition didn't want this project pursued;
At this stage of life many other things to do.

Such procrastination I've never had before...
God's strength and assistance I often would implore.
The commitment made, I had to see it through...
Never would've happened, except it was for You.

A day not fasting just doesn't feel right.
I pray because it was for You, You might
Understand and forgive me this night.
You helped me so; I think that you might.

Still...
A day not fasting just doesn't feel right.

A Plea to Saint Patrick

The Hill of Slane majestically rises,
Ruined abbey and church tower so tall.
Here Patrick lit the first fire so bright:
To the Tara King he raised the great call.

The King declined, but let Patrick move on
To the Druids and Celts God's Word to spread.
Throughout the land Patrick travelled alone
Bringing new life, awakening the dead.

Such was the effect on these humble souls
Throughout the Emerald Isle the new Life grew.
It became the land of Saints and Scholars;
Such was the height of Spirit the land knew.

But the glory has faded. The Word now lost.
Today this land is blemished with such shame.*
Though the Word Returned, they can't hear the Call;
They reject all for the sake of His Name.

But we few Bahá'ís in Slane remember
Here was the start all those long years ago.
St. Patrick, aid us to raise the new Word!
Here, again, set the new Spirit aglow!

*When this poem was written, the great scandal had just come out regarding the Roman Catholic Church covering up the many cases of child abuse around the country and the world.

Blessings of the Morning

5:50 – The alarm goes off waking me from a sound sleep:
'But I only went to bed!'
I hear in my tired head.

6:00 – Dragging myself out of bed, quietly I creep:
To the sitting room still cold
I bow my head, my arms fold.

6:05 – My sleepy soul wakes with this morning's sweet prayer:
I'm feeling God's love so near...
Memories of martyrs dear.

6:25 – Go to wake the others. Breakfast to now prepare:
Hurry, hurry, rush, rush, rush!
 Chatting, munching – gone the hush!

6:43 – It's time to be done now and clear the food away:
Tummy full with toast and tea,
It feels content as can be!

6:45 – So, there's the early start to this next fasting day:
The others go back to bed.
I decide to write instead.

6:48 – 'Another day of fasting', I say with a smile:
Nothing at all until sunset,
Only prayers my lips will wet.

6:50 – The red sun rising, looking so large for just awhile:
A sight to behold at last!
Another blessing of the Fast!

Spiritual Sisters

Spiritual Sisters are White Feather and I

Sisters from the same dear mother's womb
Sisters in spirit, whether near or far
Sisters long ago and still today
Sisters in the spiritual way

They both seek the way of the spirit -

One the path of the ancient native way;
One the plan of the long Promised New Day.

They both seek the universal love -

One refers to Him as 'Great Creator';
One says 'God' and knows none could be greater.

They both seek the way of reverence -

One with nature and sacred gifts given;
One with prayers and songs sung to heaven.

Sisters from the same dear mother's womb
Sisters in spirit, whether near or far
Sisters long ago and still today
Sisters in the spiritual way

My First Prayer Book

O Friend! O Friend of long ago!
How I do cherish you so!
In my hand your soft green cover
Still gives comfort like no other.
With pages taped from being torn
And some places dirt smudged and worn,
You are to me still so, so dear
As to my heart I hold you near.
You went with me to places Holy.
And many others much more lowly,
Where together we tried to serve;
Despite the tests, we didn't swerve.
So long together, you and I.
Many times your Words made me cry
Tears of wonder, awe and joy.
I prayed those Words I could employ
To change my heart to serve mankind
And put my old ways far behind.

Tattered and old you know me best;
You stayed with me throughout my quest.
From the start of the journey long,
You gave me strength through right and wrong.
You also caught my tears for pain
And brought the peace again to reign.
In the mountain of my strong heart,
You, dear friend, played the biggest part
Making me steadfast and so firm;
From your pages so much I did learn.

Though faded and frayed, you are to me
The dearest Friend there ever could be.

March 2004

Meeting the Master

Whoso reciteth this prayer with lowliness and fervour will bring gladness and joy to the heart of this Servant; it will be even as meeting Him face to face...

Graciously look upon Thy servant,
Humble and so lowly at Thy door...
Canst Thou feel my love, 'Abdu'l-Bahá,
As to Thee with my whole heart I implore?

I read stories of those Thou didst met -
Ordinary people like me.
I try to imagine that bounty
And wish that I, too, could've met Thee.

So, I say this prayer quite often;
It seems to be the only way.
And it is just as Thou hast said:
'Face to face' we do meet each day!

With this prayer doth Thy servant call Thee
At dawn and in the night season...
I thank Thee, O my Heart's Desire!
How Thou dost bring life meaning and reason!

The Race Unity Day

Such a blessing I had today...
I watched the children laugh and play!
Joking, skipping and running wild...
Oh! The carefree days of a child!

Today I was their teacher new...
Not always sure just what to do!
Oh! What responsibility
To see them all look up at me!

As their teacher throughout the day,
I tried to make the work like play.
Stories, art, lessons and a song...
We got on so well all day long!

I told them all spiritual things
About the love race unity brings.
With pure hearts they listened away
And heard God's Word for us today!

Like a seed these Words can now grow;
Deep in their hearts the Truth they'll know.
Oh! Such blessings I can't believe...
For me to give and them to receive!

For Everything There is a Reason

Why do we think we're told to Fast
In this Great Day, as in the past?
Does God wish to inflict such pain,
As from food and drink we abstain?

The Great Physician sets the plan
Calling us to before Him stand
At each daybreak and at sunset
To feel His love and not forget:
Without His love we wouldn't BE.
Why is this hard for most to see?

Why do some think they cannot Fast?
Why do they think they could not last?

Don't they know God will help them through
When they do as He asks them to?
Though sometimes they may feel so weak,
Great inner strength to them would speak.
Without faith and obedience
They cannot win this experience.

Why do others question our Fast?
Why do they think we cannot last?

The Great Physician knows what's best;
We simply obey His behest.
When we just try, we can endure.
He tests the hearts to find the pure.
Exemptions His wisdom bestows.
Special bounty to all He shows.

Why do we think we're told to Fast
In this Great Day, as in the past?
For everything there is a reason...
Especially in the Fasting season.

To the Last Hour

The days of Fasting are now coming to an end.
You may think we'd be happy, but not so, my friend.

For every hour of these days has been endowed
With that which would have caused every King to have bowed

Down in adoration and exaltation!
Can you now see the error of your expectation?

For nineteen days abandoning sleep for His sake,
We drink the cup of His remembrance at daybreak.

Of course this slight sacrifice we can well afford;
The wine of His presence in our prayers our reward.

To the Most Great Prison fasting transports our hearts.
We comprehend so briefly His enemies' darts

That kept Him imprisoned for those forty long years.
Having visited that prison, we melt in tears.

The days of Fasting are now coming to an end.
You may think we'd be happy, but not so, my friend.

The slow hours of these past nineteen days so long
Make us physically weak, but spiritually strong.

These days hold for us such potency and power
We cherish and treasure them to the last hour.