

POETRY

The Sunflowers

Come with me
Into the fields of sunflowers.
Their faces are burnished disks,
their dry spines
creak like ship masts,
their green leaves,
so heavy and many,
fill all day with the sticky
sugars of the sun.
Come with me
to visit the sunflowers,
they are shy
but want to be friends:
they have wonderful stories
of when they were young—
the important weather,
the wandering crows.
Don't be afraid
to ask them questions!
Their bright faces,
which follow the sun,
will listen, and all
those rows of seeds—
each one a new life!
Hope for a deeper acquaintance;
each of them, though it stands
in a crowd of many,
like a separate universe,
is lonely, the long work
of turning their lives
into a celebration
Is not easy. Come
and let us talk with those modest faces,
the simple garments of leaves,
the coarse roots in the earth
so uprightly burning.

- from "Blue Iris" by Mary Oliver

Beyond

Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing,
there is a field. I'll meet you there.

When the soul lies down in that grass,
the world is too full to talk about.
Ideas, language, even the phrase "each other" doesn't make any sense.

-Rumi

DHARMA

Buddha's Final Teaching

"Make of yourself a light. Rely upon yourself. Do not depend upon anyone else. Make my teachings your light. Rely upon them. Do not depend on others' teachings."

-Buddha

Practicing Peace

If we want there to be peace in the world, we have to be brave enough to soften what is rigid in our hearts, to find the soft spot and stay with it. We have to have that kind of courage and take that kind of responsibility. That's true spiritual warriorship. That is the true practice of peace.

-Pema Chodron

Seal of an Emperor Walking Meditation

Choose a nice road for your practice, along the shore of a river, in a park, on the flat roof of a building, in the woods, or along a bamboo fence. Such places are ideal, but they are not essential. I know there are people who practice walking meditation in reformation camps, even in small prison cells.

It is best if the road is not too rough or too steep. Slow down and concentrate on your steps. Be aware of each move. Walk straight ahead with dignity, calm, and comfort. Consciously make an imprint on the ground as you step. Walk as the Buddha would. Place your foot on the surface of the earth the way an emperor would place his seal on a royal decree.

A royal decree can bring happiness or misery to people. It can shower grace on them or it can ruin their lives. Your steps can do the same. If your steps are peaceful, the world will have peace. If you can take one peaceful step, you can take two. You can take one hundred and eight peaceful steps.

-Thich Nhat Hanh