



Spiritual Poetry Meetup

Poems to take home with you

March 15, 2026

Beauty – Francesca Aran Murphy

Wild Gratitude – Edward Hirsch

Path Work – Mark Nepo

Old Man Passing Through a Doorway – Albert Huffstickler

Recovery – Edward Hirsch

A Reminder – Thomas Merton



To join the Spiritual Poetry Meetup Group, go to

<https://www.meetup.com/Spiritual-Poetry-Meetup-International/>

For more Take-Home Poetry Packs, assorted poems, and the Intrinsic Heart blog, go to

<https://intrinsicheart.com>



Part of what it means to be,
is to be beautiful.

Beauty is not super-added to things: it is one of the springs of their reality.
It is not that which effects a luscious response in perceivers;
it is the interior geometry of things, making them perceptible as forms.

~ Francesca Aran Murphy ~
Photo by Ansel Adams

Wild Gratitude – by Edward Hirsch

Tonight when I knelt down next to our cat, Zooey,
And put my fingers into her clean cat's mouth,
And rubbed her swollen belly that will never know kittens,
And watched her wriggle onto her side, pawing the air,
And listened to her solemn little squeals of delight,
I was thinking about the poet, Christopher Smart,
Who wanted to kneel down and pray without ceasing
In every one of the splintered London streets,

And was locked away in the madhouse at St. Luke's
With his sad religious mania, and his wild gratitude,
And his grave prayers for the other lunatics,
And his great love for his speckled cat, Jeffry.
All day today—August 13, 1983—I remembered how
Christopher Smart blessed this same day in August, 1759,
For its calm bravery and ordinary good conscience.

This was the day that he blessed the Postmaster General
"And all conveyancers of letters" for their warm humanity,
And the gardeners for their private benevolence
And intricate knowledge of the language of flowers,
And the milkmen for their universal human kindness.
This morning I understood that he loved to hear—
As I have heard—the soft clink of milk bottles
On the rickety stairs in the early morning,

And how terrible it must have seemed
When even this small pleasure was denied him.
But it wasn't until tonight when I knelt down
And slipped my hand into Zooey's waggling mouth
That I remembered how he'd called Jeffry "the servant
Of the Living God duly and daily serving Him,"
And for the first time understood what it meant.
Because it wasn't until I saw my own cat

Whine and roll over on her fluffy back
That I realized how gratefully he had watched
Jeffry fetch and carry his wooden cork
Across the grass in the wet garden, patiently
Jumping over a high stick, calmly sharpening
His claws on the woodpile, rubbing his nose
Against the nose of another cat, stretching, or
Slowly stalking his traditional enemy, the mouse,
A rodent, "a creature of great personal valour,"
And then dallying so much that his enemy escaped.

And only then did I understand
It is Jeffry—and every creature like him—
Who can teach us how to praise—purring
In their own language,
Wreathing themselves in the living fire.



Path Work

What light is for plants
love is for souls.

It is that which causes
us to grow and that
toward which we grow.

As a seed inches under-
ground toward a light
it can't yet see,

love and suffering
cause us to break
ground and flower.

We break ground by
following our heart,
by being real, and
being kind.

This stirring to
break ground
and flower is
our transformation.

I welcome it by any
name. It has saved
my life.

- Mark Nepo -

from *The Half-Life of Angels:*
Three Books of Poems

[Photo, Crocuses Emerging in the Snow, from Wisconsin Life](#)

OLD MAN PASSING THROUGH A DOORWAY

I'm looking for that place inside you
where everything passes through you,
where you're like the rain,
giving and receiving at the same time
as you pass on to new identities—
that place where fate and destiny are one
and nothing is required.

I'm looking for that moment's stillness
where everything becomes crystal clear
and you see yourself as from a distant hill
or a star, everything in perspective,
the good and the bad balanced and the same,
all the moments of your life leading to this moment,
then spreading out from it in perfect order,
no questions asked.

I'm looking for that time that is all time
condensed into a single moment
then spreading out in all directions infinitely
like a stone dropped into the water.
I'm searching my mortality from end to end
for just that place, having sought it in the stars too long.

I watch an old man hobble to the door bent sideways,
each step an infinity,
then pause in the doorway to gaze into the next room,
a common place but a wonder to him.

I would move into each moment of my life
as totally engrossed as he is,
bending to the weight of the planet then flowing with it.
Watching this old man pass through a doorway,
I am all men passing into the next moment.
The light from the doorway haloes the bent head
and for this moment, I've found what I am seeking.

—Albert Huffstickler, from *Walking Wounded*



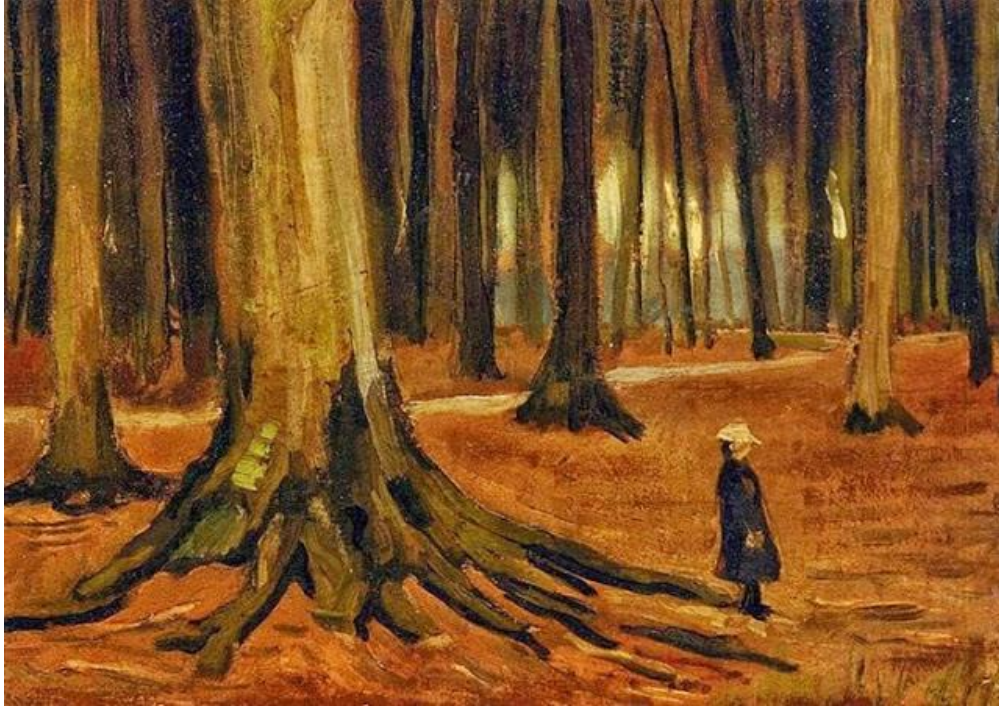
RECOVERY

It was as if the rain could feel itself
falling through the air today, as if the air
could actually feel its own dampness, the breeze
could hear a familiar voice explaining the emptiness
to the dark elms that swayed unconsciously along
the wet road, the elms that could still feel
their own branches glistening with rain.

It was as if the sky had imagined a morning
of indigos and pinks, mauves and reddish-browns.
The smiling young nurse who helped you into the car
was wearing two colorful ribbons in her auburn hair and
somehow they looked precisely like ribbons gleaming
in the hair of a woman helping you into a car.
I believe I had never seen ribbons before.

And suddenly I was staring at asphalt
puddle with rainwater. And bluish letters
purpling on a white sign. And sliding electric
ENTRANCES & EXITS. And statues bristling with color.
The yellow sunlight filtered through the clouds
and I believe I had never seen a street lamp
shimmer across a wavy puddle before.

The road home was slick with lights
and everything seemed to be crying, *just
this, just this, nothing more, nothing else!*—
as if the morning were somehow conscious of itself.
When you leaned over and touched me on the arm
it was as if my arm needed to be touched
in that way, at exactly that time.



If one reaches the point where understanding fails, this is not a tragedy: it is simply a reminder to stop thinking and start looking. Perhaps there is nothing to figure out after all: perhaps we only need to wake up.

A monk said: "I have been with you (Master), for a long time, and yet I am unable to understand your way. How is this?"

The Master said: "Where you do not understand, there is the point for your understanding."

...

"In the first two chapters of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul distinguishes between two kinds of wisdom: one which consists in the knowledge of words and statements, a rational, dialectical wisdom, and another which is at once a matter of paradox and of experience, and goes beyond the reach of reason. To attain to this spiritual wisdom, one must first be liberated from servile dependence on the 'wisdom of speech.'
(I Corinthians 1:17)."

~ Thomas Merton
excerpts from *Zen and the Birds of Appetite*
art by Van Gogh

From *Thomas Merton: Selected Essays*, edited by Patrick F. O'Connell