

Contemplating the mystery



Van Gogh Starry sky over the Rhone 1888

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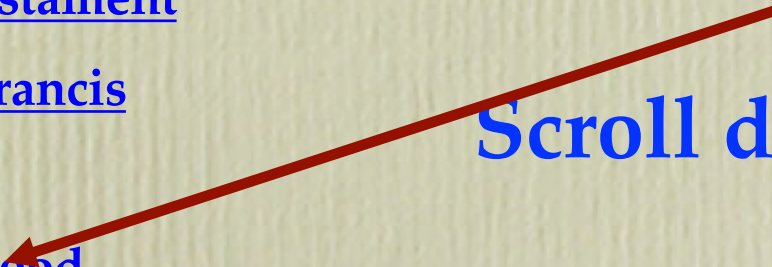
A u d i o C D ' s H o m i l i e s A r t i c l e s

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Mystery

1. Experience - puzzling (can't fully understand)
Inquiry - assemble the data and solve the 'mystery'.

2. Experience - sense of an attraction, a Presence
can't fully understand, but experience insight, enlightenment.
Our heart is engaged as we are drawn into communion.
We do not seek to solve anything, but are drawn
to yield to the attraction.

1. Aesthetic contemplation:



The delight we have when we are experiencing beauty and are drawn into communion with what is beautiful.

This can lead to deeper contemplation when we yield to the One who we sense is mysteriously present in the beauty we experience.

‘Since the creation of the world, invisible realities, God’s eternal power and divinity, have become visible, recognised through the things God has made’(Romans 1:20).

2. Intellectual contemplation:

The delight we experience through insight.

This, too, can lead to deeper contemplation as we come to appreciate that the truth we have discovered is a partial revelation of a more mysterious truth in which it participates.

Here, again, we are being drawn into communion with the mysterious One in whom everything participates.

3. Theological contemplation:

The delight we experience
in accepting in trust
the truths of faith and enjoying
what they reveal to us
of the God whom we are seeking,
and whom we sense
is drawing us into communion.



4. Supernatural or infused contemplation



That special graced delight
we experience in God Himself,
beyond whatever reflections of God
we may find in creation, and
beyond the categories of theology.

God is experienced, though not as
an object. It is a faith-experience

(be-lieving)

in which we experience God as
subject, for we experience ourselves
as being one in a communion of
love with the source of our being.

Marie-Eugène OCD 'I want to see God' page 463



‘Out of the darkness of the mystery
there arises,
through the gifts of the Holy Spirit,
a confused light, an I-know-not-what,
that makes one find peace and sweetness
in the mystery, that holds faith there
or brings it back,
freeing it from the discursive operations
of the intellect
and causing it to find rest and support
in this light beyond all distinct lights.’

Spiritual Canticle Stanza 12

O spring like crystal!
If only, on your silvered-over face,
you would suddenly form the eyes I have desired,
which I bear sketched deep within my heart.

John is aware of the importance of theological contemplation,
and so of the silver-plating of dogma.
The formulas which express in words
the truths revealed by God are not empty;
they clothe the substance
of divine truth itself which is revealed in them.

Spiritual Canticle Stanza 12

O spring like crystal!
If only, on your silvered-over face,
you would suddenly form the eyes I have desired,
which I bear sketched deep within my heart.

If we welcome the wisdom of the Christian community
and submit humbly to dogma,
grace can lead us to penetrate the mystery it expresses.

However, it is one thing to delight in the truth of faith.
It is another to experience the gaze
of the One for whom our hearts long.

In contemplation our attention
is not on any insights which we may receive,
important though these can be.

God, who is uniting himself to us in love,
wants our whole attention.

In contemplation we are being transformed into love
by the all-consuming love which is God.

Accompanying this experience of love, there is joy,
as well as a sense of belonging, communion, and peace.
This is the love for which we are made and for which we long.
The communion in love which we experience is experienced as gift.

We are quite aware of the fact that the silence, the stillness,
the welling up of joy or gratitude or sorrow or pleading,
is not something that we are organising.
It wells up unexpectedly and our hearts know that it is from God.

Contemplation can come to any person at any time,
for God invites everyone to the intimate communion
for which we are created.

In these graced moments
everything is experienced as a sacrament of the divine;
everything is 'charged with the grandeur of God'(G.M. Hopkins).

In these graced moments we experience
a new kind of presence in which we are not alone
but are embraced by the One
who gives harmony to the music of creation
and 'in whom all things hold together'(Colossians 1:17).

Our mind rests in the True that is given,
the True that is beyond the truths
which we discover through the efforts of reason and logic
to which we are committed.

Our will rests in the Good that is given,
the Good who is beyond any efforts we are making
to live a consistently moral life.

Our feelings rest in the Beautiful that is given,
the Beautiful that is beyond anything
that we might appreciate by our own efforts.

We can receive these graced moments
in the measure that we are willing to let go control
and entrust ourselves wholly to God.

Whereas before we experienced ourselves seeking and striving,
now we experience ourselves welcoming.

This communion is offered to everyone who is willing
to make space for love and surrender to it.

It is important to remember that we can experience contemplation in the midst of activity as well as in the stillness of prayer,

for whenever we are doing God's will we are open to his gift of Himself in this way. Our focus in this retreat, however, is on contemplative prayer rather than contemplative action.

If we are willing to remain open to these graced moments
when God draws us to himself
beyond all our thoughts and feelings,
and if we resist the temptation
to take control of them
or to possess them
or to attempt to reproduce them
by our own efforts or techniques,

God's longing to be in communion with us is such
that transient experiences of recollection tend to deepen
so that the soul finds itself wrapped in quiet prayer.

There is a simple form of pre-contemplative prayer that is within our power to practise.

In this prayer we hold ourselves quietly in the presence of God: a prayer of simple regard.

In some ways contemplative prayer is similar.

The essential difference is that in contemplative prayer we can only receive as a gift and welcome the communion with God that God offers us.

We can desire contemplative prayer and prepare for it,
but we cannot bring it about.

‘Any attempt to create a contemplative attitude
will lead to frustration or, worse, to self-delusion.’

(Gerald May *The Awakened Heart*, page 194).

When we were in control of our prayer we worked for such quiet,
now the quiet wells up from the mysterious depths of the soul.
We are drawn into an experience of prayer from within.

In pre-contemplative prayer we found ways
of quietening down our imagination, memory and mind.
Now, surprised by grace, these same faculties
'are absorbed and are looking as though in wonder
at what they see'(Teresa, The *Interior Castle* IV.2.6).

Now, the water that is refreshing the garden of the soul
'comes from its own source, which is God'(*The Interior Castle* IV.2.4).

Thinking of God as being in the centre of the soul
radiating out the fire of his love, Teresa states:
'the warmth and the fragrant perfumes
spread through the entire soul'(*The Interior Castle* IV.2.6).

Now, the touch of God leaves us dissatisfied
with any other pleasure.

Our souls long for the communion experienced
in the silence and stillness granted us by God.

Now, our prayer is no longer guided by our previous experience or any efforts of our mind or will.

We are conscious of ourselves being moved and inspired.

We are conscious of surrendering ourselves in love.

God is leading us on the way of love.

‘Contemplative prayer is allowing the Source of love to bring us toward the place which is our home’(May, page 195).

We do not want to give the impression
that now all is light and love.

We are the recipients of a wonderful grace of communion,
but we are not yet in heaven.

In contemplative prayer we are in the presence
of the sacred mystery which we call 'God'.

We are, therefore, in touch with the One who is at the heart of,
and yet beyond, everything.

Being transcendent, God cannot be contained or controlled.

Being immanent, God opens us up to the real world:
our own real world in all its grace and disgrace.

Contemplative prayer, therefore, opens us
to ‘the joys and hopes’
but also to ‘the griefs and anxieties
of the people of our time,
especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way.’

(Vatican II, *The Church in the Modern World*, n.1).

It opens us ‘to the suffering and brokenness of the world
as much as to its joys and beauty’(May, page 193).

We should not expect it to be otherwise,
for prayer engages us with the ultimately Real.

It is in contemplative prayer that God is transforming our souls so that, like Saint Paul, we will be able to say:
'I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me'(Galatians 2:20).

Our mind is being transformed into the mind of Christ.
Our heart is becoming his heart.
It is his communion of love
which we are being invited to experience.

Like a log in a fire this will require a profound purification,
with much blackening and hissing
till our whole being is transformed into fire
by the all-consuming fire of God's love.

Letting go our ego can be painful.

Contemplative Prayer is a gift.

We can't produce it. But we can long for it.

‘When you search for me, you will find me;
if you seek me with all your heart,
I will let you find me, says Yahweh’(Jeremiah 29:13).

‘O Lord, all my longing is known to you;
my sighing is not hidden from you’(Psalm 38:9) .

‘My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When shall I come and behold the face of God?’(Psalm 42:2)

Nothing can prepare our soul for the gift of contemplative prayer,
nothing can lead us to ‘behold the face of God’ better
than contemplation of Jesus.



Jesus open to communion

1John 1:1-3



We declare to you what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life — this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us. We declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you may have communion with us; and truly our communion is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.



‘The Word became flesh and lived among us.’

From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.



‘The heart of God descends in haste to his creation, with the weight of an infinite love, and the heart of creation rises towards God, drawn by an attraction that dominates all others in it.

It is in Jesus that these two hearts meet, and they unite so profoundly that the two hearts become one.’

(Jules Chevalier, ‘The Heart of Jesus, page 76).











Tintoretto

John 14:7-9

If you know me, you will know my Father also.

From now on you do know him and have seen him.'

Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father,
and we will be satisfied.'

Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you all this time,
Philip, and you still do not know me?

Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.

John 14:10 & 11 (see 10:38)

I am in the Father and the Father is in
me.

If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

And I will ask the Father,
and he will give you another Advocate,
to be with you forever.

This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because
it neither sees him nor knows him.

You know him, because he abides with you,
and he will be in you.

I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you ...

If you love me you will keep my word,
and my Father will love you, and we will come to you
and make our home in you.

John 15:9

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you;
abide in my love.

John 16:32

You will leave me alone.
Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me.

John 17:21

As you, Father, are in me and I am in you,
may they also be in us.

John 17:22

May they be one, as we are one,
I in them and you in me.

John 17:26

I have revealed you to them,
and I will continue to reveal you,
so that the love with which you have loved me
may be in them,
and I in them.

John 19:28

‘I thirst’





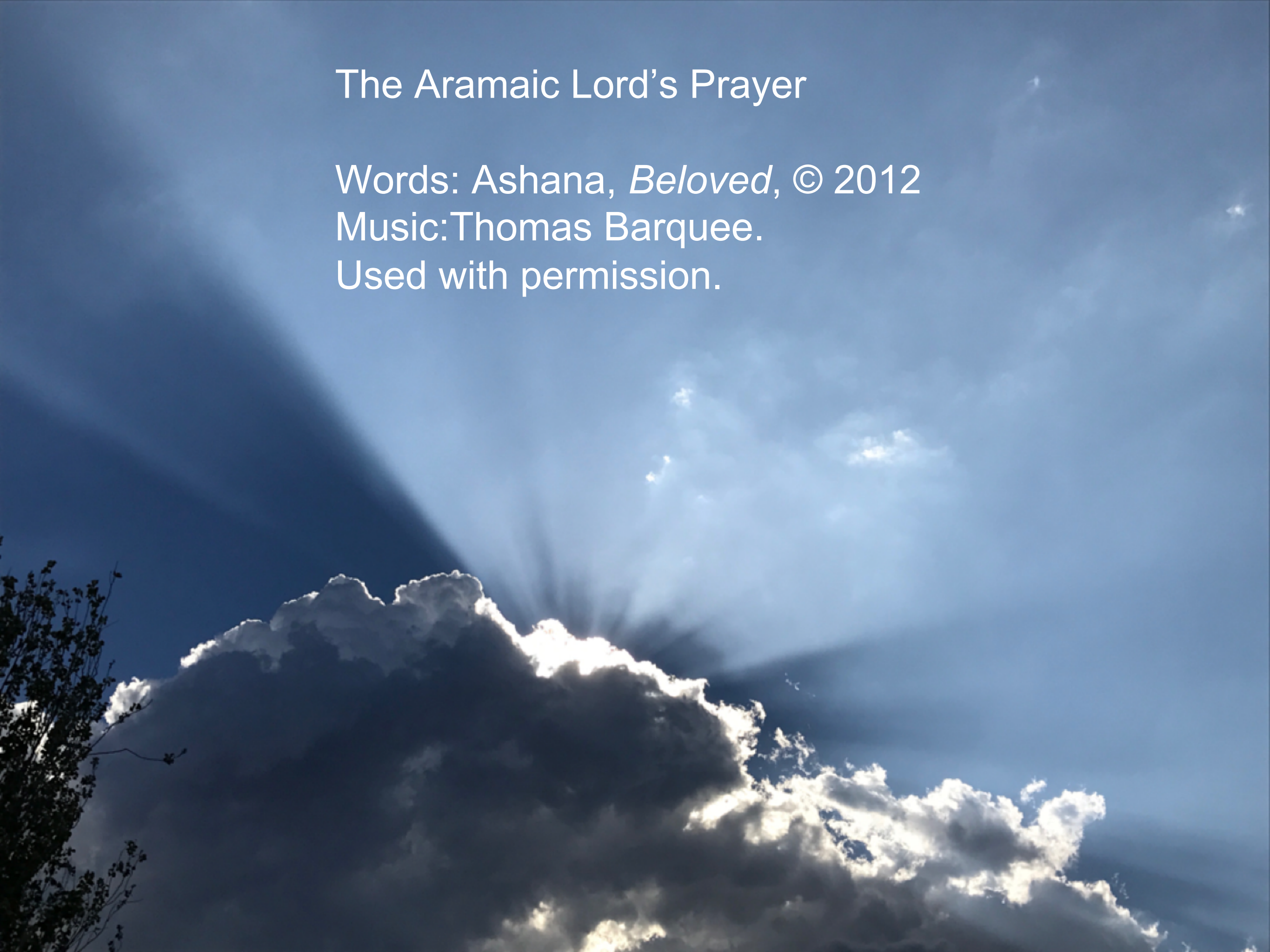
The Aramaic Lord's Prayer

The Aramaic Lord's Prayer

Words: Ashana, *Beloved*, © 2012

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The Peshitto

(Syriac Aramaic Version
of the Gospels)

Abwoon d'bwashmaya

(Our Father in heaven)



Nethqadash shmakh

Teytey malkuthakh

(Hallowed be your name

Your kingdom come.

Nehwey tsevyanach
aykanna


d'bwashmaya aph
b'arha.

Your will be done
as in heaven
so on earth.)



Abwoon d'bwashmaya

(Our Father in heaven)



Hawvian lachma
d'sunqanan yaomana.

(Give us this day
our daily bread

Washboqlan khaubayn
aykana daph khan
shbwoqan l'khayyabayn.

and forgive us
our trespasses
as we forgive
those who trespass
against us)



Abwoon d'bwashmaya

(Our Father in heaven)

The background of the entire image is a photograph of a bright blue sky. Sunbeams, or crepuscular rays, radiate from behind a large, dark, billowing cloud mass in the lower-left quadrant. The rays extend upwards and outwards across the sky. In the upper-right corner, the dark silhouette of a tree branch with leaves is visible. In the lower-right corner, the thin, dark branches of a pine tree are visible against the sky.

Wela tahlān l'nesyuna
Ela patzan min bisha.

(And lead us not
into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Metol dilakhie malkutha
wahayla wateshbukhta
l'ahlam almin.

Almin.

For thine is the kingdom
and the power
and the glory
for ever. Amen)

Abwoon d'bwashmaya

(Our Father in heaven)

