Evangelization through Art



Sr. Laurette Roy, p.m. believes that art not only serves to teach but is meant to be shared. Below are various paintings on burlap with her interpretations. Enjoy!



Sacred Heart of Jesus

In this painting, the heart of Jesus is depicted as a burning furnace of Love. This great Love symbolized by a very bright light also indicates that God is the SOURCE OF LIGHT. Jesus' left hand is held over His heart as a shield that we may not be blinded by its brilliance and that we may not be intimidated by its beauty. As we gaze upon Him we almost hear:

Come to me all you who labor and are heavy burdened and I will give you rest.

-Matt. 11:28



Holy Wisdom

In this painting JESUS CHRIST, the Master, Teacher, holds the open WORD inscribed with the well-known symbols, the Alpha and the Omega, representing that God is the beginning and the end. HE was anointed by the Father to be His Word on earth and to impart His Wisdom to humankind. His iconic gesture of the right hand symbolizes the great truths He came to reveal, namely, that He is both human and divine (two fingers pointing upward), and that there are three persons in one God (the remaining fingers on the thumb forming one unity). The colors used are those found in Russian icons, blue for divinity and red for humanity. As in the aforementioned icons, light comes from the inner being, and, in this case, the light represents the emanating WISDOM coming from the Godhead. The WORD, JESUS CHRIST, teaches us that He is the WAY to be followed, the TRUTH to be told, and the LIFE to be lived and shared. Indeed, the faith-filled disciple "shall be taught by God."



Transfiguration

At the Transfiguration the glory of God bursts forth through Jesus. In this painting, Jesus' eyes are lifted up to heaven because that is His usual stance when Scripture describes Him conversing with His Father. During this fleeting moment in time, Jesus is revealed in all his splendor. It is as if He can no longer "contain" his divinity. With this vision, Jesus prepares His witnesses, peter, James and John, for His death, resurrection and coming. (Mt 16:27-28)

Moses and Elijah, symbolized here by the burning bush and the flaming chariot, represent the two great longings within one's soul, namely, to know God and to be transfigured in the beatific vision one day. The burning bush is a symbol of the revelation of God's Holy Name to Moses, "I AM WHO AM." (Ex 3:14) The flaming chariot represents the Parousia when all the faithful will be reunited in the ETERNAL RADIANCE of the Godhead.



Holy Longing

The dynamic movement of Christ's resurrected élan from the Tau cross is symbolic of the Holy Longing within the still center of every human being. This Holy Aspiration is a result of Paradise lost. So is the travail of "all creation growing in labor pains even until now." (Rom. 8) Christ's robe sweeping into the swirl of the galaxy portrays the plan of God to restore all things through Him in the fullness of time. (Eph. 1) His uplifted arm's depict not only the timeless longing deep in the human spirit, but also the embracing gesture of Him Who holds all creation together in Himself. The Darkness of space contrasts with the brilliance of the galaxy to signify Christ's triumph over the darkness of evil through His death on the cross. The brilliance of the galaxy shows the Light of His resurrection which brought hope to fallen humanity. The Tau cross, mark of the chosen ones in Ezekiel and the Christians at Baptism, is a symbol of fidelity and hope. The green color of the cross symbolized that hope invites us to focus our gaze on the Resurrected Lord. Hope also immerses us into the unfathomable depths of the Paschal Mystery. The transparency of the cross illustrates that the cross in our lives is the entrance into the dynamism of the creative transformation of Love. Empowered by hope-filled longing, we await the coming of the Lord Who will open His arms to welcome us Home as "DAY dawns and the MORNING STAR rises in our hearts." (II Peter 1)



Behold the Man

The whole attitude of Jesus in this painting is one of humble submission and total surrender. Even in pain, His look is merciful and kind. Perhaps His greatest suffering is the knowledge that so many humans would never know or would never believe in his limitless and unconditional LOVE. Pilate's words, "Behold the man!" challenges the viewer to gaze upon Jesus' Holy Face and remain in silent contemplation.

So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple cloak. And he (Pilate) said to them, "Behold the Man" - John 19:5



Good Shepherd

The Good Shepherd is one of the oldest symbols of God's love and fidelity. It is found in the catacombs of Rome.

This painting depicts the care of the Shepherd for each person called by a unique name. His caring tenderness is shown by the gesture of His right hand stroking the lamb's neck in order to calm his fears. As he is cradled in the Shepherd's arms the lamb's countenance reflects total trust and the true peace of knowing that he will forever be protected from all harm.

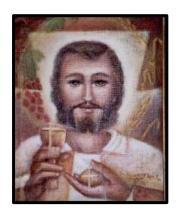


Word of Light

Jesus came as LIGHT of the world to unveil and to reveal the great mystery of God. He came as WORD spoken in human tongue to proclaim that His Kingdom is near at hand. At that glorious moment in time, God's great outpouring LOVE is manifested in Him as the new, visible and divine EXPRESSION of God's PRESENCE.

In this painting, Jesus' gesture of uplifted hands is symbolic of His mission as TEACHER and SAVIOR. His inviting hands imply that, through His message of infinite compassion, forgiveness and mercy, He bids us not only to follow Him, but also to become living gospels ourselves. With open arms He beckons us to reform our lives and to believe in the "gospel of God." (Mk. 1: 14-15) Like Moses raising his hands in prayer and supplication until sunset, (Ex. 17:11-12) Jesus' radiant stance is one of holy MEDIATION. His passion is to fulfill the WILL of the Father, to set the earth on FIRE and to see it burst into an unending BLAZE. (Luke 12:49) From the pulpit of the Cross, Jesus' uplifted arms stretch out to the ends of the earth to embrace all nations until the sunset of time.

Art is where work meets love...



Transforming Love

In this painting, this mystery of transforming LOVE is portrayed by a transparent cross that can be traced from Jesus' lips (spoken WORD) as the symbolic offering of bread and wine are changed into the very substance of His Body and Blood. Jesus knew full well that bread is made from wheat grinded into flour and wine from extracted juice of crushed grapes. By using these symbols, Jesus reminds His disciples throughout he ages that, like Him, they must live their own Passovers, i.e., they, too, must pass through the cross into New and Resurrected Life (represented by the glorious cross behind Jesus). They, too, must lay down their lives as Eucharist by surrendering their entire being to God's merciful LOVE and by becoming bread broken for others in self-sacrifice. The whole painting comes together as the beholder's eyes follow the circle of LIGHT, symbol of Trinitarian Love, enclosing the wheat and the vine in its brilliance to show that JESUS, by His DEATH and RESURRECTION, changed human weakness into the graced dignity of Divine Life with the promise of eternal glory.

At His Last Passover meal on earth, Jesus took bread and wine, two staples of everyday life, blessed them and said: "This is my Body. This is my Blood. Do this in memory of me." (I Cor. 11) Within the very familiar setting of a feast, He gave his body and Blood as Bread of Life and Spiritual Drink. More than that, He commissioned his disciples to take and eat and to embody the dynamic memory of His life, i.e., to make Him present and alive in their lives and to be Eucharist for others.



Cana Feast of Love

Some theologians parallel John's account of the wedding feast in Cana to the espousal of Jesus with His Church. During the festivities, Mary notices a shortage of wine. In order to spare embarrassment to the hosts, she makes Jesus aware of the problem and asks Him to save the situation. She seemingly ignores the fact that He tells her that it is not yet the time for His public life and she tells the servants: "Do whatever He tells you."

It is not surprising that Jesus performs His first miracle at a wedding feast, a celebration of love and life. In this painting He tenderly gestures over the water and changes it into abundant wine. This reverent extension of the hand reminds one of the Last Supper when Jesus took a cup of wine and changed it into His blood. By this miracle of miracles He became source of endless LIFE and everlasting LOVE for His Bride, the Church.

This scene also shows Mary retreating in the shadows and indicates that she chooses to live a hidden life as Jesus goes forth to fulfill His mission. The wedding party faintly seen in the background prefigures the ETERNAL BANQUET OF LOVE to which we are all invited. Until then, Jesus Eucharist mysteriously transforms the water of our everydayness into "spiritual wine" as He accompanies us on our earthly pilgrimage.



"Belovedness"

In this scene of Jesus' baptism in the Jordan, an aura of soft light envelops Him as God the Father proclaims Him "Beloved." A diaphanous white dove symbolizing the Holy Spirit enfolds Him with heart-shaped wings as He is anointed for His ministry. With head bowed in humble reverence, the Sinless One chooses to be in the midst of sinners and teaches us that we, too, must choose a life of self-emptying and humility as the way to Risen Life.

Bathed in the saving waters of our own Baptism, the Holy Spirit poured abundant Love upon us and filled our whole being, illuminating it with DIVINE LIGHT. We became children of God and members of the communion of saints. Born of Water and the Spirit, our hearts became "sanctuary" and "community" and entered into the dynamic movement of Trinitarian Life. The sweeping wave of water engulfing Jesus portrays this dynamic movement of Divine Life, love and LIGHT in which we were immersed forever by our baptismal covenant.

Our commitment is to let this LOVE and LIGHT flow freely and gently through our innermost self so as to overflow into the hearts of all our brothers and sisters. Clothed with the white robe of transformed humanity, we journey together toward our Eternal Home as we are transformed daily "from glory to glory" by the Holy Spirit with the comforting assurance that we are DEEPLY LOVED.



Immaculate Heart of Mary

Mary receives light from God who is the Source of Light. She is painted sideways to show that she is the receptor of light, but as the light of the Triune God enters her heart, it is broken into the seven colors of the rainbow as white light is broken when it enters a pure crystal. (The rainbow formed by the radiance issuing from the heart of Mary is a traditional symbol of Christ.)

More than any other human person, Mary watched over her heart and held it in the light of Christ. Her left hand indicates this vigilance and her right hand faithfully holds her heart up to the LIGHT that transforms it.

Her head is bent toward her left hand as someone who is totally intent on listening. So, too, Mary was always attentive to the WORD OF GOD, to His Holy Will. Because of this, she readily opens her hand in a gesture of service to all humankind a generous response to LOVE.



Chosen One

This scene depicts the child Mary as she is presented in the Temple. Her whole being is bathed in the light of the glory of God. From all eternity the Father had chosen her to be the Mother of His only SON, WORD MADE MAN. Now she comes to prepare herself to be the WOMAN at the center of salvation history and to be the first to hear God's heartbeat.

In this painting, the hand of the lord God enfolds His Chosen One with tender care and divine love. Mary's gaze is lifted up in wonder as she holds the scroll of her people's sacred tradition close to her heart. She glows in readiness to hear God's message through these sacred words. Her simple and prayerful stance embody her longing spirit and her sweet surrender to the Will of God as she grows in wisdom and understanding.



Word Filled Silence

The glory of God bursts forth from the heavens in the stillness of Christmas' starlit night. THE WORD IS MADE FLESH in human history and the silence of the stable surrenders to the holiness of the miraculous moment of Jesus' birth...to the mystery of greatness and littleness, of power and weakness, of wordlessness and WORD. Though Mary is wordless with wonder and awe as she holds her little baby close to her heart, she is WORD-filled as she listens to the heartbeat of God. Today she gives birth to Jesus Emmanuel. God sends His Son in human form that we may hear his gentle, peaceful VOICE and know His tender, caring LOVE today, tomorrow and forever.



Pieta

What are Mary's thoughts as she gazes on her Son's Holy Face? Undoubtedly, memories of His Life flash in her mind as she recalls important events. She gently holds His broken body and covers Him reverently with her veil. This gesture reminds her of that wonder-filled night when she wrapped Him with swaddling clothes. It is also symbolic of her newly acquired role as MOTHER of broken humanity. In union with the FATHER, she offers her Son for the salvation of human kind.

God so loved the world that He gave His only Son... that the world might be saved through Him. John 3:16-17

Not even she can fathom the depths of the CROSS, the mystery of unconditional ETERNAL LOVE. She knows that Jesus is the true Paschal Lamb immolated for the sins of the world. In silence, she anticipates the fulfillment of the promise: The Son of Man is to be handed over to men and they will kill him, and three days later he will rise. Mark 9:31



Annunciation

At a very young age, Mary was introduced to the Word of God. As a true child of Israel, she was familiar with the fact that the cloud covering the meeting Tent indicated that the lord was present among His people:

Then the cloud covered the meeting tent and the glory of the Lord filled the dwelling. Ex. 48:34

In this painting, Mary is seated with a scroll representing the Word of God. In peaceful silence, her heart is listening in the gentle movement of the Spirit within her in total availability and interior freedom. She is unaware that she has been chosen to fulfill the prophecy that a virgin would bear a child. (Is. 7:14)

As the angel greets her, she is taken by surprise. Her conversation with the angel shows a maturity beyond her hears. As soon as she hears the angel assuring her that the holy Spirit would come upon her and that His mighty power would encircle her with His protection she utter her "yes." It is the word the prophets had longed to hear and one that would reverberate and transcend all times because, at that moment, the glory of God filled His new dwelling promised to His people and the Word of Life embraced humankind within Mary's womb. As the cloud came to rest upon the temple of Jerusalem at the time of its dedication (1 Kings 8:18), the power of the Most high came to rest on MARY, the new temple.



Joyful Radiance

Mary "set out and traveled to the hill country in haste," and thus, became the first missionary to bring the Good News of salvation to others. Her flowing veil in this painting shows that nothing could stop her because she is carried by the Holy One she is carrying. She could not contain the news that the promised Messiah was finally here. She braves the difficult caravan journey to seek out the only one who had experienced a call from God for a mission seemingly as humanly impossible as she had. Elizabeth had consented to be the mother of the "prophet of the Most High" after child-bearing age as Mary had consented to become the mother of the "Son of the Most High" even though she was a virgin. Elizabeth recognizes in Mary the one chosen by God, the one on whom God could rely to bring His infinite Love to the world. Immediately Mary sings her hymn of joy, the Magnificat.

The soft glow of the rainbow, sign of God's friendship or covenant with humankind, (Gen. 9:13) enwraps the two women chosen by God to be at the heart of salvation history as they greet each other. Their radiant faces depict the joy of true communion centered on Christ. This holy encounter becomes a lofty ideal of authentic friendship and community for centuries to come. In symbolic gestures, Mary's right hand reaches out to Elizabeth (who represents humankind) as she shares the Sacred Presence of her unborn Child with her. Elizabeth's left hand is held in great respect as she receives this great Gift in the name of faith-filled persons of all times. Both hands are positioned to form an aura of LIGHT around Mary's womb, first tabernacle of Jesus Emmanuel, GOD MADE MAN. Thus, both women share in God's LOVE and LIFE and their inner beings are filled with a "SON-BURST" of joy and peace.

Art is where work meets love...



Prince of Peace

On the first Christmas a dazzling star burst forth from the soundless symphony of the universe. Like a jewel in the night, its brilliance shattered the darkness of space and its rays spilled all over the starlit sky to brighten a dismal world bereft of peace and harmony. As the Eternal Son clothed our broken humanity, angelic choirs filled the heavenly expanse with a melody of praise and great tidings:

In this painting, Jesus, the Son of God in human form, is weak and vulnerable in His mother's arms. As we contemplate the Divine Infant sleeping softly in the secure embrace of Mary, our fearfulness of God's splendor is changed into loving trust. Like a brilliant STAR, Jesus' peaceful slumber radiates inner peace and brings solace to our weary hearts ever in search of lasting happiness and repose. As He rest on His mother's shoulder, so too, He calls us forth to silence our restlessness or He comes to fulfill His promises and to change our darkness into LIGHT and our dissonance into PEACE.



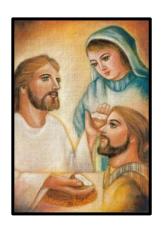
Light of All Nations

The subdued hues of this painting create an atmosphere of reverence and worship as Mary and Joseph fulfill the law of Moses by bringing Jesus to His Father's House to be consecrated.

...they took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, just as is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male that opens the womb shall be consecrated to the Lord," and to offer the sacrifice of "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons..." Luke 2:23-24

This prophetic gesture announces that our "redemption is at hand," (Luke 21:28) and that the LIGHT of all nations has appeared never to be overcome by the darkness of evil.

The gentle circles of light around Jesus show the ripple-effect of this light as it radiates upon "whoever lives the truth." (John 3:21) The mission of Mary and Joseph are also implied by their symbolic stance. Mary is shown presenting Jesus to humankind as Savior and Joseph stands in the background as vigilant protector and gentle provider.



Emmaus

A new biblical interpretation of the Emmaus event is that the two disciples were husband and wife. This theory is based upon Scripture: "One of them named Cleopas..." (Luke 24:18) "Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleopas..." (John 19:25).

Biblical scholars believe that "Cleopas" and Clopas" could refer to the same man. It was against Jewish law to return home on the Sabbath, so Clopas and Mary left on Sunday at which time Jesus accompanied them on the road to Emmaus. At the end of their journey, they invited Him into their home as it was evening.

"...while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it and gave it to them. With that their eyes opened and they recognized him." (Luke 24:30-31)

This painting attempts to recapture the moment when Christ's resurrected LIGHT pierced the DARKNESS of Good Friday's great tragedy with dazzling brilliance. As "their eyes opened", Clopas and Mary experienced GENTLE PEACE, true reward of faithful DISCIPLESHIP.

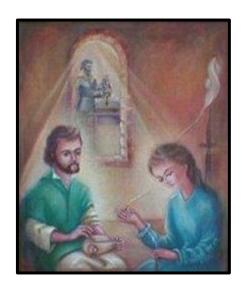
Through him all thing were made; he holds all creation together in himself. Col. 1:17



Blessed are the Poor in Spirit

How blest are the poor in spirit: the reign of God is theirs. Matthew 5:3

In this painting the young shepherdess represents one who is poor in spirit. she is aware that being total gift from God, i.e., that she is totally "received" from God. All she is and all she has comes freely from her Creator. In her nothingness, she is completely dependent on the almighty for all her needs. Her shabby cloak flying in the wind indicates that she follows the leadings of the Spirit with unwavering trust and meekness of heart as reflected on her serene countenance. Her forward position accentuates that, in gentle surrender to God's holy will, she is thrust into the dynamic movement of Uncreated Love. Her whole attitude is childlike and inner peace is conveyed by the soft light enveloping her. The regal color of her dress reminds the viewer that she is "queen" in the Kingdom of God through baptism and the patches symbolize that she is already living in this Kingdom with her brothers and sisters here on earth. She fully realizes that her "wealth" is in her poverty because she knows how full of love and kindness our Lord Jesus is: though he is so rich, yet to help her he became so poor, so that by being poor, he could make her rich. (paraphrase--II Cor. 8:9)



Nazareth - Holy Intimacy

NAZARETH: A small village in Israel where the Holy Family lived and bonded in intimate relationship for some twenty years. NAZARETH: A home where Jesus, Mary and Joseph shared solitude and prayer, silence and dialogue, joy and sorrow. NAZARETH: A place where Jesus, issuing from the mysterious Trinitarian relationship of the Godhead, gradually "came HOME" within himself in an ever-increasing awareness of who He was as Son of God and Son of Man. During the most productive and active years of His life, Jesus remained hidden in the company of Mary and Joseph to be schooled for His mission to redeem fallen humankind. For Mary, the period of Nazareth was a school of mutual love and true freedom because she lived in the constant Presence of the Son of God, her son, and shared His daily life in an unparalleled holy intimacy on earth.

This painting reminds the beholder that Nazareth is a school of awareness of the "HOLY" in everyday life and an internship of the kingdom of God. NAZARETH is also that sacrosanct inner space where one learns in profound silence, moment by moment, and year by year, how to "come HOME" to God and to self, how to be homebound together with others until DAY dawns when all of us will be gathered as ONE family in our eternal HOME to sing the glory of the HOLY ONE in an everlasting and harmonious melody.



Ezekiel's Vision

"Above the firmament over their heads something like a throne could be seen, looking like sapphire. Upon it was seated, up above, one who had the appearance of a man. Upward from what resembled his waist I saw what gleamed like electrum; downward from what resembled his waist I saw what looked like fire; he was surrounded with splendor. Like the bow on a rainy day was the splendor that surrounded him. Such was the vision of the likeness of the glory of the Lord." Ez. 1: 26-28.

The vision of Jesus sitting on a throne with extended hands is an invitation for the viewer to sit and to speak with Him (Ez. 2:1) The electrum represents the Uncreated Energy of God, unfathomable and mysterious union of the Three in One. It bursts forth in all directions and ignites the disciple with the Fire brought to earth by Jesus, the Word of God. In this living dynamism, the disciple is not only consumed and transformed, but is also impelled to proclaim the Word to all peoples and to give glory to God in all His splendor. This splendor is represented by the seven circles of rainbow hues around the circle, the Heart of God. The bow is a reminder of God's covenant with humankind. "I will set my bow in the clouds to serve as a sign of the covenant between me and the earth." Gen. 3:13. Finally. our eyes bring us full circle to the "INNER SANCTUM", the inner circle representing the Holy of Holies. This inner circle assumes the dominating position of the all-inclusive CENTER in which the universe is gathered together.



Joyful Feast of Hope

Inspired by the first two chapters of Acts, this painting captures the sacred moment of the Pentecost event, the birth of the Church. Feast of Hope and Joy! United together in prayer, the faithful followers of Jesus are surprised by the SPIRIT. Sweeping down like a Mighty Wind, this Holy Fire of Love enkindles an everlasting Flame in their hearts and sends them forth to share the reason for their hope. The glowing burst of the pinwheel-shaped sparks of fireworks erupting from all directions symbolizes their festive jubilation. The clay-colored background signifies that the coming of the spirit pierces the darkness of fallen humanity with marvelous Light. The inner faces of those present in the Upper Room solemnly reflect the radiance of transcendent PRESENCE as they claim the inheritance of the Spirit's GIFTS.

Mary, Mother of the Church, is the central figure of the painting. Her allenfolding gesture shows that she fully embraces this mission received at the foot of the Cross. Her hands lifted in prayer are symbolic of the dynamic and joyful hope with which she gathers all the brothers and sisters of Jesus. Her peaceful and intense gaze focuses beyond the realm of the visible to express the longing within all creation to be caught up in God's plan for wholeness by the transforming POWER of the SPIRIT. (I Cor.)



Vision of Glory

The greatest claim to fame is to be a child of God. This honor is conferred upon each of us as the waters of Baptism immerse us in Trinitarian LIFE and clothe us with a robe of glory symbolized by the child's white garment in this painting. At this precise moment, a unique melody in perfect unison with the rhythm of God's great symphony of Creation is placed within our inner being. Only if we "turn and become like a child" do we discover the theme of this original song. As we live day by day with the purity of heart and the unwavering trust of a child, the Spirit unveils and reveals it slowly to us.

This painting attempts to depict the "childlikeness" by the simple scene of a father holding a child who sings the praises of God to her heart's content as she enjoys the security of her father's arms with complete delight. It also portrays the child who is finally safe in her everlasting HOME. The subdued staff and notes in the background represent the surround-sound of the everlasting hymns of praise that will enthrall her as she joins the angelic choirs in eternal jubilation. She is filled with wonder at "what eyes has not seen and ears has not heard." (I Cor. 2:9) She sees the FACE of the TRIUNE GOD (the three stars) and bathes in the VISION OF GLORY.

"Do not be afraid any longer, little flock." -Luke 12:32



Someone Cares

God is the Eternal CARE-GIVER whose divine providence frees us from all fears, worries and anxieties. The thought that one's life is in the Heavenly Father's caring Hand is comforting as one ventures out to meet the challenges of a broken and wounded world. Through Scripture, Jesus invites us to look at the birds of the air and the flowers of the field as proofs that the Almighty provides for our every need moment by moment, day by day, and night by night.

The whole scene of this painting symbolizes the inner joy of one who trusts in the Lord wholeheartedly. The birds are secure and carefree as they ready themselves to fly. They exhibit the true freedom of one who places all anxieties about tomorrow in God's Hand and lives the "NOW" moment to the fullest. The back of Jesus' hand serves as a shelter for the little bird and depicts God's tender protection from all threatening dangers. The open gesture illustrates that God enables one to face the future with joyful hope and provides the thrust to live out the "do not be afraid" of the Gospels knowing that the divine "SOMEONE CARES".



Wind-Swept Firelight

The Life Breath emanating from the Trinity, dynamic Source of uncreated Love, sweeps like a mystical Wind through space and time as the reverent Spirit Lord rests upon and invades the still center of one's being. As one "stirs into flame the Gift" received (2 Tim. 1:6) a blaze is ignited (Lk. 12:49) that will burn brightly throughout one's earthly journey "for our God is a consuming FIRE" (Heb. 12:29) and "as gold in the furnace, God proves [the heart and soul]." (Wis. 3:6) This outpouring of the Spirit transfigures one's sacred center and erupts into works of Love to return as glory and praise to the Eternal Breath from whence it came in a dance of indescribable JOY.