1. ***Trusting Joy***

*The First Step: Remember the Light*

**Five A.M. in the Pinewoods**

I’d seen

their hoofprints in the deep

needles and knew

they ended the long night

under the pines, walking

like two mute

and beautiful women toward

the deeper woods, so I

got up in the dark and

went there. They came

slowly down the hill

and looked at me sitting under

the blue trees, shyly

they stepped

closer and stared

from under their thick lashes and even

nibbled some damp

tassels of weeds. This

is not a poem about a dream,

though it could be.

This is a poem about the world

that is ours, or could be.

Finally

one of them--I swear it!--

would have come to my arms.

But the other

stamped sharp hoof in the

pine needles like

the tap of sanity,

and they went off together through

the trees. When I woke

I was alone.

I was thinking:

so this is how you swim inward,

so this is how you flow outward,

so this is how you pray.

*Mary Oliver*

Once, years ago, I emerged from the woods in the early morning at the end of a walk and—it was the most casual of moments—as I stepped from under the trees into the mild, pouring-down sunlight I experienced a sudden impact, a seizure of happiness. It was not the drowning sort of happiness, rather the floating sort. I made no struggle toward it; it was given. Time seemed to vanish. Urgency vanished. Any important difference between myself and all other things vanished. I knew that I belonged to the world, and I felt comfortably my own containment in the reality. I did not feel that I understood the mystery, not at all; rather that I could be happy and feel blessed within the perplexity—the summer morning, its gentleness, the sense of the great work being done, though the grass where I stood scarcely trembled. As I say, it was the most casual of moments, not mystical as the word is usually meant, for there was no vision, or anything extraordinary at all, but only a sudden awareness of the citizenry of all things within one world: leaves, dust, thrushes and finches, men and women. And yet it was a moment I have never forgotten and upon which I have based many decisions in the years since.

*Mary Oliver*, from *Long Life*

*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. . . . If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.*

*[as opposed to] the works of the Flesh: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing and things like these.*

*Galatians 5:16-26*

*I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live,*

*but Christ who lives in me.*

*Galatians 2:19-0*

*A method for practicing joy, based on the “Examen”:*

1. *Each day we remember the light and give thanks for the light.*
2. *We remember the darkness, and ask for forgiveness, and refuge, and strength.*
3. *We ask for the grace to discern how we can follow the light—what it is we are*

*being called to do--and then we leave it all to God, all of it, releasing ourselves into his hands.*

*In those who are making spiritual progress, the action of the good angel is gentle, light, and sweet, as a drop of water entering a sponge.*

*St. Ignatius*

*My dear souls, you are seeking for secret ways of belonging to God, but there is only one: making use of whatever he offers you. Everything leads you to this union with him. The blood flowing through your veins moves only by his will. Every feeling and every thought you have, no matter how they arise, all come from God’s invisible hand. You have nothing to do but love and cherish what each moment brings.*

*Jean-Pierre de Caussade, S.J.*

*God acts within every moment*

*And creates the world with each breath.*

*He speaks from the center of the universe,*

*And in the silence beyond all thought.*

*Mightier than the crash of a thunderstorm,*

*Mightier than the roar of the sea,*

*Is God’s voice silently speaking*

*In the listening heart.*

*Psalm 93 (translated by Stephen Mitchell)*

*And look, you were within me and I was outside.*

*Augustine, The Confessions*

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*But the Problem!*

Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

John 20:11-18

*Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger*

*in the mark of his nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.*

*John 20:25*

In this quest to find God in all things, there is still an area of uncertainty. There must be. If a person says that he met God with total certainty and is not touched by some margin of uncertainty, then this is not good. If one has the answers to all the questions—that is proof that God is not with him. It means that he is a false prophet using religion for himself. You must leave room for the Lord, not for certainties. We must be humble. Uncertainty is in every true discernment.

Pope Francis

God is always a surprise. You never know where and how you will find him. You are not setting the time and place of the encounter with him. You must, therefore, discern the encounter.

Pope Francis

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No one was an eyewitness to Christ’s resurrection and no evangelist describes it. No one can say how it came about physically. Still less was its innermost essence, his passing over to another life, perceptible to the senses. Although the Resurrection was an historical event that could be verified by the sign of the empty tomb . . . still it remains at the very heart of the mystery of faith as something that transcends and surpasses history.

Catechism, 647

Naturally there can be no contradiction of clear scientific data. The Resurrection accounts certainly speak of something outside our world of experience. They speak of something new, something unprecedented—a new dimension of reality that is revealed. What already exists is not called into question. Rather we are told that there is a further dimension, beyond what was previously known. Does that contradict science? Can there really only ever be what there has always been? Can there not be something unexpected, something unimaginable, something new? If there really is a God, is he not able to create a new dimension of human existence, a new dimension of reality altogether? Is not creation actually waiting for this last and higher “evolutionary leap,” for the union of the finite with the infinite, for the union of humanity and God, for the conquest of death?

Pope Benedict

Entering into the tomb. That is why we are here: to enter, to enter into the mystery which God has accomplished. We cannot live Easter without entering into the mystery. It is not something intellectual, something we only know or read about . . . It is more, much more! To enter into the mystery means the ability to wonder, to contemplate; the ability to listen to the silence and to hear the tiny whisper amid great silence by which God speaks to us. To enter into the mystery demands that we not be afraid of reality: that we not be locked into ourselves, that we not flee from what we fail to understand, that we not close our eyes to problems or deny them, that we not dismiss our questions.

Pope Francis

*Although the doors were shut,*

*Jesus came and stood among them and said,*

*“Peace be with you.”*

*John 20:26*

To do a freewriting exercise, simply force yourself to write without stopping for ten minutes. Sometimes you will produce good writing, but that’s not the goal. Sometimes you will produce garbage, but that’s not the goal. You may stay on one topic, you may flip repeatedly from one to another: it doesn’t matter. Sometimes you will produce a good record of your stream of consciousness, but often you can’t keep up. Speed is not the goal, though sometimes the process revs you up. If you can’t think of anything to write, write about how that feels or repeat over and over ‘I have nothing to write’ or ‘Nonsense’ or ‘No.’ If you get stuck in the middle of a sentence or thought, just repeat the last word or phrase till something comes along. The only point is to keep writing.

Peter Elbow, ***Writing with Power***