

Poems of Lent



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Materials developed for WordSPA by Kim Langley, M.Ed

The Saints of April

Coltsfoot gives way to dandelion,
plum to apple blossom. Cherry fills
our woods, white petals melting
like the last late snow. Dogwood's
stigmata shine with the blood
of this season. How holy
forsythia and redbud are
as they consume their own
flowers, green leaves running
down their crowns. Here is
the shapeliness of bodies
newly formed, the rich cloth
that covers frail bones and hides
roots that hold fervently
to this dark earth.

--For Jack Ridl



by Todd Davis, from *The Least of These*. © Michigan State University Press, 2010.

One Day

One day I will
say
the gift I once had has been taken.

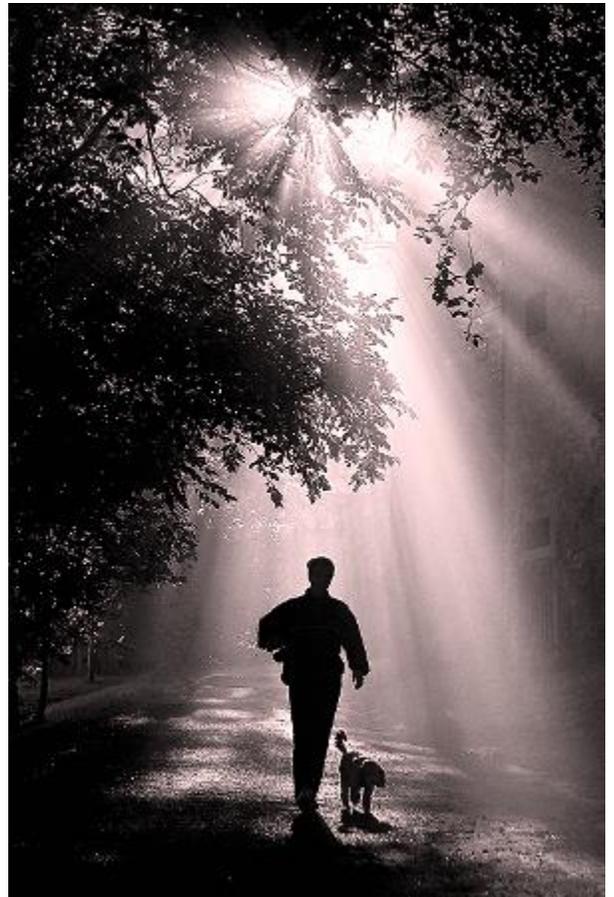
The place I have made for myself
belongs to another.
The words I have sung
are being sung by the ones
I would want.

Then I will be ready
for that voice
and the still silence in which it arrives.

And if my faith is good
then we'll meet again
on the road
and we'll be thirsty,
and stop
and laugh
and drink together again

from the deep well of things as they are.

By David Whyte, *Where Many Rivers Meet*



The Star Market

The people Jesus loved were shopping at The Star Market yesterday.
An old lead-colored man standing next to me at the checkout
breathed so heavily I had to step back a few steps.

Even after his bags were packed he still stood, breathing hard and
hawking into his hand. The feeble, the lame, I could hardly look at
them:

shuffling through the aisles, they smelled of decay, as if The Star
Market

had declared a day off for the able-bodied, and I had wandered in
with the rest of them: sour milk, bad meat:
looking for cereal and spring water.

Jesus must have been a saint, I said to myself, looking for my lost car
in the parking lot later, stumbling among the people who would have
been lowered into rooms by ropes, who would have crept

out of caves or crawled from the corners of public
baths on their hands
and knees begging for mercy.

If I touch only the hem of his garment, one woman
thought, I will be healed.
Could I bear the look on his face when he wheels
around?



by Marie Howe, *The Kingdom of Ordinary Time*

THE SNOW STORM

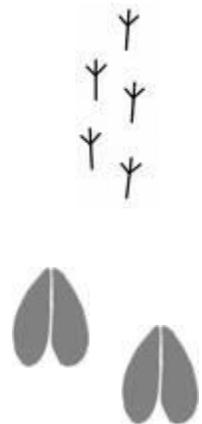
I walked down towards the river, and the deer had left tracks
deep as half my arm, that ended in a perfect hoof
and the shump shump sound my boots made walking made the
silence loud.

And when I turned back towards the great house
I walked beside the deer tracks again.
And when I came near the feeder: little tracks of the birds on the
surface
of the snow I'd broken through.

*Put your finger here and see my hands, then bring your hand and
put it in my side.*

I put my hand down into the deer track
and touched the bottom of an invisible hoof.
Then my finger in the little mark of the jay.

Marie Howe
In the kingdom of ordinary time



April in Maine

The days are cold and brown,
Brown fields, no sign of green,
Brown twigs, not even swelling,
And dirty snow in the woods.

But as the dark flows in
The tree frogs begin
Their shrill sweet singing,
And we lie on our beds
Through the ecstatic night,
Wide awake, cracked open.

There will be no going back.

by May Sarton
from *Collected Poems: 1930-1993*



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LOVE

Love means to look at yourself
The way one looks at distant things
For you are only one thing among many,
And whoever sees that way heals his heart,
Without knowing it, from various ills--
A bird and a tree say to him: Friend.



Then he wants to use himself and things
So that they stand in the glow of ripeness,
It doesn't matter whether he knows what he serves;
Who serves best doesn't always understand.

by Czeslaw Milosz

On His Blindness

When I consider how my light is spent
E're half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one Talent which is death to hide,
Lodg'd with me useless, though my Soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, least he returning chide,
Doth God exact day-labour, light deny'd,
I fondly ask; But patience to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts, who best
Bear his milde yoke, they serve him best, his State
Is Kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed
And post o're Land and Ocean without rest:
They also serve who only stand and waite.

by John Milton (1608 – 1674)

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The Rivulet (1871).
VI. “O, break my heart”

O break my heart; but break it as a field
Is by the plough up-broken for the corn;
O break it as the buds, by green leaf seated,
Are, to unloose the golden blossom, torn;
Love would I offer unto Love’s great Master,
Set free the odor, break the alabaster.

O break my heart; break it victorious God,
That life’s eternal well may flash abroad;
O let it break as when the captive trees,
Breaking cold bonds, regain their liberties;
And as thought’s sacred grove to life is springing,
Be joys, like birds, their hope, Thy victory singing.

–Thomas Toke Lynch (1818-1871)

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The Changed Man

If you were to hear me imitating Pavarotti
in the shower every morning, you’d know
how much you have changed my life.

If you were to see me stride across the park,
waving to strangers, then you would know
I am a changed man—like Scrooge

awakened from his bad dreams feeling feather-
light, angel-happy, laughing the father
of a long line of bright laughs—

"It is still not too late to change my life!"
It is changed. Me, who felt short-changed.
Because of you I no longer hate my body.

Because of you I buy new clothes.
Because of you I'm a warrior of joy.
Because of you and me. Drop by

this Saturday morning and discover me
fiercely pulling weeds gladly, dedicated
as a born-again gardener.

Drop by on Sunday—I'll Turtlewax
your sky-blue sports car, no sweat. I'll greet
enemies with a handshake, forgive debtors

with a papal largesse. It's all because
of you. Because of you and me,
I've become one changed man.

by Robert Phillips, from *Spinach Days*



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