

Male Spirituality Writing Series

The following pages contain writings and poems that have been created and shared by some of the men who've attended the Male Spirituality events over the years. They are "soul spillings," written and shared within specific contexts, but also revealing the kind of creative expression of male spirit present at these gatherings of men. They have been inspired by, but don't begin to capture the totality of, all the stories, laughter, tears, love, angst, and passion brought to these gatherings by "a few men good men and true."

These writings are shared here with the authors' permission so they might be respectfully used to inspire those to whom they find their way.

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A Few Good Men

By the oaks of The Grand there gathered 14 good men and true. Under the leadership of a Walking Buffalo, a Songbird, and a pseudonymous poet named Pablo they searched their history, their hearts, and their spirits in a good way, for the path that the Creator has set for men of faith to walk.

Around the sacred fire at dawn they gathered. Even the growling of Little Bear was included in the circle of community. The cat called Breakfast purred and pranced among the prayers and climbed the people. The Creator smiled upon these men, good and true, as the heat of sacred fire wafted scent of new tobacco to the sky.

There were many stories offered. Many spirit-wounds were shared and in the sharing, healing was begun. There was grief and joy in writing, there was midrash picture-taking. There was sitting, walking, talking, by the Grand and in the trees. There was eating, there was sleeping, there was singing, there was weeping, and above all there was laughter in the hearts and on the lips and in the eyes and in the bellies of the men beside the Grand.

Oh the men themselves were grand, as in their maleness in their circle in their struggle bonds were formed and chains were broken, and the Spirit smiled upon them and they knew.

They knew that they were men and although the men were few, they also knew the goodness of creation's deep heart-longing for a few good men of spirit, a few good men of passion, a few good men, a few good men, a few good men and true.

Seventh Fire Smouldering

As I sit amidst this soon to be disbanded circle of my brothers
avision of the seventh fire smoulders
'midst the healing woundedness of new connections

And I remember...

The dark polysyllabic poet I love
grasps the weighty earthiness of the grandfather
and speaks of sticks and stones that slay
kings and violent fathers

Men of vulgar courage carve
black and fearful questions
Flames of anger erupt
then are tempered
by immersions in pools of grief filled wetness

Deep subversive passions
dance across the elder's gentle features
He asks for an apologetic vision
and the songbird alights on the shaft of the eagle's feather

Youths come to the sweat lodge eager for bodily wisdom
on the fiery couplings of gender
Sancho addresses the President in Cree
while Don Quixote undermines the structures
of the church's stiff linear uprightness

The rising sun pauses to dance in the smoke of medicines
wafted upward by the breathing of the four winds
Sacred tears and unrestrained and Holy laughter
pour forth from the circle of life
adrift in all its connected ambiguities

Silent and unspoken cries of joy and pain
touch the very face of God
in tactile connection...

The tobacco clutched to my heart in the first shadows of dawn
Gathers my longings and my joys
I hear the rhythm of the drum
as I cast its medicine into the sacred fire
and pray the eagle circling high overhead
sees me walking in a good way
with my brothers
and my sisters
of many tribes...

Remember this circle my brothers
Remember, you are keepers of the vision
Remember
Remember

"Father, Do You Have a Blessing for Me?"

Esau I am, yet I am not Esau.
First-born I am, and favourite son,
the apple of my father's eye,
the carrier of his unfulfilled hopes,
his untried dreams.
Yet, no Jacob has taken advantage,
my birthright I have not sold,
no scheme stole from me
my father's blessing.
Still, I hear my soul
pleading Esau's prayer,
"Father, do you have a blessing for me?"

Jacob I am, yet I am not Jacob.
Close to my mother I am,
the sharer of her love of poetry,
the bearer of her sensitivity
and delight.
Yet, time and again,
I brought to my father
his favourite meal of rationality
and good sense,
of caution
and uprightness,
seeking to win his favour,
my soul crying out,
"Father, do you have a blessing for me?"

Isaac I am, yet I am not Isaac.
A father I am, sire of a son,
an only-born and a favourite,
who shares my artistic creativity
and my sensitivity.
Yet, I wonder.
how often has he come to me,
seeking my soul's blessing,
only to be sent away,
empty-hearted, pleading,
"Father, do you have a blessing for me?"

Saying Yes to the Mystery

Once again a circle of men gathers
ever changing
yet somehow remaining the same

Once again we listen to the reluctant elder
whose yes is no
and yes
Whose struggle to bridge the long distance
'twixt head and heart
hurt and healing
angry frustration and patient hopefulness
Inspires and informs our own journeying

The grandfather carries the heat of previous gatherings
holds the imprint of brothers absent
loosens bound up tongues and stories
Binds our circle to the cycles of Creation

Here, where everything and nothing is held sacred
tears and anger equally are honoured
Together we raise questions of how to call on Warrior energies
to challenge and defend
risk and resist
...in a good way
"What my brother says is true" becomes a mantra of respect
for each man's fragile wisdom
...from which we learn and grow together

The profane voice of the Infidel names the Eucharist of holy silence
and the Mystery descends within, between and amongst us

We laugh
We cry
and it becomes part of us
here in this circle of vulnerable strength and shared humanity

Ma ma skatch!

G'chi - miigwech!!

All My Brothers

The time is now
I summon all my brothers
Those who inhabit my being,
Those who guide me,
Those who are above,
Those who dwell within,
Those who are below,
Those who watch over.

I declare that the time is now
For guidance, for direction,
For help, for courage.

Stand with me, you who are brother
Sister, friend, ally.
Especially you, my Beloved.

For I am at that moment
Low in spirit, lost and uncertain
Sensing only that something
Must be done.
And so I call on you.

Let us come together within the circle
And let us have it out.
What needs to be done
I ask of you?

I ask of you...
Call to your will the forces that be.
Bring into being the divine spark.
Ignite the fire, illumine the void.
Heat the loins.

For there is much to do
And little time to do it.

I ask of all assembled.
Give me of your strength.
Lend me of your sight, offer me
Your wisdom. For my time has come.

And you are kin and family.
I trust you. Let us go forward
Together.
All my Brothers

Thank You from Baby Brother

Brothers

There are brothers of the flesh
And brothers of the Spirit
I have no biological brothers
But now I have brothers of the Spirit
And since Spirit is so much stronger than flesh,
I no longer lack what once was missing

I have laughed till I cried,
I have wept till I felt joy.
I have met the Songbird and the Infidel.
I have shared with each of you
A communion of stories, struggles, wisdom and freedom.

But mostly I have discovered in myself
Things that were hidden, buried.
We know not what is inside us
Until someone brings it out into the light.

Thank you, my Brothers of the Light!

Enlightenment

Our road to enlightenment is not a straight one,
But one with many dangerous curves, hills and valleys,
Detours and dead ends.

From each new experience and each new relationship,
I take away pieces to add to my collection of knowledge.
Each day I seek to add at least one more tidbit to my collection,
For knowledge is power.

The One who knows all is all powerful.

Someday, I will have learned enough
To enter into His domain and learn
What He can only teach me face to face.
Until then, I will walk this path He has set before me,
Careful to inspect every stone and every twig,
That I might learn its lesson.

And though I may stumble,
I know He will catch me,
And though I may tire,
He will give me strength for the journey.
For though the path is a winding one,
The destination must be reached!

The Power of Men

Yes, it is about power,
the power of men,
men's power.
Not the power
that beats up others,
that drowns others,
that oppresses others.
The so-called patriarchy
did that to us men.
Under its rod
our backs were scarred,
our souls were diminished,
our spirits were drowned.
Nor the power
that blames us men today
for the oppression of the past.
So-called feminism
can do that to us men.
Under its rod
our self-esteem was attacked,
our self-respect was diminished,
our self-image was demeaned.
But, yes, it is about power,
the power of men,
men's power.
For in sharing our stories,
our voices grow strong;
in hearing our stories,
our spirits expand;
in the accepting of our stories,
our power is reborn
For we are men,
men of spirit,
men of divine spark.
And, yes, it is about power,
the power of men,
men's power.

In the Face of Loss

My knees grow weak,
breath will not allow itself
to be pressed into words,
tears are banked behind my eyes
but cannot be coaxed
into cataracting down my cheeks.
In the face of loss
I am emasculated.
Let's hold each other, my brothers,
so that our tears may flow
freely and freeing us
to discover again words
to stir our courage
in the face of loss.

The Grandfather

There comes a moment as "the grandfather" passes
When the silence in my heart speaks.

The life of the stone
Rises up in my mouth
And the voice on my lips
Is a voice not my own.

The grandfather's voice and the grandfather's heart
Are as warm as the sun in the shelter of March.

There are those see him hard
Because he is strong
But his arms can enfold you
His patience is long

The grandfather's wisdom, the grandfather's soul
Is sedate in its pace and it makes the heart whole

But the wholeness it brings
It brings with a price
For the grandfather's wisdom
Is the wisdom of life.

The Drum

Deep in the beat
In the heartbeat of life
There lives a hunger
That gnaws the bones of the boy.

The sacred hunger of the soul
Cries out for love
And will not be satisfied
With less than wholeness.

Wholeness only comes through brokenness
When innocence loses itself in desire
When desire loses itself in giving
When giving breaks open in sacrifice
Then love germinates and grows.

Conversation

Conversation has no shape
But the shape of the Spirit
The Spirit moves among our spirits
Twisting, turning, emptying, filling
Lifting, falling, crying, calling
You are home my brother, you're home.

To Plant a Tree

To plant a tree
Is an act of love
An act of contrition
An act of redemption.

To plant a tree
As absurd as it sounds
Is an act of great faith
In the love of the ground.

For the soil of salvation
Will receive it and bless it
Will hold it, will feed it
Will twist it and test it.

Until it has grown for a few hundred years
And it falls in the forest to the shedding of tears
And the soil of the forest receives it again
The soil of salvation whose love never ends.

The River

There is a river
A river of sound
That flows through the heart
Of the drummer of life.

And the stones of the earth
Are alive with that sound
That I feel in my bones
When I stand on the stones
By the shores of the river
The river of life.