

The Blessed Virgin Mary Compared to a Window - Written in 1944

Because my will is simple as a window
And knows no pride of original birth,
It is my life to die, like glass, by light:
Slain in the strong rays of the bridegroom sun.

Because my love is simple as a window
And knows no shame of original dust,
I longed all night, (when I was visible) for dawn my death:
When I would marry day, my Holy Spirit:
And die by transsubstantiation into light.

For light, my lover, steals my life in secret.
I vanish into day, and leave no shadow
But the geometry of my cross,
Whose frame and structure are the strength
By which I die, but only to the earth,
And am uplifted to the sky my life.

When I became the substance of my lover,
(Being obedient, sinless glass)
I love all things that need my lover's life,
And live to give my newborn Morning to your quiet rooms,
-Your rooms, that would be tombs,
Or vaults of night, and death, and terror,
Fill with the clarity of living Heaven,
Shine with the rays of God's Jerusalem:
O shine, bright Sions!

Because I die by brightness and the Holy Spirit,
The sun rejoices in your jail, my kneeling Christian,
(Where even now you weep and grin
To learn, from my simplicity, the strength of faith).

Therefore do not be troubled at the judgements of the thunder,
Stay still and pray, still stay, my other son,
And do not fear the armies and black ramparts
Of the advancing and retreating rains:
I'll let no lightning kill your room's white order.

Although it is the day's last hour,
Look with no fear:
For the torn storm lets in, at the world's rim,
Three streaming rays as straight as Jacob's ladder:

And you shall see the sun, my Son, my Substance,
Come to convince the world of the day's end, and of the night,
Smile to the lovers of the day in smiles of blood;
For though my love, He'll be their Brother,
My light - the Lamb of their Apocalypse.

The Evening of the Visitation - Written in 1947

Go, roads, to the four quarters of our quiet distance,
While you, full moon, wise queen,
Begin your evening journey to the hills of heaven,
And travel no less stately in the summer sky
Than Mary, going to the house of Zachary.

The woods are silent with the sleep of doves,
The valleys with the sleep of streams,
And all our barns are happy with peace of cattle gone to rest.
Still wakeful, in the fields, the shocks of wheat
Preach and say prayers:
You sheaves, make all your evensongs as sweet as ours,
Whose summer world, all ready for the granary and barn,
Seems to have seen, this day,
Into the secret of the Lord's Nativity.

Now at the fall of night, you shocks,
Still bend your heads like kind and humble kings
The way you did this golden morning when you saw God's
Mother passing,
While all our windows fill and sweeten
With the mild vespers of the hay and barley.

You moon and rising stars, pour on our barns and houses
Your gentle benedictions.
Remind us how our Mother, with far subtler and more holy
influence,
Blesses our rooves and eaves,
Our shutters, lattices and sills,
Our doors, and floors, and stairs, and rooms, and bedrooms,
Smiling by night upon her sleeping children:
O gentle Mary! Our lovely Mother in heaven!

Song for Our Lady of Cobre - Written in 1944

The white girls lift their heads like trees,
The black girls go
Reflected like flamingoes in the street.

The white girls sing as shrill as water,
The black girls talk as quiet as clay.
The white girls open their arms like clouds,
The black girls close their eyes like wings:
Angels bow down like bells,
Angels look up like toys,

Because the heavenly stars
Stand in a ring:
And all the pieces of the mosaic, earth,
Get up and fly away like birds.

The Candlemas Procession - Written in 1943

Lumen
Ad revelationem gentium.

Look kindly, Jesus, where we come,
New Simeons, to kindle,
Each at Your infant sacrifice his own life's candle.

And when Your flame turns into many tongues,
See how the One is multiplied, among us, hundreds!
And goes among the humble, and consoles our sinful
kindred.

It is for this we come,
And, kneeling, each receive one flame:
Ad revelationem gentium.

Our lives, like candles, spell this simple symbol:
Weep like our bodily life, sweet work of bees,
Sweeten the world, with your slow sacrifice.
And this shall be our praise:
That by our glad expense, our Father's will
Burned and consumed us for a parable.

Nor burn we now with brown and smoky flames, but
bright
Until our sacrifice is done,
(By which not we, but You are known)
And then, returning to our Father, one by one,
Give back our lives like wise and waxen lights.

Cana - Written in 1946

Once when our eyes were clean as noon, our rooms
 Filled with the joys of Cana's feast:
For Jesus came, and His disciples, and His Mother,
 And after them the singers
 And some men with violins.

Once when our minds were Galilees,
 And clean as skies our faces,
Our simple rooms were charmed with sun.

Our thoughts went in and out in whiter coats than
 God's disciples',
In Cana's crowded rooms, at Cana's tables.

Nor did we seem to fear the wine would fail:
For ready, in a row, to fill with water and a miracle,
We saw our earthen vessels, waiting empty.
What wine those humble waterjars foretell!

Wine for the ones who, bended to the dirty earth,
 Have feared, since lovely Eden, the sun's fire,
Yet hardly mumble, in their dusty mouths, one prayer.

Wine for old Adam, digging in the briars!

La Salette - Written in 1946

It is a hundred years since your shy feet
Ventured to stand upon the pasture grass of the high
Alps,

Coming no deeper in our smoky atmosphere
Than these blue skies, the mountain eyes
Of the two shepherd children, young as flowers,
Born to be dazzled by no mortal snow.

Lady, it is a hundred years
Since those fair, terrible tears
Reproved, with their amazing grief
All the proud candor of those altitudes:
Crowning the flowers at your feet
With diamonds, that seized upon, transfigured into
nails of light
The rays of the mountain sun!-

And by their news,
(Which came with cowbells to the evening village
And to the world with church-bells
After not too many days,)
And by their news
We thought the walls of all hard hearts
Had broken down, and given in,
Poured out their dirty garrisons of sin,
And washed the streets with our own blood, if need
be -
- Only to have them clean!

And though we did not understand
The weight and import of so great a sorrow,
We never thought so soon to have seen
The loss of its undying memory,
Passing from the black world without a word,
Without a funeral!
For while our teeth were battling in the meat of
miracles and favors,
Your words, your prophecies, were all forgotten!

Now, one by one,
The things you said
Have come to be fulfilled.

John, in the might of his Apocalypse, could not fore-
tell
Half of the story of our monstrous century,
In which the arm of your inexorable Son,
Bound, by His Truth, to disavow your intercession
For this wolf-world, this craven zoo,

Has bombed the doors of hell clean off their hinges,
And burst the cage of antichrist,
And roused, with His first two great thunderbolts,
The chariots of Armageddon.

Duns Scotus - Written in 1947

Striking like lightning to the quick of the real world
Scotus has mined all ranges to their deepest veins:
But where, oh, on what blazing mountain of theology
And in what Sinai's furnace
Did God refine the gold?

Who ruled those arguments in their triumphant order
And armed them with their strict celestial light?
See the lance-lightning, blade-glitter, banner-progress
As love advances, company by company
In sunlit teams his clean embattled reasons,

Until the firmament, with high heavenly marvel
Views in our crystal souls her blue embodiment,
Unfurls a thousand flags above our heads -
It is the music of Our Lady's army!

For Scotus is her theologian,
Nor has there ever been a braver chivalry than his
precision.
His thoughts are skies of cloudless peace
Bright as the vesture of her grand aurora
Filled with the rising Christ.

But we, a weak, suspicious generation,
Loving emotion, hating prayer,
We are not worthy of his wisdom.
Creeping like beasts between the mountain's feet
We look for laws in the Arabian dust.
We have no notion of his freedom

Whose acts despise the chains of choice and passion.
We have no love for his beautitude
Whose act renounces motion:
Whose love flies home forever
As silver as felicity,
Working and quiet in the dancelight of an everlasting
arrow.

Lady, the image of whose heaven
Sings in the might of Scotus' reasoning:
There is no line of his that has not blazed your glory
in the schools,
Though in dark words, without romance,
Calling us to swear you our liege.

Language was far too puny for his great theology:
But, oh! His thought strode through those words
Bright as the conquering Christ
Between the clouds His enemies:

And in the clearing storm and Sinai's dying thunder
Scotus comes out, and shakes his golden locks
And sings like the African sun.

Evening: Zero Weather - Written in 1947

Now the lone world is streaky as a wall of marble
 With veins of clear and frozen snow.
There is no bird song there, no hare's track
 No badger working in the russet grass:
 All the bare fields are silent as eternity.

And the whole herd is home in the long barn.
The brothers come, with hoods about their faces,
 Following their plumes of breath
 Lugging the gleaming buckets one by one.

This was a day when shovels would have struck
 Full flakes of fire out of the land like rock:
And ground cries out like iron beneath our boots

When all the monks come in with eyes as clean as the
 cold sky
 And axes under their arms,
 Still paying out Ave Marias
With rosaries between their bleeding fingers.

We shake the chips out of our robes outside the door
 And go to hide in cowls as deep as clouds,
Bowing our shoulders in the church's shadow, lean
 and whipped,
To wait upon your Vespers, Mother of God!

And we have eyes no more for the dark pillars or the
 freezing windows,
Ears for the rumorous cloister or the chimes of time
 above our heads:
For we are sunken in the summer of our adoration,
 And plunge, down, down into the fathoms of our
 secret joy
 That swims with indefinable fire.

And we will never see the copper sunset
Linger a moment, like an echo, on the frozen hill
Then suddenly die an hour before the Angelus.

For we have found our Christ, our August
 Here in the zero days before Lent -
We are already binding up our sheaves of harvest
 Beating the lazy liturgy, going up with exultation
 Even on the eve of our Ash Wednesday,
And entering our blazing heaven by the doors of the
 Assumption!

The Flight into Egypt - Written in 1944

Through every precinct of the wintry city
Squadroned iron resounds upon the streets;
Herod's police
Make shudder the dark steps of the tenements
At the business about to be done.

Neither look back upon Thy starry country,
Nor hear what rumors crowd across the dark
Where blood runs down those holy walls,
Nor frame a childish blessing with Thy hand
Towards that fiery spiral of exulting souls!

Go, Child of God, upon the singing desert,
Where, with eyes of flame,
The roaming lion keeps thy road from harm.

The Messenger - Written in 1944

There is some sentry at the rim of winter
Fed with the speech the wind makes
In the grand belfries of the sleepless timber.
He understands the lasting strife of tears,
And the way the world is strung;
He waits to warn all life with the tongue of March's
bugle,
Of the coming of the warrior sun.
When spring has garrisoned up her army of water,
A million grasses leave their tents, and stand in rows
To see their invincible brother.
Mending the winter's ruins with their laughter,
The flowers go out to their undestructive wars.

Walk in the woods and be witnesses,
You, the best of these poor children.

When Gabriel hit the bright shore of the world,
Yours were the eyes saw some
Star-sandalled stranger walk like lightning down the
air,
The morning the Mother of God
Loved and dreaded the message of an angel.

Winter's Night - Written in 1946

When, in the dark, the frost cracks on the window
The children awaken, and whisper.
One says the moonlight grated like a skate
Across the freezing river.
Another hears the starlight breaking like a knifeblade
Upon the silent, steelbright pond.
They say the trees are stiller than the frozen water
From waiting for a shouting light, a heavenly message.

Yet it is far from Christmas, when a star
Sang in the pane, as brittle as their innocence!
For now the light of early Lent
Glitters upon the icy step -
"We have wept letters to our patron saints,
(The children say) yet slept before they ended."

Oh, is there in this night no sound of strings, of singers!
None coming from the wedding, no, nor
Bridegroom's messenger?
(The sleepy virgins stir, and trim their lamps.)

The moonlight rings upon the ice as sudden as a
footstep;
Starlight clinks upon the dooryard stone, too like a
latch,
And the children are again, awake,
And all call out in whispers to their guardian angels.

Hagia Sophia - Written in 1963

I. Dawn. The Hour of Lauds.

There is in all visible things an invisible fecundity, a dimmed light, a meek namelessness, a hidden wholeness. This mysterious Unity and Integrity is Wisdom, the Mother of all, *Natura naturans*. There is in all things an inexhaustible sweetness and purity, a silence that is a fount of action and joy. It rises up in wordless gentleness and flows out to me from the unseen roots of all created being, welcoming me tenderly, saluting me with indescribable humility. This is at once my own being, my own nature, and the Gift of my Creator's Thought and Art within me, speaking as Hagia Sophia, speaking as my sister, Wisdom.

I am awakened, I am born again at the voice of this, my Sister, sent to me from the depths of the divine fecundity.

Let us suppose I am a man lying asleep in a hospital. I am indeed this man lying asleep. It is July the second, the Feast of Our Lady's Visitation. A Feast of Wisdom.

At five-thirty in the morning I am dreaming in a very quiet room when a soft voice awakens me from my dream. I am like all mankind awakening from all the dreams that ever were dreamed in all the nights of the world. It is like the One Christ awakening in all the separate selves that ever were separate and isolated and alone in all the lands of the earth. It is like all minds coming back together into awareness from all distractions, cross-purposes and confusions, into unity of love. It is like the first morning of the world (when Adam, at the sweet voice of Wisdom awoke from nonentity and knew her), and like the Last Morning of the world when all the fragments of Adam will return from death at the voice of Hagia Sophia, and will know where they stand.

Such is the awakening of one man, one morning, at the voice of a nurse in the hospital. Awakening out of languor and darkness, out of helplessness, out of sleep, newly confronting reality and finding it to be gentleness.

It is like being awakened by Eve. It is like being awakened by the Blessed Virgin. It is like coming forth from primordial nothingness and standing in clarity, in Paradise.

In the cool hand of the nurse there is the touch of all life, the touch of Spirit.

Thus Wisdom cries out to all who will hear (*Sapientia clamitat in plateis*) and she cries out particularly to the little, to the ignorant and the helpless.

Who is more little, who is more poor than the helpless man who lies asleep in his bed without awareness and without defense? Who is more trusting than he who must entrust himself each night to sleep? What is the reward of his trust? Gentleness comes to him when he is most helpless and awakens him, refreshed, beginning to be made whole. Love takes him by the hand, and opens to him the doors of another life, another day.

(But he who has defended himself, fought for himself in sickness, planned for himself, guarded himself, loved himself alone and watched over his own life all night, is killed at last by exhaustion. For him there is no newness. Everything is stale and old.)

When the helpless one awakens strong as the voice of mercy, it is as if Life his Sister, as if the Blessed Virgin, (his own flesh, his own sister), as if Nature made wise by God's Art and Incarnation were to stand over him and invite him with unutterable sweetness to be awake and to live. This is what it means to recognize Hagia Sophia.

II. Early Morning. The Hour of Prime.

O blessed, silent one, who speaks everywhere!

We do not hear the soft voice, the gentle voice, the merciful and feminine.

We do not hear mercy, or yielding love, or non-resistance, or non-reprisal. In her there are no reasons and no answers. Yet she is the candor of God's light, the expression of His simplicity.

We do not hear the uncomplaining pardon that bows down the innocent visages of flowers to the dewy earth. We do not see the Child who is prisoner in all the people, and who says nothing. She smiles, for though they have bound her, she cannot be a prisoner. Not that she is strong, or clever, but simply that she does not understand imprisonment.

The helpless one, abandoned to sweet sleep, him the gentle one will awake: Sophia.

All that is sweet in her tenderness will speak to him on all sides in everything, without ceasing, and he

will never be the same again. He will have awakened not to conquest and dark pleasure but to the impeccable pure simplicity of One consciousness in all and through all: one Wisdom, one Child, one Meaning, one Sister.

The stars rejoice in their setting, and in the rising of the Sun. The heavenly lights rejoice in the going forth of one man to make a new world in the morning, because he has come out of the confused primordial dark night into consciousness. He has expressed the clear silence of Sophia in his own heart. He has become eternal.

III. High Morning. The Hour of Tierce.

The Sun burns in the sky like the Face of God, but we do not know his countenance as terrible. His light is diffused in the air and the light of God is diffused by Hagia Sophia.

We do not see the Blinding One in black emptiness. He speaks to us gently in ten thousand things, in which His light is one fullness and one Wisdom. Thus He shines not on them but from within them. Such is the loving-kindness of Wisdom.

All the perfections of created things are also in God; and therefore He is at once Father and Mother. As Father He stands in solitary might surrounded by darkness. As Mother His shining is diffused, embracing all His creatures with merciful tenderness and light. The Diffuse Shining of God is Hagia Sophia. We call her His "glory." In Sophia His power is experienced only as mercy and as love.

(When the recluses of fourteenth-century England heard their Church Bells and looked out upon the wolds and fens under a kind sky, they spoke in their hearts to "Jesus our Mother." It was Sophia that had awakened in their childlike hearts.)

Perhaps in a certain very primitive aspect Sophia is the unknown, the dark, the nameless Ousia. Perhaps she is even the Divine Nature, One in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And perhaps she is in infinite light unmanifest, not even waiting to be known as Light. This I do not know. Out of the silence Light is spoken. We do not hear it or see it until it is spoken.

In the Nameless Beginning, without Beginning, was the Light. We have not seen this Beginning. I do not know where she is, in this Beginning. I do not speak of her as a Beginning, but as a manifestation.

Now the Wisdom of God, Sophia, comes forth, reaching from "end to end mightily." She wills to be also the unseen pivot of all nature, the center and significance of all the light that is in all and for all. That which is poorest and humblest, that which is most hidden in all things is nevertheless most obvious in them, and quite manifest, for it is their own self that stands before us, naked and without care.

Sophia, the feminine child, is playing in the world, obvious and unseen, playing at all times before the Creator. Her delights are to be with the children of men. She is their sister. The core of life that exists in all things is tenderness, mercy, virginity the Light, the Life considered as passive, as received, as given, as taken, as inexhaustibly renewed by the Gift of God. Sophia is Gift, is Spirit, *Donum Dei*. She is God-given and God Himself as Gift. God as all, and God reduced to Nothing: inexhaustible nothingness. *Exinanivit semetipsum*. Humility as the source of unfailing light.

Hagia Sophia in all things is the Divine Light reflected in them, considered as a spontaneous participation, as their invitation to the Wedding Feast.

Sophia is God's sharing of Himself with creatures. His outpouring, and the Love by which He is given, and known, held and loved.

She is in all things like the air receiving the sunlight. In her they prosper. In her they glorify God. In her they rejoice to reflect Him. In her they are united with him. She is the union between them. She is the Love that unites them. She is life as communion, life as thanksgiving, life as praise, life as festival, life as glory.

Because she receives perfectly there is in her no stain. She is love without blemish, and gratitude without self-complacency. All things praise her by being themselves and by sharing in the Wedding Feast. She is the Bride and the Feast and the Wedding.

The feminine principle in the world is the inexhaustible source of creative realizations of the Father's glory. She is His manifestation in radiant splendor! But she remains unseen, glimpsed only by a few. Sometimes there are none who know her at all.

Sophia is the mercy of God in us. She is the tenderness with which the infinitely mysterious power of pardon turns the darkness of our sins into the light of grace. She is the inexhaustible fountain of kindness, and would almost seem to be, in herself, all mercy. So she does in us a greater work than that of Creation: the work of new being in grace, the work of pardon, the work of transformation from brightness to brightness *tamquam a Domini Spiritu*. She

is in us the yielding and tender counterpart of the power, justice
and creative dynamism of the Father.

IV. Sunset. The Hour of Compline. Salve Regina.

Now the Blessed Virgin Mary is the one created being
who enacts and shows forth in her life all that is hidden in Sophia.
Because of this she can be said to be a personal manifestation
of Sophia, Who in God is Ousia rather than Person.

Natura in Mary becomes pure Mother. In her, *Natura*
is as she was from the origin from her divine birth. In Mary *Natura*
is all wise and is manifested as an all-prudent, all-loving, all-pure person:
not a Creator, and not a Redeemer, but perfect Creature, perfectly
Redeemed, the fruit of all God's great power, the perfect expression
of wisdom in mercy.

It is she, it is Mary, Sophia, who in sadness and joy, with the full awareness
of what she is doing, sets upon the Second Person, the Logos, a crown
which is His Human Nature. Thus her consent opens the door of created
nature, of time, of history, to the Word of God.

God enters into His creation. Through her wise answer, through her obedient
understanding, through the sweet yielding consent of Sophia, God enters
without publicity into the city of rapacious men.

She crowns Him not with what is glorious, but with
what is greater than glory: the one thing greater than
glory is weakness, nothingness, poverty.

She sends the infinitely Rich and Powerful One forth
as poor and helpless, in His mission of inexpressible
mercy, to die for us on the Cross.

The shadows fall. The stars appear. The birds begin to sleep.
Night embraces the silent half of the earth. A vagrant, a destitute
wanderer with dusty feet, finds his way down a new road. A
homeless God, lost in the night, without papers, without
identifications, without even a number, a frail expendable exile
lies down in desolation under the sweet stars of the world and
entrusts Himself to sleep.

La Comparsa En Oriente - Written during 1940-1942

Drums of the early evening wake
The mountain full of ore, and the canebrake.
Up at Cobre tall tambores call
One who rings gangarias with a nail,
One with feathers for sleeves,
One whose arms are birds,
One with a mouth full of great fires
And lights instead of words.

One with a tobacco leaf hat
Rings his drum like a bell,
And brings the saints of heaven, with claves,
Down from the starlit hill;
A black angel beats an ass's jaw
And (tick tick) a white the claves
While the sodality of the blessed virgin
Follow after, carrying flowers.

Five angels beating bongos,
Seven saints ringing their bells,
Wear coats made out of paper money
And shoes made out of shells.
They clatter like a box of nickels,
Holding candle towers, on fire:
They whirl these as solemn as wise men,
Paper temples in the air.

Lights fly like birds behind the cane
And shot flies after, but in gourds,
When the comparsa goes off to the plains
With fires in her mouth, but now words:
For ten angels ring gangarias

When the comparsa goes away
With all the mountain people and pilgrims
Dancing down to Camaguey.

The pray for us, Mother of Jesus,
Caridad, Merced,
Queen of Cobre and of the three towers
That watch over Camaguey :
The ten angels are playing gangarias
And the comparsa goes away.