



*Contemplative Ways to Being*

**LIFE AS JOURNEY**

Michael Fish, OSB CAM.

## A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

And the world cannot be discovered by a journey of miles,  
no matter how long,  
but only by a spiritual journey,  
a journey of one inch,  
very arduous and humbling and joyful,  
by which we arrive at the ground at our own feet,  
and learn to be at home.

– WENDELL BERRY  
THE COLLECTED POEMS, 1957-1982

## PILGRIM

When your ship,  
long moored in harbour,  
gives you the illusion  
of being a house;  
when your ship begins to  
put down roots  
in the stagnant water  
by the quay:  
put out to sea!

Save your boat's journeying soul,  
and your own pilgrim soul,  
cost what it may.

– ARCHBISHOP HELDER CAMARA

## LIGHTENING THE LOAD

The first thing we have to do  
is to notice  
that we've loaded down this camel  
with so much baggage  
we'll never get through the desert alive.  
Something has to go.

Then we can begin to dump  
the thousand things  
we've brought along  
until even the camel has to go  
and we're walking barefoot  
on the desert sand.

There's no telling what will happen then.  
But I've heard that someone,  
walking in this way,  
has seen a burning bush.

— FRANCIS DORFF  
LAST NIGHT I DIED:  
POEMS FROM RETIREMENT

## THE JOURNEY

One day you finally knew what you had to do, and began,  
though the voices around you kept shouting their bad advice—  
though the whole house began to tremble  
and you felt the old tug at your ankles.  
“Mend my life!” each voice cried.  
But you didn’t stop.  
You knew what you had to do,  
though the wind pried with its stiff fingers at the very foundations,  
though their melancholy was terrible.  
It was already late enough, and a wild night,  
and the road full of fallen branches and stones.  
But little by little, as you left their voices behind,  
the stars began to burn through the sheets of clouds,  
and there was a new voice which you slowly recognized as your own,  
that kept you company as you strode deeper and deeper  
into the world, determined to do the only thing you could do—  
determined to save the only life you could save.

– MARY OLIVER  
DREAM WORK

## SOMETIMES A MAN STANDS UP

Sometimes a man stands up during supper  
and walks outdoors, and keeps on walking,  
because of a church that stands somewhere in the East.

And his children say blessings on him as if he were dead.

And another man, who remains inside his own house,  
dies there, inside the dishes and in the glasses,  
so that his children have to go far out into the world  
toward that same church, which he forgot.

– RAINER MARIA RILKE  
TRANSLATED BY ROBERT BLY  
SELECTED POEMS OF RAINER MARIA RILKE

## THE BOOK OF CAMP BRANCH

How much delight I've known  
in navigating down the flow  
by stepping stones, by sounding  
stones, by words that are  
stepping and sounding stones.

Going down stone by stone,  
the song of the water changes,  
changing the way I walk  
which changes my thought  
as I go. Stone to stone  
the stream flows. Stone to stone  
the walker goes. The words  
stand stone still until  
the flow moves them, changing  
the sound – a new word –  
a new place to step or stand.

– WENDELL BERRY  
LEAVINGS: POEMS

## CARETAKE THIS MOMENT

Caretake this moment.  
Immerse yourself in its particulars.  
Respond to this person, this challenge, this deed.

Quit the evasions.  
Stop giving yourself needless trouble.  
It is time to really live; to fully inhabit the situation you happen to be in now.  
You are not some disinterested bystander.  
Exert yourself.

Respect your partnership with providence.  
Ask yourself often, How may I perform this particular deed  
such that it would be consistent with and acceptable to the divine will?  
Heed the answer and get to work.

When your doors are shut and your room is dark you are not alone.  
The will of nature is within you as your natural genius is within.  
Listen to its importunings.  
Follow its directives.

As concerns the art of living, the material is your own life.  
No great thing is created suddenly.  
There must be time.

Give your best and always be kind.



*Be*

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