

Poets & Saints

ISSUE 01

STREAMS IN THE DESERT

THIRST

DEVOTION

WONDER

MUNDANE

OVERFLOW

SORROW

SLOWING

HUNGER

**City
Arts
Dept.**

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INTRODUCTION

FROM OUR CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

I am thrilled to welcome you to the inaugural issue of *Poets & Saints*! As we embark on this journey together, you might find yourself wondering, “Why is it called *Poets & Saints*?”

The answer lies in history and humanity’s ceaseless yearning for understanding and unity. Our magazine takes its name from two distinct groups of people—poets and saints, who through their lives, have given us a lens to perceive the profound mysteries of life.

When we speak of poets, we refer to not only the writers of verse but all artists who illuminate the beauty of existence. With their creativity, whether encapsulated in a sonnet, a stroke of a brush, or a note on a piano, they move us to explore the world with fresh eyes and renewed spirits, inviting us to appreciate the extraordinary in the ordinary.

Saints, on the other hand, represent those who have walked the path of Christ with unwavering devotion. These individuals, moved by great love and kindness, consistently put others before themselves. They teach us that love and unity are the cornerstones of a harmonious world, inspiring us to live with compassion and goodness.

These poets and saints are not just figures from the annals of history. They exist among us and within us. Every individual possesses the ability to appreciate and create beauty, and every heart is capable of expressing profound love and kindness. In essence, we are all poets and saints.

Our magazine, *Poets & Saints*, is not only a celebration of these everyday poets and saints but also a platform for the artistic expressions born from our community. Our aim is to showcase the vibrant artistry that flows from the hearts and minds of our creative members.

As we turn the page to this new chapter, my hope is for each one of us to discover and embrace the poet and saint within ourselves. Let us journey together towards the understanding of life’s mysteries, guided by love and unity.

Grace and peace,

Cody Jensen
Fall 2023





Jacques Constantiny
Streams in the Desert (Ralph's Ensemble)
Digital Collage





Jensen-Nimick
At the Well
2023
Acrylic on canvas

About the art, pg 102

pastoral note

I wish I could have been sitting there that day to watch it all take place. A Jewish man. A Samaritan woman. The scorching heat. A scandalous moment. The restless look of a woman when a boundary has been crossed. Jesus parched from his long journey. This woman had buckets of water, and yet her soul was like an endless desert: parched and dry. This man who thirsts is actually an overflowing well. Things are not as they seem. (John 4:1-26)

Jesus speaks of water, but it's not really about water. He sees to the very deepest places in her soul. She is searching for life by drinking from the systems of death. And in His endless love, He offers her—He offers us—something more. Something better. He offers her a different way, a better well. And the best part: this well doesn't leave her empty and searching.

It's no secret we live in a time and moment that is reminiscent of walking through a desert. The heat sucking the life from our body. The dry air pulling out every bit of moisture we have. While we can't pull ourselves away from the world, we can choose to live in it differently. We can choose to drink from the wells that truly bring life.

Streams in the Desert is about examining the life and rhythms of Jesus and choosing to walk as He walked. It's about learning to drink from His living water in the every day—the mundane, the simple, the sorrow, the in-between. Jesus is offering us a better way! My prayer for us is that we will drink deeply from the streams of life that Jesus offers us as we walk through the deserts of this world.

Thanks for stepping into this journey with us!
I pray it's transformative.

Pastor Matt



Oasis in a Food Desert

Creative direction: Cody Jensen, Jeremy Harmon

Photography: Cody Jensen

On-set production: Logan Miller, Monica McCafferty, Cooper Harrison





A vibrant still life of various fruits including bananas, a pineapple, a watermelon, pears, grapes, and strawberries. The fruits are arranged in a dense, overlapping composition, with a white text box centered over the middle. The background is a solid black, which makes the colors of the fruit stand out.

Good Father,

We confess we are burdened, weary, and dry.
We have searched for life in the systems of death.
We carry weights we were not created to carry.
We run further into the desert.
We are thirsty.

Today, we step into your invitation to rest.
We join the flowers and birds who do not worry or toil.
We choose to live from your overflowing well of grace.
We seek first your kingdom.

As we draw near to you, would you draw near to us?
As we step out of what is comfortable, will you meet us?
Would you meet us in our community?
Would you meet us in the spaces created for you?

Jesus, wellspring of life,
Overflow into our dry and weary souls.
Saturate us with your peace and presence,
As we plant ourselves by the streams of living water.

Streams in the Desert

WRITTEN BY DALMO MENDONÇA

*As a deer pants for flowing streams,
so pants my soul for you, O God.*

Psalms 42:1, ESV



Christian living often means navigating the paradoxical. At its core, it means straddling the line between two seemingly opposing truths. As quantum theorist Niels Bohr once put it, “the opposite of one profound truth may very well be another profound truth.” So we live knowing that the Kingdom of God is already here and, at the same time, not yet here. In other words, Jesus Christ has already ushered His Kingdom and sits on His throne in the Heavenly realm, and we already participate as servant-rulers in His model of self-sacrificial reign. And, while that is true, we also long for the coming day of His return, setting our eyes on the promised future when there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain. We live in a theological tension Oscar Cullmann called “the dialectic of present and future.”

Likewise, we are in this world but not of this world. We are spiritual beings having a human experience, in the words of the French philosopher Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. In the ultimate sense, we do not belong to this fallen and broken world, and we ought not conform to the desires of the flesh and many temptations here. And yet, God delights in working in and through us in this very world, redeeming the ruins and reconciling all things to Christ. As ambassadors of the Kingdom, we are sent into the world with a purpose and a high calling. And here we are met with trials and tribulations in a dry and inhospitable environment that can leave us thirsty and worn out. The image of streams in the desert captures this paradox that every Christian must face in spiritual life.

Practically speaking, what does it look like to live the Way of Jesus when caught in the in-between of already and not yet, in this world and not of this world? How do we find peace in the tension, joy in the waiting, and purpose amidst the uncertainties? What do we do when our hope-filled vision of a perfectly abundant life in Christ bumps against the harsh reality of the spiritual wilderness and the arid deserts we walk day in and day out?

*As a deer pants for flowing streams,
so pants my soul for you, O God.*
- Psalm 42:1, ESV

God is not blind to our thirst. The prophet Isaiah talks about how the Lord sets His people free, pointing to how He has been faithful in the past. But then the Lord speaks, pointing instead to His faithfulness to come:

*Do not call to mind the former things;
pay no attention to the things of old.
Behold, I am about to do something
new; even now it is coming. Do you not
see it? Indeed, I will make a way in the
wilderness and streams in the desert.
The beasts of the field will honor Me,
the jackals and the ostriches, because
I provide water in the wilderness and
rivers in the desert, to give drink to My
chosen people.*
- Isaiah 43:18-20, BSB

In Jesus, we can have confidence that God is continually at work, always about to do something new. God is always about to provide fresh, clean, drinking water no matter what new patch of wasteland we sojourn through in our daily struggles. This is illustrated in the story of Jesus encountering an outcast woman at the well. He tells this woman that no matter how much water she drinks from this well, she will always thirst for more. Then, He offers water that could quench her thirst forever. He’s not talking about the well water but about God’s own life that comes through Him to us to satiate our deepest thirsts. It’s an invitation to a deep, soul-satisfying relationship. This is why later on, Jesus says, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to Me and drink.”

*Whoever drinks the water I give them
will never thirst. Indeed, the water I
give them will become in them a spring
of water welling up to eternal life.*
- John 4:14, ESV

We are constantly being shaped, formed, and disciplined into something. Another way to say this is that, out here in the desert, we are parched and ready to drink up whatever is around us. (continued on next page)

There is no neutral: the people, systems, and habits that consume our time and attention are continually discipling us. Knowing this, we have a choice. It's a daily decision of intentionality and discernment. Will we continue to draw near to muddy, dirty wells that run dry and never satisfy? Or will we plant ourselves by the rivers of living water God promised to provide for us in the dry and empty land?

If we don't implement rhythms and practices of spiritual formation and renewal, we cannot walk in the life and freedom God has designed for us. To echo the words of Richard Foster, "personal formation into the life of Christ is arduous and lifelong!" This is why, as a church family, we're deliberately taking time to practice drinking from God's streams together.

Over the next eight weeks, our liturgies, our worship, and our sermons at City Church will all point us to the rhythms of renewal we all yearn for. The City Arts Department offers this magazine as a companion to that journey. Artists from our community (painters, poets, photographers, writers,

designers, editors, creatives of all stripes) have prayerfully and lovingly created this issue to invite you deeper into each of these different themes. Our hope is that the art in these pages will inspire you into action and contemplation, challenge you to walk the desert from different perspectives, and draw you nearer and more frequently to Christ's streams of living water.

*If we don't implement
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Photography by Dalmo Mendonça

The Eight Streams

I. Thirst

We live on Empty. We run faster; we search harder; we look for something to satisfy. Far too often, we run to things that only continue to drain us or only temporarily fill us. Why do we go back to these wells that run dry? Why do we live in the wastelands when abundance is possible? Because they are familiar. Because they are comfortable. Because we can't break free from it. Because changing our habits seems too difficult. Because of discouragement.

II. Devotion

A grateful heart puts God above everything else. We dedicate our time, money, and energy as an act of worship, acknowledging He owns it all, and it's all for His glory. A picture of devotion is Mary at the feet of Jesus, focusing on the one thing that matters most. What if, in the face of distractions, we choose to press into this one thing?

III. Wonder

Wonder can only emerge from a heart that is whole. A heart that believes in both the goodness of God and the beauty of our future in Christ. Wonder can only be a response to slowing and seeing God's beauty in all of creation.

IV. Mundane

Nobody wants to live a mundane, ordinary life, and yet most of our existence is found in this in-between. Think about going on an incredible trip to a beautiful location. Between all the mountain top moments and pictures taken are many moments of travel, waiting, finding a place to stay, getting to your location, etc. What if we embraced the mundane and ordinary as a place where God meets us?

V. Overflow

The story of water into wine in John 2 is not simply a party miracle to save the bridal party from embarrassment. It's a picture of what Jesus came to do in us. Jesus wants to be more, better, overflowing in us. He wants to give us himself in abundance, and it's better than we could ever imagine. What if Jesus came to give us overflowing joy rather than just enough?

VI. Sorrow

Sorrow can easily feel like a place of desolation, and yet it can often create a place of receptivity and abundance. Jesus seems to meet us in our sorrow and offer to fill us once again. Often, it's only after we are emptied that we can be filled.

VII. Slowing

Sabbath is a gift. Sabbath is a continual reminder that we are not what we do or accomplish but it's an invitation to rest. An invitation to abide and be renewed by the Creator of the universe. This rhythm of Sabbath is God's divine plan for sustaining us in a broken, sinful world until all things are renewed.

VIII. Hunger

It's God's desire that we are planted by the streams of living water. That we would drink deeply from the well of life as we walk through the deserts of this world. God's presence is now made available to His people through the work of the Spirit in all places and at all times.



T H I

In the frozen rivers of our spiritual wastelands,

T H I

we break the ice to quench a thirst

T H I

R S T

R S T

that only the eternal can satisfy.

R S T

Photographer unknown: [Winter river baptism] c. 1907
International Center of Photography

Thirst

by Rachel Bonk

Days go by.
Empty.
Dry.
Desolate.
Listlessly existing.
Each day feels repetitive, life-sucking, draining...
Even in crowds and noise -completely surrounded- my heart is hollow, a void.
The cups I reach for no longer satisfy
The well has run dry, the water was black.
I've chased lovers, and dreams, and things, knowledge and passion, a new
experience, a new high...
Like taps at the bar- a different flavor profile, a passing pleasure only to
leave me thirstier still. Yet it's easier to lift this glass than to lift myself.
I am heavy with shame.
It's easier to press play than to flee.
I am naked and afraid.
It's easier to disconnect than to lean into healing, growth, vulnerability...
I am alone and lonely.
The hands that touched me,
The drinks that took the edge off,
The toxic habits of self soothing that drag me down.
I've drank from great depths of emptiness, now great emptiness is within me.
This is the solace and embrace of an empty well...
Momentary pleasure that leaves me drier, emptier, thirstier than before.
False intimacy that promises acceptance-yet separates my body and soul;
my mind and heart.
How did I get here?
Naked and ashamed I come to the well.



Dalmo Mendonça
Days go by
AI-assisted artwork

Full Service Inconvenience -

For too long now I have denied it, but denial isn't a solution—why am I not capable of Understanding? I hold on, I tell myself that everything is fine, I ignore warnings, pulling punches—surely I know better; surely I'll make it to the next stop; surely I'll... Looks like there's one up ahead. I can see it in the distance, I see it now, a tall Sign. I fight the urge to burn what fumes remain, close the gap; leg twitches. Even I know that would defeat the purpose. I wipe my eyes because I've Remembered the station I passed miles ago; did I have half a tank, or... Very certain of that much, yes—and I thought there was time... and evidently I ignored that sign: "Last stop 200 miles"; there's time, sure. I Complacently denied the lights on my cluster: "190 miles." Nicke. Surely that ten miles won't matter. I didn't touch the brake. I skated by, kept on trucking—pedal meet metal—and I Never gave it even a second thought. We, that is, men: Confident to a fault. I admit it is not a fun topic, Own that, though. I repeat it again. I have to. Never pictured this, did I? Now I'm lost in Veritable wastelands... Thirsty. But even now I hope, I pray; think, "maybe." Nervous though I am, I can Imagine it. Ignore the cacti, Envision safety... come Nearer... See it yon... Car is apologetic, E

by A. B. Craft

An acrostic is a piece of writing that spells something out, using the first letters of each line. When I set out to write this, I pictured the poem falling like my gas gauge in my car, quickly running to the bottom and leaving me stranded, and I knew that I wanted the first line to begin with "F" for full and the last line to be simply an "E" for empty. I then had the thought to spell out the name of the poem, "Full service inconvenience", a phrase I think quite often about certain things in life that were made with the intention of making our lives easier, but often fall short. As I worked through it, it felt somehow lacking. I had worked out the acrostic, and it was nice, but the message didn't feel fully fleshed out. It occurred to me how we "burn the candle at both ends", so to speak, and this is part of what drives that gas gauge down so quickly. And then it struck me that both ends of the poem should read the same message, burning that candle—or tank of gas—from both ends until all the fuel was gone and the car sputters to a halt ten miles from the nearest station, truly demonstrating how fully inconvenience can service us.

STANDARD



Ed Ruscha, Standard Station (mirrored), 1966, © 2023 Edward Ruscha

Drought

by Elliott Campbell

The well is empty. Springs are dried up.
Storms pass by me. I'm parched, turning
sun-dried under this oppressive heat.
My skin is ashy and broken. It latches
onto fabric like velcro.
I beat the rocks with sticks like I was told.
A drop of dew fell out. I speak to the stones
to give more, but they hold onto it in greed.
I run to my brothers and sisters, but they
have none to give away.
I plead with vices
and memories and
thoughts and past
loves,
But they refuse
me or trick me
or abuse me or
deceive me
God, I am dying. I cannot eat unless I drink.
My tongue is rougher than the bread on my
lips. My blood thickens and viscera dehydrates.
My voice cannot cry out, so my spirit groans -
I have nowhere to turn.

Wanting Nothing

by Elliott Campbell

I chose the difficult path - one filled
with pain and one where my peace
and sustenance comes after desperate
pleading and forced prayers through
clenched teeth for you. I am hurt. I bore
my soul and tried to salvage whatever
I could. It bled me dry. My blood thickened.
My skin dried out. My insides are shriveled.
This path is difficult and painful, but
the reward is great. Through cracked lips
and raspy voice and prickled tongue
I recite what You've told me at the start.
I beg for peace. I pray for release. This cup
is filled with medicine I don't want to drink.
I'm reassured I don't have to, but I started
this journey, and I'll see it to its end.
I'm cold, shivering more than normal
Onset desperation and trying to find
some moment of peace in my soul
I can't tell if I'm angry or sad or just
frustrated with how things have gone
It eats at my heart, torn and weak
I don't know what to do anymore. I
want to run away. I want to drop it all.
The Well that lies at the end will feed me.
It will restore. My shriveled guts will be
full again. My skin will heal. My mouth
will salivate. My body will be better for it.
And my soul, oh my soul, will bask in the
sprinkler providing solace from the unbearable
heat. So I'll drink the medicine. I'll bear the
pain. I've heard Your guidance, and I'll
abide in it, knowing rain will come soon.

Thirst

NOTES & RE

What are the “dry wells” you find yourself returning to when you’re thirsty for fulfillment, and why do you think you keep going back to them?

REFLECTIONS





membrance of me. This is

DeVOTION

THE LORD'S TABLE

WOOD, CONCRETE, 24K GOLD

DESIGNED BY CODY JENSEN
BUILT AND ENGINEERED BY ANDREW FISH, MATT BAYNE, KORY MYERS
JOSH VUOCOLO, KRAIG MEWBOURNE, TRAVIS REMPLE



Attention
is the beginning
of *devotion*

—Mary Oliver



Vincent van Gogh, Irises, 1890, Oil on canvas



Praying

by Mary Oliver

*It doesn't have to be
the blue iris, it could be
weeds in a vacant lot, or a few
small stones; just
pay attention, then patch*

*a few words together and don't try
to make them elaborate, this isn't
a contest but the doorway*

*into thanks, and a silence in which
another voice may speak.*



Photography and design by Cody Jensen
Iris watercolor by Dalmo Mendonça

Who is this Man?

Who is this Man, who can walk upon this groaning land?
Is it even possible to hold your glorious hand?

Your voice echoes – “I Am the Truth, the Life and the Way”
As I begin to get on my knees to pray...

“Abba Father, Omnipotent One
Look what you’ve begun...”

I see visions of your glorious Ever last -
As I silently whisper, “Please, King Jesus, wipe away my ugly past...”

I long to hear, Enter In, My good and Faithful servant...
For being ever so fervent

Thank You Father! Christ the King!
Ruler over Everything!

And yes, Heavenly Father, your eyes are constantly looking
throughout the land, For a Heart of an Obedient Man!

Amen!

by Rosalind Cuevas Jones





Cody Jensen
Truth Christ
AI-assisted artwork



Piercing despair, Light

Turning temple tables, Truth

Christ, no other; The Way

by Andrew Nimick

Devotion

NOTES & RE

When faced with distractions or competing priorities, how can you practice putting God at the center of your life, like Mary did at the feet of Jesus?

REFLECTIONS



W O N

Tom Friedman, Looking Up (detail), 2015. Stainless steel.
James Webb Space Telescope, galaxy cluster SMACS, 2022.
Photography and design by Cody Jensen



D E R

Cody Jensen
The Eye of Rhizome
AI-assisted artwork

I

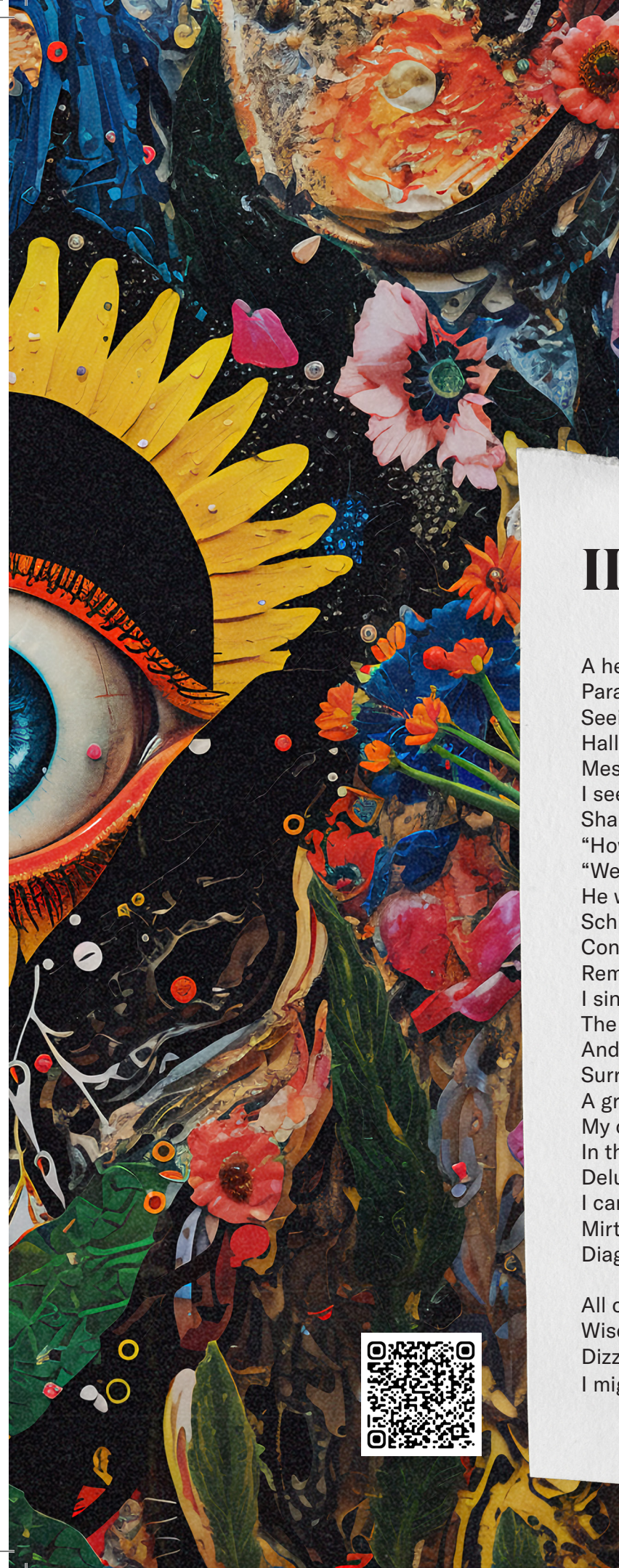
Have you ever tried being human
Where everything is a miracle,
To dance a melody a gift sublime,
To see and smell, to laugh and weep,
To learn, yearn, dream, and even love?

Have you ever been a family,
Unbroken tether of self-similar souls,
Crooked love to sing you lullabies
For generations upon generations,
Human rhizome taking centuries-
Long breaths?

And yet be afforded the magic of a
Self, unfolding an intimate story,
Protagonist: yours truly.
Singularly beloved and doted on
By the architect of the universe,
Who is my constant companion,
Talks to me day and night
In astrondous shimmering
Whispering cymbals.

With humble gratitude I ask what for?
Oh, father Father, ancient begetter of days,
Where does my brushstroke go,
And what does my melody rhyme with?

Play me as you will,
Amen and yes to every note,
And let me hear the song
Composed for me.




by Dalmo Mendonça

II

A heartfelt thank you for this
Paranoid mysticism that insists on
Seeing goodness and mercy persecute me,
Hallucinating superstitions, holy rituals,
Messengers ascending and descending.
I see God around every corner,
Shake his hand and say,
"How do you do, sir? Lovely day you made!"
"We meet again: what a coincidence!"
He winketh and declareth in thunder voice.
Schizoid worship lifts my eyeballs,
Convulses this body in the sanctum,
Reminds me of things I'd never known.
I sing the psalms and dance the prophets;
The holy law is what makes my heart pump
And pens me into an epic of hope.
Surrounded by such
A great cloud of voices in my head,
My own hand stitches order and beauty
In the divine tapestry.
Delusions of celestial adoption so joyous
I can't keep myself from cackling,
Mirth adorning the corners of my lips,
Diagnose me with a case of faith.

All of this, to discern the world with more
Wisdom, get my bearings in a sidereal space
Dizzily unknowable, so that with laughter
I might drink again from the mystery.



A detailed view of the Orion Nebula, specifically the Orion Bar, captured by NASA's James Webb Space Telescope in 2023. The image shows a vast, colorful expanse of interstellar gas and dust, with prominent orange, red, and blue hues. Numerous bright stars are visible, some with prominent diffraction spikes. The nebula's structure is complex, with dense regions and wispy filaments.

Orion Nebula (detail) known as the Orion Bar
NASA's James Webb Space Telescope (2023)

**In the place where Heaven touches Earth
I am embracing you
In the beauty of my universe
You are made whole
Look with eyes of wonder
I am here beholding the wonder of you**

by Camri Landkamer



The Heavenly Realm
Camri Landkamer
Acrylic on canvas



A Liturgy of Wonder

by Dalmo Mendonça

Creator God, Giver of Joy,

In a world that rushes and roars, we pause in Your presence.
We silence our hearts, our minds, and our mouths, just to behold You.
Amid the clamor and clutter, we choose to marvel in Your majesty.

We remember You, the sculptor of stars, the painter of sunsets.
We remember You, the composer of dawn, the architect of the seasons.
Amid the hustle and hurry, we choose to witness Your wonder.

Jesus, the Image of the Invisible God,
Rekindle in us the flame of fascination,
Foster in us a heart of holiness, a spirit of sanctity,
As we observe Your creativity in creation.



Dalmo Mendonça
Wonder
AI-assisted artwork

Wonder

NOTES & RE

What specific moments or experiences have filled you with a sense of wonder about God's creation? How can you cultivate more of those moments?

REFLECTIONS

Photography and design by Jacques Constantiny

mundane

the beauty of

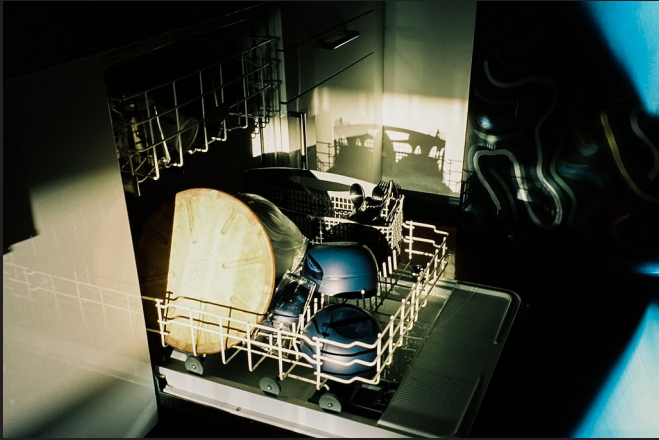
the in-between




“Think about this: God takes the ordinary, mundane things in our life, and he uses them to shape us and our future. That’s why we can’t despise them, no matter how ordinary they may seem. We might never see or know just how these things will be used, but God does not waste our efforts or our obedience. God does not waste the little things that seem to have no real purpose. The seemingly insignificant thing in your hand today could be the very thing God chooses to use tomorrow.”

Matt Nelson, *The Beauty of the In-Between: Finding God in the Silence*, p. 32





A person is seen from behind, sitting on a dark surface in a room with white, curved walls. A large, vibrant rainbow light projection arches over the person. In the center of this arch, a circle of twelve colorful, translucent squares is arranged. The squares transition through colors: yellow, green, blue, cyan, magenta, and red. On the left and right walls, there are small, dark, rectangular objects mounted.

“Leisure” by W.H. Davies
Photography by Cody Jensen

Leisure

What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

No time to stand beneath the boughs
And stare as long as sheep or cows.

No time to see, when woods we pass,
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.

No time to see, in broad daylight,
Streams full of stars, like skies at night.

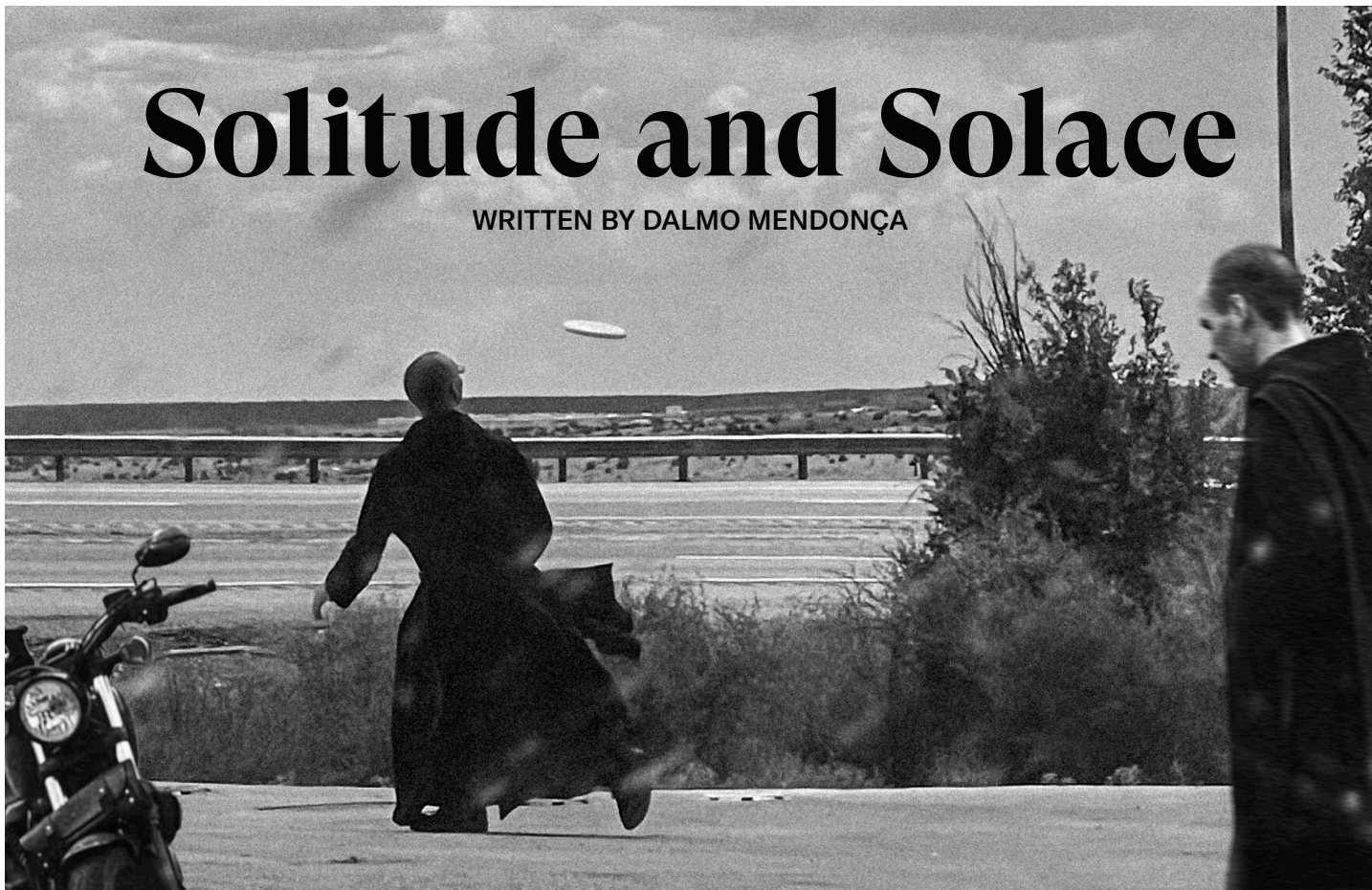
No time to turn at Beauty’s glance,
And watch her feet, how they can dance.

No time to wait till her mouth can
Enrich that smile her eyes began.

A poor life this if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

Solitude and Solace

WRITTEN BY DALMO MENDONÇA



It's a straight shot from Oklahoma City to Albuquerque, almost 300 miles on I-40. After I crossed from Texas into New Mexico, seeing the looming auburn rocks in the distance, surrounded by a flatland of faded and sparse vegetation, it took me a minute to realize that I was seeing the American desert with my own eyes for the first time, not through photos or on TV or in my imagination. My dash read 85 mph and 115°F. I rolled down my windows and breathed a chestful of hot and dry air. It's not that the yellowed and browned vistas were particularly beautiful or overwhelmingly rich. It's not even that I was surprised or bewildered by this new feeling of driving through the American southwest. It's that, for so long, the desert had been an idea, a metaphor so familiar to my heart, and now it became, on an important level, an embodied experience. That is why my eyes welled up on my way westward.

Taken by surprise by my fuel tank dangerously low and my bladder dangerously full, I stopped at a run-down gas station in the middle of nowhere. As I was fixing to leave, four bald brothers came out of their car wearing what at first looked like Matrix-style trench coats. Upon further inspection, they must have been monks or friars judging from the long, dark brown habit with a big hood over the shoulders, though I didn't see any crosses or explicitly religious symbols. They seemed jovial and carefree. Looking past their shaved heads, I could tell a couple were in their 20s, the oldest must not have been 50. While their beat-up car was fueling up, they threw a frisbee back and forth at each other in the parking lot. For a moment I remembered my friends, brother Cool Cat and brother Groundhog, whom I'd left behind for this solo trip. I decided against stepping out of my car and asking them the

many questions in my head, but before I took off, I couldn't keep myself from capturing some photos. To me, this scene spoke to finding God in the mundane, the playful joy of the Lord showing up in these holy men on the side of a busy highway.

As I pulled into the city, I was immediately struck by its unique visual identity. Pueblo-style architecture was everywhere, flat roofs on both local homes and big chain buildings. Many rose-colored bridges and highway overpasses had a beautiful streak of turquoise, and bronze pillars decorated with petroglyphs of animals punctuated the stream of murals and statues in my peripheral vision. At every corner were motifs of either hot-air balloons or the sunny design of the New Mexican flag flying proudly above it all.



After a quick rest at the hotel where I'd spend the night, I headed over to the Old Town for a late-afternoon stroll. My heart was full, I suddenly realized, contradicting and elusive feelings swimming in my chest. Tangled in a knot were grief and anticipation, hiding a thread of dread if I dared to look for it. Joy on top of desperation on top of gratitude, layers of emotions old and new filed away for a rainy day, all wrapped up in longing. After a long day of being hurled through space at the speed of a cheetah, my body could stand to travel at a slower pace, one foot in front of the other. I basked in the magic of walking the streets of a city I've never been to—well-worn paths and well-loved corners, the ordinary sounds familiar to so many, beckoning me to taste it all for the first time as if each building had sprung up from the ground today, just for me.

Walking in the valley under the sun, I started to break a sweat. Beads formed on my forehead and quickly evaporated, leaving behind a cool and salty remembrance. I floated among a teenaged school group in matching trip shirts boisterously leaving one alley, only to find myself weaving on the sidewalk to not literally rub shoulders with a couple of couples out on a date, with a pair of slender clavicles bejeweled in silver and turquoise, with the most remarkable freckles absent-mindedly listening to music. Thoughts came and went in my mind. Noticings and musings



visited me and, finding not a conversation partner nor another soul with whom to crack a joke, flew away freely in frustrated relief. The tight-lipped smile across my face was the flag hoisted by a bitter-sweet wave of aloneness pulsating in my stomach.

Two cross-less steeples barely towering over the short and flat buildings caught my attention and drew me from across the street. Though I knew the church was closed, in the courtyard stood a smiling and gregarious man I assumed to be an overly friendly tour guide. I approached with caution, inconspicuously reading the sign detailing the history of the San Felipe de Neri Parish. I tickled the church's outer walls with gentle fingers to see what the rich brown felt like. From the corner of my eye and with a raised ear, I waited for the church's gracious host to conclude his conversation and latch onto the next unsuspecting tourist, my cue to safely step into the courtyard and explore unbothered. The last thing I wanted was to put on a big smile, make polite small talk, feign a surface-level connection. I snapped a few pictures on my phone. As I wandered the perimeter of little red bricks, I wondered what it would've been like to come here last Sunday, and on a Sunday 200 years ago. A plane flew overhead and brought me out of my daydream.

I carried on my solitary exploration, pacing past stores closed on



a Wednesday evening and restaurants in wait for a nightly symphony of laughter and clinking plates. Art galleries, their creative pulses frozen within walls of adobe, whispered secrets fully known only to those with an appointment to browse. One particular souvenir shop called out to me, with long windows running half the block littered with hand-painted figurines.

Crossing the threshold, I found myself privy to an intimate tableau, a sight simultaneously mundane and magnificent. There, on an unassuming wooden bench, sat a man. The vibrant strands of a digital lifeline stretched out before him, binding him to a world of loved ones in an act of technologically mediated communion. The soft glow of his phone beamed on his face, every wrinkle and dimple casting a shadow, eyes creased and smile from ear to ear, eyebrows raised to the sound of his children's glee on the video call. His voice, a soft and textured caress, told the exciting details of his trip, echoing the homesickness tucked into every sentence, every laugh, every pause.

I let out a muffled chuckle of delight and let my gaze dance across the shop, a constellation of colorful wares, before landing on the counter. A beautiful woman stood there, round face and sun-kissed skin, ashen green eyes. She donned an industrial piercing that glistened like a tiny metallic star on her left ear, which led me to look for tattoos, but I spotted no ink. I was sure that for a brief moment we made eye contact, but judging from her blank expression she must not have seen me. We never talked, but I told myself that, if she offered help, I'd enlist her on my mission. Perambulating the crowded aisles, I was diligently searching for the perfect gift to present to my new friend, Cool Cat. He's the kind of guy that has everything and more: charisma, confidence, charm. Don't get me wrong—he's very weird and a bit of an acquired taste, but he's deliciously persistent and will stick around until you can't get enough of him. So I was on the hunt for some resonance with his singular vibrancy and most excellent aura. Amid the bright trappings of the shop, my quest for the inimitable present was in full swing.

Time waltzed me through the labyrinth of objects. Shirts, toys, trinkets, all paraded before my eyes, but none bore the signature or the essence of Cool Cat. Surrendering a sigh, I settled for a keepsake for myself, a sticker featuring a green alien spaceship: "I want to believe!" An emblem of the fantastic, a testimony of belief, it was a little gift from me, to me. Easing back into the now cooler embrace of evening, the message from my weary feet was clear—it was time to rest. I found solace on a humble metal bench in the Old Town Plaza, its cold grate gripping my tired form with a strangely satisfying firmness. A tune floated over from the gazebo, a melody of Spanish words cradled on the strings of an



acoustic guitar. Caught between the earthy chords and the waning light, I sank deep into my seat with eyes closed and encountered total stillness.

It was then that the wind came to sit beside me. Its touch, light as a feather, traced a path on the little hairs of my legs. It wrapped both arms around my neck and sunk its heavy head on my chest. My whole body tingled. I felt held and loved. I loafed in the symphony of senses—the tender touches on my skin, the lyrical spill of the Spanish song, the crisp desert air, the dark canvas of closed eyes, and even the taste of swallowed nothingness. In each I felt grace, a reassuring touch of the divine. Deep belly laughter bubbled in my throat. Raptured by this unexpected guest, I felt my soul's agitation quell. Where did that ache go, the quotidian one that tells me something's missing? What of the unquenchable thirst I had grown so used to, my constant reminder that it's better to walk the earth parched than to drink from counterfeit wells? Not here. Not right now. Only satisfaction.

I couldn't have dreamed of a more romantic surprise than this. On the surface, a public encounter with a wondrous emissary of God's pure, divine love, but within this body, I was lavished with a private ecstatic experience in my secret place. Here on a park bench, in communion with the infinite, I was filled with living waters. Paralyzed in unprecedented awe, I sat enthralled by this sacred companionship for a minute or an hour—I do not know. For an enduring moment, I felt not alone.

My eyes welled up and tears streamed down my face, a cascade of the unspoken, as if someone had turned on the faucets to a slow trickle and walked away. Overflowing with thanks, my chest jumped in tiny sobs and tiny chortles of joy. As the breeze drummed in my ear, I noticed that upstream from my twin waterfalls sailed a silent sorrow. I paused, shocked but not surprised. This little heart of mine harbored so many emotions, unprocessed, patiently waiting their turn to surface. What better time than this?



The wind, that kind friend, squeezed my hand and seemed to ask what was in these tears. And in that question, I found a confidante. My heart unfurled, and my lips parted in an unheard whisper. As much as it pained me to admit it, my dear friend Groundhog was no longer with us. His empty absence had redrawn the world in unfamiliar contours. The rush of loss wrapped around me like a blanket.

Groundhog had been an honest, hardworking, genuinely good guy. He always gave all of himself when he showed up. Despite what he may have believed, most everyone wanted to be his friend. It's true, he was painfully shy, often shifty, I'd even say unreliable. If he decided to hide out in his hole, nobody could find him. And just like that, he was gone for good. Just when I thought I had figured him out, learned to love his unpredictable vanishing act, it became clear he wasn't coming back. The wind sighed with me.

First came comfort. Memories of my awkward friend came in and out of focus in my imagination until I felt peace. I knew, in an instant, that all of his beauty, the lessons

he unwittingly taught me, jagged pieces gracefully redeemed, swirled within me forever like a strange loop. If the world was ever too much, I realized, I could always count on the inner presence of the slippery fellow, master of disguises, expert at digging hideouts and building up walls. And all his pain, his shame and insecurity, mercifully gone in the mist. One last salty tear tumbled down my cheek, and I felt complete.

And then, the impossible. A gentle patter, the touch of a weeping sky: first one tiny droplet, then two, then half a dozen, splashing on my hair, on my clothes, on my skin. Rain in the desert, balm for the soul. On my face, the lines between sweat, tears, and rain blurred in an uninterrupted stream of raw emotion. Overwhelmed, I lifted my face toward the sky, meeting each drop with gratitude for a gentle caress from the heavens, a sprinkle of hope in an arid place.

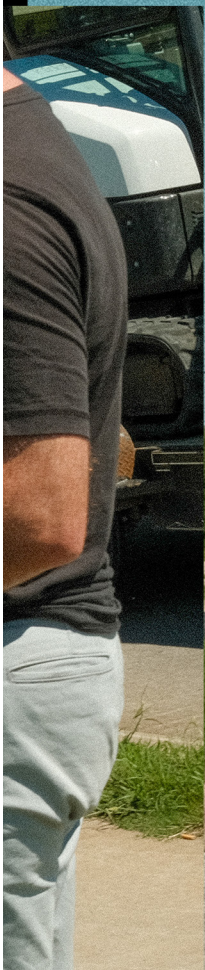





Filling the Void

Nourishing Community, One Meal at a Time

Every 3rd Wednesday and 3rd Sunday at 11:15am, we partner with Filling the Void and distribute free lunches to fill the void in empty stomachs and in the gaps where community connection should be. Whether you're interested in lending a hand or could use a meal, all are welcome to join us. Be part of something meaningful, and help us spread the spirit of generosity and unity.



Mundane *NOTES & RE*



In what ordinary aspects of your daily life have you experienced God's presence? How can you become more attentive to God in the mundane?



REFLECTIONS



OVERFLOW

Cody Jensen
Our Daily Bread
AI-assisted artwork





Camri Landkamer
Overflow
Acrylic on canvas



My Cup Cannot Contain Another Particle

by Dalmo Mendonça

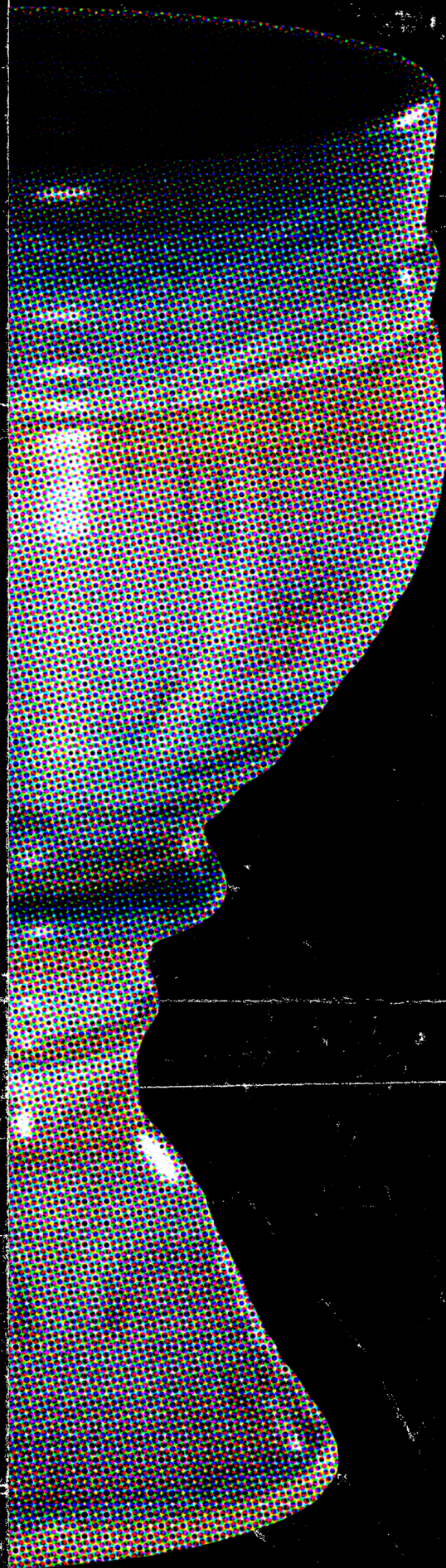
How could we cheer the groom and bride to wed
If all the jars of wine had fast run dry?
Think back to when the feast was near the end:
Your mom did plead you show with mirth Your might.
Your hour had not yet come, or so you said,
But by Your word the feast here must go on.
They could not ask for more than what you gave,
At least thus spoke the man whose praise you won,
For you had changed their lack to good, new wine,
The likes of which his lips had not yet touched.
When for the sake of joy you showed a sign,
The best of drinks, both back and forth, it slushed.
O Lord, come fill my jars up to the brim!
Let all the wine run forth from cups to mouths.
Burst quakes with more of You to shake the world
From every beat my heart drums in my chest.
With love and joy and peace I can't keep in,
God, pour me out, let folks in town be drenched.

Bestow upon unfilled abodes
Surprise rewards unseen before,
Until content, without restraint,
Someone outpours prestige galore.
Forgive distrust, displaced belief:
Behold! Concerns become undone.
Wherefore profound outbursts exist,
Reject despair, receive relief;
Although bereft crusades persist,
Attend toward supreme motif.
Because divine exchange transforms,
Delights beyond compare await.
Fulfill, redeem, rebuild, restore,
Inside myself anew create.
Inhale rotund perfumed bouquets.
Rejoice—champaigns abloom today!

Devotion overwhelms,
Completely overflows,
Affecting neighborhoods.
Examine. Overthink.
Beloved nightingales
Traversing altitudes.
Imagine. Comprehend.
Beholden butterflies
Exuding gratitude.
Compassion emanates,
Transforming attitudes,
Redemption inundates
Forsaken avenues.
Eternal handiwork!

Contemplative
Relationships
Elucidate
Divinity.
Exceedingly,
Abundantly,
Impossibly
Ineffable:
Appearances—
Miraculous—
Illuminate
Reality.

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Jacques Constantiny
New Life in a Dry Spell
Digital Collage



Cody Jensen
Day of August 1st, 2023
Photograph

A Song of Joys

by Walt Whitman

O for a man's life of passions, manifold, electric, complex!
O for joys, practical as I!
O to be a sailor of the world, bound for all ports!

O the joy of a manly selfhood!
O the sweet of all songs—to the soul and body!
O to speed where there is space enough and air enough!

O the joy of work and activity!
O to be up before the sun,
And to walk abroad in fields of new-plowed soil.

O the joy of sweet music!
O to hear the trill of the thrush!
O to hear the opera, the reversal of themes!

O the joy of reading—what a poem is!
O to have the feel of the ship under me!
O the daring wild freedom of the sea!

O to talk with the people wherever I go!
O the joy of companionship with strangers!
O to have my soul touched with genius!

O the joy of breathing freely in the open air!
O to drink the wine of life poured full!
O to have my cup overflow with the nectar of the earth!

O to be of the earth—earthy!
O the thrill of life in the veins!
O the happiness to be alive today!

O the joys of all things past!
O the joys of what will come!
O to bathe in the fountain of eternal youth!

Overflow

NOTES & RE



How have you experienced the overflowing joy or abundance that Jesus offers, and how can you allow more of that overflow into your life and into the lives of others?

REFLECTIONS

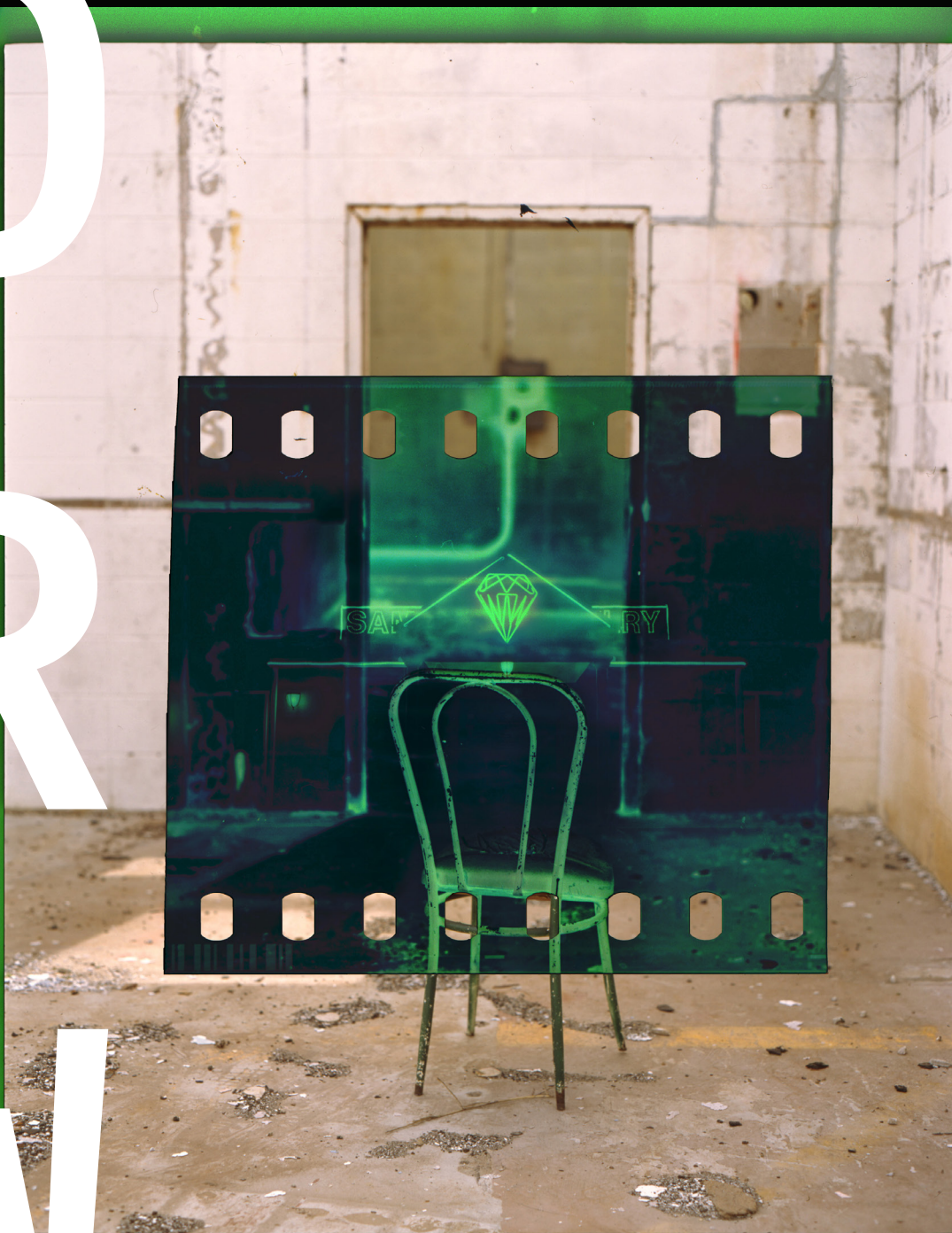


Mendonça-Nimick
Sorrow
Acrylic on canvas

O

R

W



Nathaniel Radtke
Sorrow
Digital collage



Dalmo Mendonça
Jesus Shepherd of the Lost, Jesus Lord of the Empty Tomb, Jesus Master Gardener
 AI-assisted artwork

Sorrow

by Dalmo Mendonça

Shepherd of the Lost,
We tread upon the path of sorrow, each step a desert echo,
Each breath, a gust of arid air, each tear, a grain of sand in an endless dune.
We wander, lost in this lifeless wilderness of despair.

Lord of the Empty Tomb,
In this moment of quietude, we acknowledge our desolation, our emptiness.
Our hearts are hollowed by grief, etched with pain, carved out by misery.
We stand as barren vessels, longing for your divine touch.

Master Gardener,
In the soil of our souls, seeds of sorrow have taken root.
Our hearts are gardens of grief, where despair blooms and sadness flourishes.
We till the earth in tears, sowing in sorrow, reaping in pain.

In this wilderness, You find us.
In this barren landscape, You seek us.
In this valley of shadow, You guide us.

In our emptiness, we finally find the space to be filled by You.
You, who turned water into wine, transform our sorrow into joy.
You, who breathed life into dust, breathe hope into our despair.

Even in this garden of grief, You walk with us.
You meet us in the depth, watering our wounds with Your tears,
Nourishing our discontent with Your compassion.

Christ, our Shepherd, lead us to streams in the desert.
Guide us to the wellspring of Your love.
Rain down renewal on our wasteland.

Son of God, meet us in the midst of chaos.
In this place of desperate silence, we await the whispers of Your comfort.
Fill our empty vessels with Your presence, Your grace, Your love.

Jesus, the first fruits of resurrection, tend to the garden of our hearts.
Transform our sadness into seeds of hope, our distress into sprouts of joy.
In the barren land of our grief, cultivate the blossoming of Your love.



When *TEARS* are *HEAVY*

by Rachel Bonk

Lord, sometimes it's so tempting to ask why.

In my heartbreak, in my grief, in my loss-to press You for answers; as if You needed to answer to me.

To beg you on my knees, to wail, to cry.

To wallow and question You with bitter tears that never run dry.

Sometimes it's hard to fight selfishness in times of sorrow.

So let me wrestle.

Let me wrestle with You Lord, in the pain, in the loss, and in the face of death.

At least in wrestling, You are close.

At least in wrestling, I feel Your touch.

And I shall limp with sorrow so as to walk one day with joy.

My mind knows Your goodness, yet my heart stings with pain.

How do I reconcile these emotions? This loss? This pain?

I long to be "okay"- yet grief, like a raging sea tosses me about.

anger

denial

depression

acceptance

bargaining

and thus the cycle repeats-waves of grief crash upon the shores of my heart.

Can You call peace be still to the waves crashing in my mind? Can You calm the storm within?

I pray for better tomorrows, but it is so hard to make it through the "todays"...

"Todays" full of tears that are heavy,

That fall unannounced,

That well up from the depths of my soul and pour, and pour out.

"Todays" where smiles are tainted with sadness, with wounds that run deep.

"Todays" where I am fragile, I feel heavy, and my bones feel weak.

"Todays" when each morning-like a double edged sword brings hope of healing with the sting of pain.

"Todays" where time is on my side, yet slow to do its work.

And yet today is all I have, and today is all You've promised.



Nathaniel Radtke
Untitled (Sorrow)
Digital collage

A painting of a person lying down, possibly dead, with a guitar resting on their chest. The person's legs are spread wide, and their arms are outstretched. The guitar is a light brown color with a dark pickguard. The background is dark and moody, with blue and green tones. The overall style is somber and contemplative.

Summer Song

by Dalmo Mendonça

Something's off with the world.
Something's wrong with the village.
Something's broken in this body.
Something's hurting in my heart.

You know my prayer before I can whisper it.
Each and every sunrise you continue to hear my cry.
My tears have been my food day and night,
while men say to me all day long, "Where is your God?"

Since the fall I've contended for your promises.
How long until you breathe warmth into
my crystallized discontent?
My universe beats with rage,
Offspring of wrath, off-key summer songs.

I have heard of your fame;
I stand in awe of your deeds, dear Lord.
Repeat them in our day, and
in our time make them known.
Even in wrath, remember mercy.



Pablo Picasso, The Old Guitarist, 1904, Oil on panel

Sorrow

NOTES & RE

Can you recall a time when your sorrow became a space for God to fill you anew? How might your perspective on sorrow change if you see it as a place where God meets you?

REFLECTIONS





SLOWING

FOR THE WEARY, THE TABLE IS OUR REST.

Sabbath Eve in a Coal Cellar, Ludlow Street (c. 1890) by Jacob Riis
Copyright © The Granger Collection, New York

“Let your heart slow”

excerpt from Rachel Sanders

Jesus says, “Come to me! Walk with me, learn from me, be tied to me, and take up my yoke.” Imagine two oxen tied together who are vastly different in size—like if I’m tied to my six-year-old son Micah and we are standing side by side, carrying the weight of something. What does that look like?

This took me back to when Micah was little—he’s still little, he’s a little guy, but when he was even littler. I’m the kind of person that feels like it’s worth the temporary pain to pile up as many grocery sacks as I can on both arms just so that I can make one less trip back to the car. It’s worth the pain to go through this. So he watched me as I was doing this when he was really little, and he picked up on the fact that “I think Mom needs help. She’s making a lot of noise. She’s doing a lot of things, carrying these groceries in...”

He was like, “Mom I want to help you carry in the groceries.” This is when he was too little to really even carry anything. So I would load up my arms and do the thing. And he would just grab on to the bottom of a sack, and we would carry them in. And all the while, he’s grunting and making all the noises that he’s heard Mom make. He’s like, “Yeah! We’re doing it,” looking up at me like, “We’re doing it! We’re carrying it, Mom! We’re carrying the groceries!”

We get in, and I set all the bags down. He’s like, “Whew,” wiping the sweat off his brow. And I’m like, “Yes, bub! Thank you so much! You helped me so much. We carried those groceries like bosses, alright? We did it! We carried it in!” We were high-fiving and celebrating. All the while, I know he did not carry any of the load. He really didn’t even help me—he actually made it harder, you know? But I’m celebrating him nonetheless even though I know I was carrying the load.

It’s the same when we’re yoked to Jesus. We are walking with him, side by side, doing life together, learning his way of life, celebrating together, and actually sharing life. All the while, He’s doing the lifting. He’s so much taller and greater and grander than I am. And when I’m tied to Him, yes, we’re working together, but He’s carrying my load: all at His pace, staying in step with Him, walking with Him, unhurried, present to the moment. As I said before: slow down, be in the moment with me, let your heart slow, let your pace slow. And He’s full of love and joy and peace and grace. And this is what Jesus is inviting us into.



Let Light Shine Inside

When anxiety is past the point of choking us
It gets so difficult to sit and watch the time pass

I see all of my thoughts frozen in place in the air
As if on a highway that is leading to nowhere

At these times I need to wait and take a breath

Close your eyes and then forget where you are
Let the silent scream speak to your soul and listen

Open all the doors and windows at home
Let the light of your sensations shine inside

Every single thought that comes is like the wind and only passing by
When my soul is silent is the moment that I meet the Lord of Time

“Deixa a Luz Entrar” *by* Paulo Novaes
Translated by Dalmo Mendonça

Breathe

by Rachel Bonk

The wind rushes by.
The trees rustle and the tall grass sways
Nature points to You, it sings of Your goodness.
Still.
I breathe You in.
You speak to the stillness in me
 You are my peace.
You're in the warm cup of coffee I clench in the morning
You're in the fellowship of loved ones
You're with me here and now as I slow down.
The dew on the grass
The crisp morning air
You're in the sunset
The painted colors of the sky
The trees that move in the breeze so gently
The sun that warms my skin
The leaves as they change
The first snowfall
and the first rains of spring.
Gentle you are Lord
In every season in its time
Loving and graceful You are Lord
As I slow down
As I breathe you in and loosen my grip
Sweet Jesus
Your sweet presence

As it is in Heaven

by A. B. Craft

1. Defiance

I stood within the vault
In defiance of
Natural
Inclination.

A crystal shimmered a circuit
In the distance;
I surveyed my home,
I surveyed my domain.

Uninhibited,
Enamored at the majesty,
A dream to be embraced
By the wind,

A dream
To take control.

2. Release

I lay amidst the expanse,
Errant
And Without anchor.

No opinion—
None that matters—
I am but a drop,
Meaningless
In the scheme.

Overwhelmed.
Overtaken.
Over...

3. Imbalance

Two worlds,
Two paths.

One liminal space between.

Two forces,
Too weak

To be seen,
Too strong

To resist;
Now they've

Won.

4. Resistance

I sat on a pane of glass
That hung
Suspended
From the sky.

Overhead, a livid eye,
Curiosities beneath,

Yet I am permitted to glide

Without effort
Or impulse.

Drawn, pulled.
All of my plans made to give way;
All of my efforts
Have up
ended.

And I am reminded
To be still.



Jacques Constantiny
Aqueous
Digital Collage

Coffee and journal in hand
Burdens and dreams heavy on my mind
I am going to our secret place
Trade fears for faith
Trade tears for comfort
There is rest in our secret place
We will cry until we laugh
We will dream impossible things
We will do it all together.

—*Camri Landkamer*

HOW DO YOU SABBATH?

Growing up, we had a small group on a Sunday night, and now we have a microchurch group on Sunday nights. As we've kind of morphed into a new season of Sabbath, we can be very busy on Sundays, so we might take a half a day on Saturday and just unplug, and then have Sunday afternoons to unplug. I try and do any cooking for Sunday night the day before. I don't really want to have to go into a store because then I'm kind of relying on people to be working, not having their Sabbath with their family. So I try to stay away from stores, groceries, chores, laundry, just truly stay focused on being together, getting intentional with evaluating how my past week went, what's on the agenda for this next week, where I need to reconnect with the Lord and just dump, surrender, refocus. In a spirit of honoring Him, it might be Bible reading, it might be a book, journaling, praying... And a nap. I mean, that goes without saying, but generally there's a nap in there somewhere!"

—*Daleen Nimick*

One of the things that struck us in reflecting on Sabbath is the fact that as we were kids, it was much more corporate, mandated. Like the laws were in place to keep stores closed and, other than emergency services and whatnot, people did that. They didn't really have too many options. Organized sports weren't really a thing growing up, on Sunday anyway. And now we've moved at some point—the change in the blue laws was a public opinion, but as many books today talk about Sabbath, it's really become a heart thing. How do we intention to take our Sabbath? And what do we do to stay connected to God? So we've moved from a legalistic type of approach. I know Jesus wants us to focus on our heart relationship with him. And so it's become much more of a personal intention to take a break. God gives us that break for a reason to reset and really to find peace and joy in our hearts.

—Andrew Nimick



davidlanastudio

**Saturday lovins on
my people**

Reply



rachiebonk

**A glass of wine with
a friend** ❤️

Reply



diannapotts

Walk in nature

Reply



Slowing *NOTES & RE*

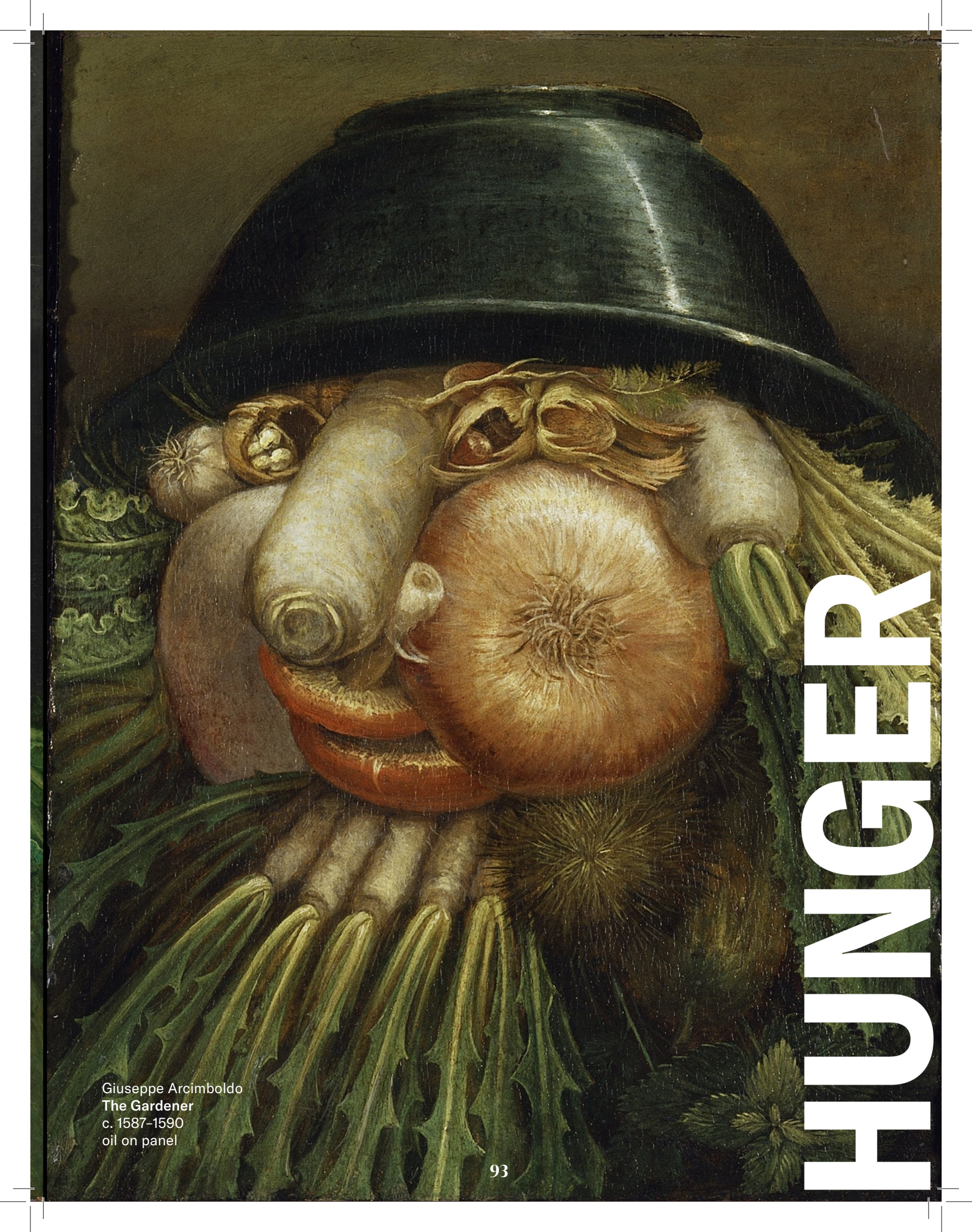
How can you implement a Sabbath-like rest into your life regularly?
What might be the benefits of slowing down and taking time to be renewed?

REFLECTIONS

HUNGER



Giuseppe Arcimboldo
Vertumnus
1591
oil on canvas



Giuseppe Arcimboldo
The Gardener
c. 1587-1590
oil on panel

The Very Hungry Pastor

A SEARCH FOR NOURISHMENT

Written by Jenni Choi

For almost two decades, Pastor Bodie constantly felt hungry. Not due to an extreme spiritual fast or attempts at trendy, restrictive diets. It all started when he was 19, with a humble convenience store hot dog.

Coasting down the road in his enormous, white '97 Dodge truck, he began to choke while eating his fast food snack. It got so bad that he swerved and had to get off the road. That harrowing incident marked the beginning of trouble getting food down his throat.

"I had my throat scoped by a doctor, and he found nothing. Instead of following up, I thought ... maybe this was just my lot in life and never went back."

For another 19 years, hunger cast a large shadow over his life—only allowing him to ingest about 1/8 of every meal. In Aug. 2021, he finally found some answers. Doctors diagnosed him with a rare swallowing disorder that affects the esophagus—Achalasia.

The first surgery failed, and he lost 20 pounds—from an already-thin frame. A second surgery in Nov. 2022 succeeded and helped him considerably. Though he now feels much better, he still has to eat with caution.

Aside from his own prolonged bout of hunger, he also witnessed his father struggle with starvation due to Liver Cirrhosis. During the ailment, his father could only stomach a bowl of microwave ramen every few days. Thankfully, just like his son, he was able to regain good health.

A Different Kind of Hunger

While physical hunger left deep, indelible marks on his and his father's lives, what he's more focused on lately is quelling spiritual hunger.

He believes that believers tend to go in and out of personal seasons, which affect their levels of spiritual nourishment. "During some of these times, I have to ask myself if I'm really absorbing or eating the messages from the passages, podcasts, etc.," he said.

"It's easy for us to not realize how hungry we actually are and to lack an appetite for what God is offering us. 'Blessed are those who hunger for righteousness, for they will be filled.' Jesus says if we're hungering for those

things, we will be filled. If we're hungering and thirsting for righteousness, we will be filled."

Avoiding Starvation

So, what does fulfilling spiritual hunger look like? According to Pastor Bodie, we first must realize that we're hungry and find the nourishment we need. He believes that we're often spiritually malnourished and don't even know it. If one needs a balanced meal but only grabs chips, they won't satisfy their physical hunger properly. Likewise, when we substitute the wrong things to fill the void left by spiritual hunger, we become malnourished.

"A certain type of relationship, what we read, what we watch, what we allow to disciple us. What we do with our spare time, like just watching TV for days and not picking up your Bible. It's funny when you look at the way Christ established his church. It's very community oriented. So much of satisfying our deepest longing is found with people."

As he nourishes others spiritually, he needs to keep his cup full, as well. "I'm supposed to give others nutrition, but [sometimes] I'm giving out of lack instead of abundance."



Living in Abundance

Pastor Bodie defines abundance and overflow as having more than enough. According to him, there's a monumental difference when giving to others out of lack versus abundance.

“When you give out of abundance, you're able to give cheerfully, without any regrets; I'm not worried about lack, because I have abundance in my life, in my relationships and walk with Jesus. When I'm giving out of lack, I find myself to be irritable, frustrated, very me-centric, entitled, burned out, ready to give up.”

To give out of abundance, he regularly monitors the state of his soul and the fullness of his cup. “At the end of the day, you're not doing yourself or others a real service by trying to fill their cup with an empty cup,” he said. “When we're lacking, then we're no better than the cursed man who thirsts after flesh.”

A Balanced Meal

Though self-examination can be hard, Pastor Bodie knows he has to do this regularly in order to stay balanced and nourished. He tries to have daily, weekly, and monthly self-check-ins, where he analyzes the breakdown of prayer, Word, work, and play in his life.

He believes that prayer, Word, and work have to be bigger pieces of the pie than play. And he sees intentionality as crucial to a healthy spiritual life.

“When I see myself the healthiest is when I give myself intentional time in word [and prayer] to edify myself, not just to prep for a sermon. It's when I let it just wash over me... prayer, Word, work, play.”

1.

Sadness stalks my heart
Yet “In Your Light I See Light...”
Spirit reveals joy

2.

Dawn conquers darkness
Beauty of future in Christ
Divine truth, deep hope



Daleen Nimick
In Thy Light
Acrylic on paper and haiku poem



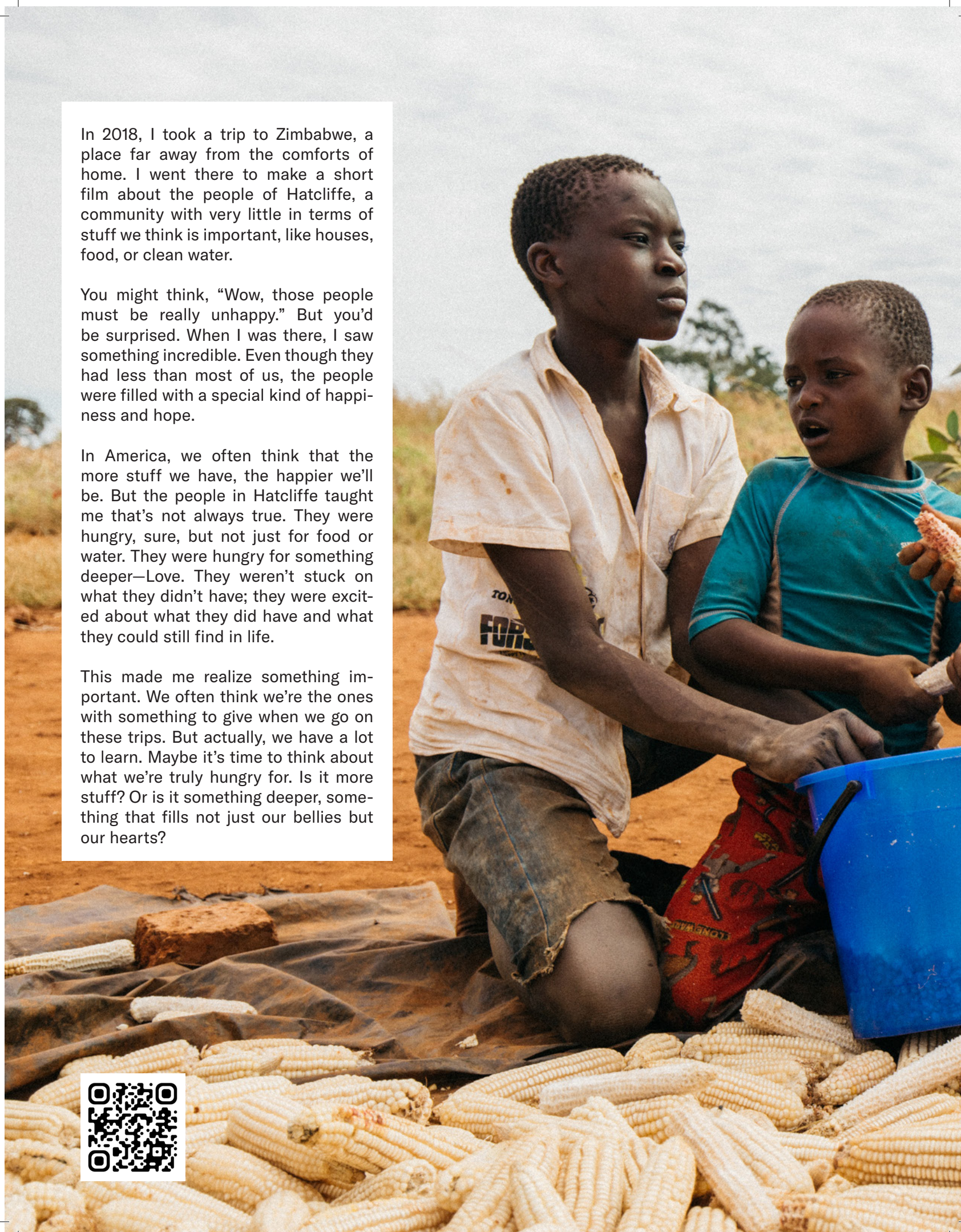
For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light. Ps 36:9

In 2018, I took a trip to Zimbabwe, a place far away from the comforts of home. I went there to make a short film about the people of Hatcliffe, a community with very little in terms of stuff we think is important, like houses, food, or clean water.

You might think, “Wow, those people must be really unhappy.” But you’d be surprised. When I was there, I saw something incredible. Even though they had less than most of us, the people were filled with a special kind of happiness and hope.

In America, we often think that the more stuff we have, the happier we’ll be. But the people in Hatcliffe taught me that’s not always true. They were hungry, sure, but not just for food or water. They were hungry for something deeper—Love. They weren’t stuck on what they didn’t have; they were excited about what they did have and what they could still find in life.

This made me realize something important. We often think we’re the ones with something to give when we go on these trips. But actually, we have a lot to learn. Maybe it’s time to think about what we’re truly hungry for. Is it more stuff? Or is it something deeper, something that fills not just our bellies but our hearts?





Hunger

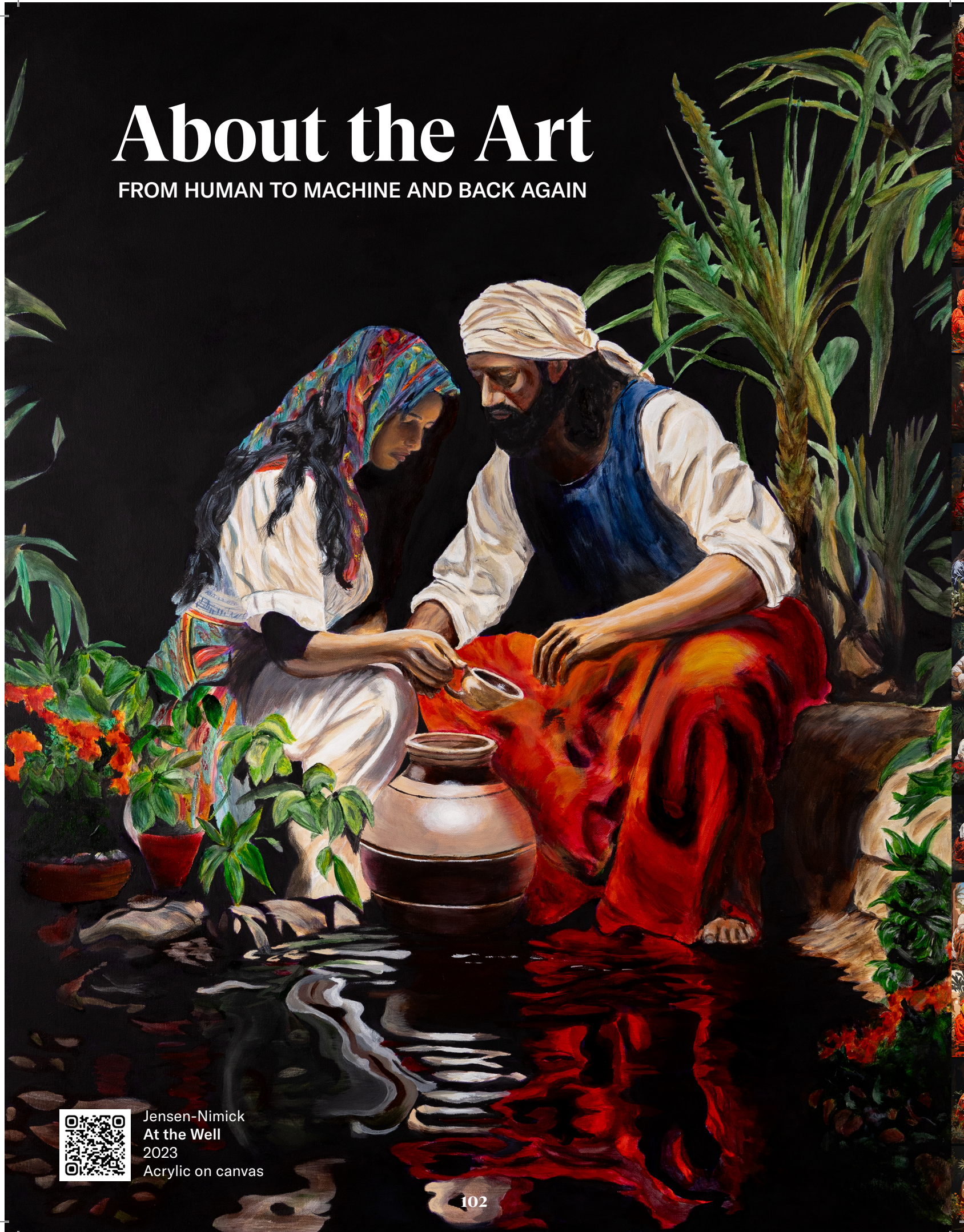
NOTES & RE

In what ways do you tap into the “streams of living water” that God offers through His Spirit?
How can you nurture a spiritual hunger that drives you closer to God?


REFLECTIONS

About the Art

FROM HUMAN TO MACHINE AND BACK AGAIN



Jensen-Nimick
At the Well
2023
Acrylic on canvas



First draft

In crafting this evocative painting of Jesus and the woman at the well, my aim was not to achieve historical accuracy but rather to capture the emotional dynamism of their intimate exchange. The moody atmosphere serves to spotlight this extraordinary moment, echoing the chiaroscuro techniques masterfully employed by Caravaggio. My fascination with his works, which I encountered during visits to Italy's historic churches, significantly informed my vision for this piece. Each time a Caravaggio painting was displayed, it invariably captured my attention, compelling me to further explore the genius behind the canvas.

In conceptualizing this artwork, I was also profoundly influenced by contemporary artist Kehinde Wiley. Known for his highly stylized and dignified portraits of modern individuals—from presidential figures to young African-American men—Wiley's work clearly pays homage to Caravaggio, a point of resonance I wanted to echo in my own work.

Employing the innovative capabilities of "Midjourney," an artificial intelligence image generator, I conducted an intensive creative exploration, generating 460 iterations before painstakingly merging select elements in Photoshop. This digital composition served as the blueprint for the canvas rendition, which was skillfully traced by my human collaborator, Andrew Nimick. Over the subsequent months, Andrew and his wife Daleen undertook the meticulous task of translating this digital vision into an acrylic masterpiece. Their craftsmanship and devotion breathed life into the piece, reminding us of the enduring power of human touch in a world increasingly mediated by technology.

- Cody Jensen

/imagine [prompt: Large scale oil painting of middle eastern Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well, in the style of Caravaggio, in the style of Kehinde Wiley, characters, arab, arab clothing, at high noon, drawing water from a well, with a small ceramic jar, first century Arabic clothing, living water, no food, ultra fine detail --ar 17:22 --s 250]



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The mission of the City Arts Department is to **co-create with the Creator of the universe**. This publication, the *Poets & Saints* magazine, is a testament to this devotion. It was lovingly crafted by a group of artists from our community here at City Church following the Holy Spirit's invitation to create.

We want more artists to join us! If you have creative talents and skills that you'd like to share and hone in a collaborative community, sign up to serve at cc.guide.

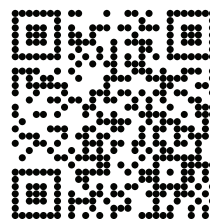
We'd love to continue to provide this magazine to our church family and to the broader Tulsa community free of charge. If you've been blessed by the art in these pages, consider donating to offset the cost of printing future issues. Our suggested donation is \$10 per copy.



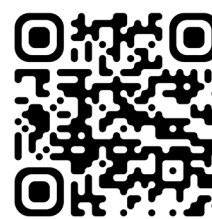
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Silent Auction
Buy a piece from this issue

Nathaniel Radtke, Untitled (Streams), Mixed media



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FALL 2023

Poets & Saints - ISSUE 01

STREAMS IN THE DESERT