

## Reflection on Prayer

The Velvet Bridge by Czeslaw Milosz, translated by Robert Haas

You ask me how to pray to someone who is not.

All I know is that prayer constructs a velvet bridge

And walking it we are aloft, as on a springboard,

Above landscapes the color of ripe gold transformed by a magic stopping of the sun.

That bridge leads to the shore of Reversal

Where everything is just opposite and the word *is* unveils a meaning we hardly envisioned.

Notice: I say we;

There, every one, separately, feels compassion for others entangled in the flesh

And knows that if there is no other shore

They will walk that aerial bridge all the same.

“What we normally pray to God is not that His will be done, but that he approve ours.”

- Helga Gross

“As long as algebra is taught in school, there will be prayer in school.”

- Cokie Roberts

Call on God, but row away from the rocks.

- Indian proverb

Praying by Mary Oliver

It doesn't have to be  
the blue iris, it could be  
weeds in a vacant lot, or a few  
small stones; just  
pay attention, then patch  
a few words together and don't try  
to make them elaborate, this isn't  
a contest but the doorway  
into thanks, and a silence in which  
another voice may speak.

Pray, v. To ask that the laws of the universe be annulled in behalf of a single petitioner confessedly unworthy.

- Ambrose Bierce, The Devil's Dictionary

from "An Island of Peace Within One's Soul"  
-Howard Thurman

No one is ever free from the peculiar pressures of our individual lives. Each of us has to deal with the evil aspects of life, with injustices inflicted upon us and injustices which we wittingly or unwittingly inflict on others. We are all of us deeply involved in the throes of our own weaknesses and strengths, expressed often in the profoundest conflicts within our souls. The only hope for surcease, the only possibility of stability for the person, is to establish an Island of Peace within one's own soul.

Here one brings for review the purposes and dreams to which one's life is tied. This is the place where there is no pretense, no dishonesty, no adulteration. What passes over the threshold is simon-pure. What one really thinks and feels about one's own life stands revealed; what one really thinks and feels about other people far and near is seen with every nuance honestly labeled: love is love, hate is hate, fear is fear. Well within the island is the Temple where God dwells---not the God of creed, the church, the family, but the God of one's heart.

Agnostic Prayer: Dear God, if there is a God, save my soul, if I have a soul.

May Sarton describes what she meant by prayer in: *Journal of a Solitude*

"If one looks long enough at almost anything, looks with absolute attention at a flower, a stone, the bark of a tree, grass, snow, a

cloud something like revelation takes place. Something is ‘given’ and perhaps that something is always a reality outside the self. We are aware of God only when we cease to be aware of ourselves, not in the negative sense of denying self, but in the sense of losing self in admiration and joy.

“I prayed for twenty years but I received no answer till I prayed with my legs.”

- Frederick Douglass

### I Am Prayer: Hassidic Story

This is what Rabbi Burnbaum said concerning the verse in the Psalm: “ And I am prayer.” It is as if a poor man, who has not eaten in three days and whose clothes are in rags, should appear before the king. Is there any need for him to say what he wants. This is how David faced God: he was prayer.

### Prayer

- Maya Angelou

Father, Mother, God

Thank you for your presence

During the hard and mean days.

For then we have you to lean upon.

Thank you for your presence

During the bright and sunny days,

For then we can share that which we have

With those who have less.

And thank you for your presence  
During the Holy Days, for then we are able  
To celebrate you and our families  
And our friends.

For those who have no voice,  
We ask you to speak.

For those who feel unworthy,  
We ask you to pour your love out  
In waterfalls of tenderness.

For those who live in pain,  
We ask you to bathe them  
In the river of our healing.

For those who are lonely, we ask  
You to keep them company.

For those who are depressed,  
We ask you to shower upon them  
The light of hope.

Dear Creator, You, the borderless  
Sea of substance, we ask you to give to all the  
World that which we need most – Peace.

“I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go.”

- Abraham Lincoln

Sometimes the answer to our own prayers is to become the answer to someone else's prayers.

- Robert Brault

Prayer is not asking. It is a longing of the soul. It is daily admission of one's weakness. It is better in prayer to have a heart without words than words without a heart.

- Ghandi

This is How We Are Called by Kimberly Beyer-Nelson

In the hours before the birds  
Stream airborne  
With chiming voice,  
A silent breath rests in the pines,  
And upholds the surface of the lake  
As if it were a fragile bubble  
In the very hand of God.

And I think,  
This is how we are called:

To cup hands and hold  
This peace,  
Even when the sirens begin  
Even when sorrow cries out, old and gnarled,  
Even when words grow fangs and rend.

Cupped hands  
Gently open,

Supporting peace  
Like the golden hollow of a singing bowl,  
Like the towering rim of mountains  
Cradling  
This slumbering and mist-draped valley.