

☼ Contemplate the sun burning up 4 million tons of itself every second for you! Contemplate the Son pouring out his life on a cross for you! Human generosity is possible because the sun/Son is generous.<sup>14</sup> From the blast of the birthing of ten thousand galaxies, Jesus exploded outward from his tomb in radiant light and love, to fill the earth and the whole cosmos with the fullness of divine life.<sup>15</sup>

Look up into the sky, beyond the limits of this small galaxy – far beyond the boundaries of your mind – into the billions of galaxies that glow like flaming flowers filling the garden of the universe. Light travels 5,787 trillion miles a year; and to cross at the speed of light, just once this universe whose every starry body contains the fullness of the Risen Christ, would take all of twenty billion years.

Oh, beyond comprehension, too vast for our little minds, is the mystery of the Resurrection, is the wonder of the nighttime sky, is the body of the Risen Christ, of the whole Church to which I belong!<sup>16</sup>

And yet, despite all amazement, the truth remains simple: Life is a pure flame, and we live by an invisible sun within us. The energy of the Son (sun) flows in your veins. You are a child of the sun. Plug into the energy of the universe, the light of the Son, the power of the Eternal Fire. Let your light shine for all to see, joining with the light of others to dispel the darkness. Shine as illuminators in the world. You are children of God without a doubt, shining like stars in the dark night.<sup>17</sup>

☼ Fire is your sacrament, O God; fire is sacred. Now, as we have brought fire to these candles, may we be reminded that we are to burn with this same fire for you.

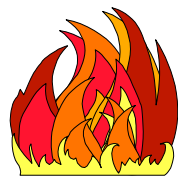
Just as we have lit these candles, may we allow your light to enter our eyes, fill our minds and strengthen our hearts, that we may see the path – *your* path – that lies before us.

Light is for communication.... Light, in fact, is *essentially* a communal thing; it is of its nature to be shared.<sup>18</sup> Let us communicate your light to all we meet. May the memory of this gathering linger long after these candles have been extinguished.

Grant us the gift of divine wisdom, that we may step forward with faith and courage, in *your* service, as the only body, hands, feet, eyes and voices that you possess in this world.

Amen!

*Music: We Are* (Sweet Honey in the Rock)



## Saturday Evening Candlelight Service



*The room is dark except for one central candle. Quiet music plays. Retreatants enter in silence, at their own pace, and settle. When all are comfortable and still and a prayerful silence has settled, the leader begins:*

O Divine Wisdom, sometimes we are confused and unsure, and it feels like we are lost in the darkness. Night enrobes us in her cloak and the dawn seems distant.

*Music swells: “...Light our way, Lord  
Bright so we don't fall.  
Teach us to call on you  
More faithfully...”*

*When this verse ends, music quiets to a whisper. Slowly, one by one, retreatants light their candles (☼) and proclaim their passages.*

☼ In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth....God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... All things come into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being through him was life, and the life was the light of all people.<sup>1</sup>

In the beginning, God created fire. Fire to light. Fire to warm. Fire to protect. Fire to feed. Fire to heal. Fire to live. In the beginning, God created life.

☼ And in each life, God plants a seed of fire. For each child that is born, a morning star rises and sings to the universe who we are. For each child that is born, fire takes flesh in the warmth of a loving womb. For each child that is born, a tongue of heavenly fire ignites a soul.<sup>2</sup>

There is an ancient story, told around the evening fires, that the stars fall from the skies only at appointed times. They fall from the heavens gently, as do the brilliant autumn leaves. And, luminous, they descend whirling upon the winds of outer space. Millions of brilliant

leaves fall to earth, floating lazily downward. Then, as they approach this planet, they become impatient and anxious to reach the earth, so they shoot toward their destination, sparkling with eagerness and eternal energy.<sup>3</sup> ✨

Such a disturbance from the heavens is not a cause for alarm, but rather a cause for joy! Every shooting star you see racing across the night sky has as its destination an open and loving womb. You and I – all of us – are only leaves from heaven. We are divine energy, starlight fused with flesh.<sup>4</sup>

But as time flows and the stars move across the sky, each flame ignited in that primordial Fire is threatened. The ashes of confusion, doubt, fear and anger fall upon our lives, encrusting our hearts, suffocating our souls. Our fears threaten to extinguish our fire. Once the energy of a star fuses with flesh, the memory of what it is and where it came from can easily be forgotten. Countless stars sleep in the dust of their earthen bodies.<sup>5</sup>

Our *deepest* fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous, loved?

✨ Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God, a flame from the eternal Fire.<sup>6</sup> Arise! Shine! For your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you....The glory of the Lord will appear over you....Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice.<sup>7</sup>

✨ You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn't serve the world....We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fears, our presence automatically liberates others.<sup>8</sup>

✨ You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.<sup>9</sup>

✨ A vocation has about it a sense of mystery. A vocation comes from within your very soul, the fire that burns deep down within you, the

birthplace of your dreams and your memories, your history and your passions and your desires. When you are creative in the truest way by living out the mystery of *you*, then you become not only something special, but something sacred! By responding to the challenge to become your truest and best self, you will find yourself in the presence of the Real Mystery of God. Our true work, our vocation, is to complete our birth from the One Fire, to fulfill our destiny, to live the dreams that free our enormous soul from living too small a life, a life encrusted in fear and doubt.<sup>10</sup>

✨ If you pour out your bread for the hungry, if you bind up the wounds of the soul, then will your true light shine for all to see. If, indeed, you have faith the size of a mustard seed... If you take time to practice, you will become a great musician. If your heart is filled with love, you will do all things well. If you can swallow a tongue swollen with the desire to say “I told you so!” If you can forgive seven times seventy times. If... If... If... Strange that such a small word has the power to prevent the light from raging quiet in the night, from shining like a city seated on a hill for all to see.<sup>11</sup>

There is a story about an old holy man and his disciples. One night the young seeker came to the hermitage of this holy man and said to him, “Abba, I wish to be holy. I have read all the sacred scripture. I have fasted for years, have trained my body to be totally obedient. I have prayed the long night vigils and have spent forty days in absolute solitude in the most remote area of the desert. Please, Abba, what else should I do?” The old man stood up tall, raised his arms above his head, his fingers flickering like luminous lamps, and he said softly, “Well, my child, you could become fire!”<sup>12</sup> ✨

But “to become fire” you must first move beyond all the *ifs* of life. True wisdom is to know who you are, to know you are light. Those who know and who have removed all the *ifs* shine brightly like the stars of the night sky. ✨ Having removed the *ifs*, they find time to study, to practice, to play with children, to help the poor... Time to pray, to go deep – deep inside themselves – and to touch that luminous leaf shimmering at the centre of their hearts. Not *if* they had the time, they *have* the time. Not *if* they could be kind; because they want passionately to be kind, they indeed become kind. Truly, this age is unsurpassed in distress, and daily the darkness grows because in so many of our lives there are too many *ifs*.<sup>13</sup>

1. John 1:1-4
2. Adapted from Sweet Honey in the Rock
3. Adapted from "Falling Stars" by Edward Hays
4. *ibid.*
5. *ibid.*
6. Adapted from Marianne Williamson
7. Isaiah 60:1-2,5
8. Marianne Williamson
9. Matthew 5:14-16
10. Edward Hays and Brian Swimme
11. Adapted from "Falling Stars" by Edward Hays
12. *ibid.*
13. *ibid.*
14. Brian Swimme
15. Edward Hays
16. *ibid.*
17. Adapted from Thomas Browne & Philippians 2:15
18. Rosemary Haughton