

Pilgrimage to the Heart of the Sacred

By

Ty Ragan

Dedicated

To my Dad & Mum,
who always believed in me and taught me to walk in the Sacred, stick to my convictions and change the world. My Dad for all the money and time put in to help me learn my craft of dancing with words. I know some early mornings you would have rather been sleeping Pops, and I love you for it.

Foreword

Ty Ragan's course, *Pilgrimage*, stems from Ty's long journey from an unfocused youth to an inspiring spiritual leader in his community. I have seen him work with people who live at the Mustard Seed, (a drop-in shelter for the homeless), and how he interacts with young people who are troubled by the world they find themselves in. By following his Christian Faith he was able to bring hope where there was despair, where there was indifference, he taught compassion.

Pilgrimage reflects on Ty's calling to bring Christ's love into each and every person so that they may live a more abundant life filled with compassion, understanding and love.

The exercises found within are based on biblical and eastern philosophies that have helped guide humanity for thousands of years. At this time on Earth, we face many challenges like war, injustice and despair. By looking at these teachings and working with them, we can overcome our own limited way of negative thinking and become the change we wish to see in the world.

Remember that Nelson Mandela, Gandhi and many of those who strived for human rights throughout the world have all had Jesus Christ as one of their personal influences. It was the real world version of "what would Jesus do" that inspired many of these political changes.

I find these spiritual exercises helpful in navigating the modern world. I am always looking for ways to bridge the gap between my fellow human beings and myself. I feel it is the lack of spirit, not only in myself, but also throughout the world that causes injustice, famine and war to go on. But if we follow the teachings of Christ, and many Eastern Philosophers we can open our hearts and minds, allow our true intent to show, and come together as "God's People" to positively change the world.

Peace to you all,

Paul Vargis

October 31, 2007

Introduction

Jesus said, "If those who lead you say to you, 'See, the King/Queendom is in the sky,' then the birds of the sky will precede you. If they say to you, 'It is in the sea,' then the fish will precede you. Rather the King/Queendom is inside of you, and it is outside of you. When you come to know yourselves, then you will become known and you will realize that it is you who are the sons & daughters of the living Father & Mother. But if you will not know yourselves, you will dwell in poverty and it is you who are that poverty."

-Gospel of Thomas 1:3

(Italics mine)

Our world is dying. We have raped Gaia, the source of life, bound, gagged and abused Her. The world itself cries out in pain at this. We have turned our backs on the Sacred. The very labels we use for the Sacred Creative Force of the universe.... Jehovah, Yahweh, God, Christ, Goddess, Allah...all are used to perpetuate violence, misogyny, corruption and poverty.

For too long a majority of the earth's citizen's have been without voice. Why is this? Surely they have voices those who are not wealthy, they can talk.

But will anyone listen?

Unfortunately the dominant culture in the world is Western-Modern-Scientific. A language the vast majority of the world's citizens do not speak. It is a language of preciseness, of statistics, numbers and figures, cold and calculating language that strips away beauty, community and mystery of life.

If our world is to heal we as a creation of the Sacred need to reclaim our voice. There are many ways to channel our personal wisdom that comes through the Sacred (read whichever term you label as the Sacred). Tapping into the many wells that the river of creation flows through.

Each of us has a drive for creativity, whether we are dancers, singers, writers, actors, tradesmen, artists or hobbyists...there is an inherent desire to create. We as a species have ignored this desire to create for too long and our world is now paying the price.

Our interconnected systems are falling apart. The air is choked, water is poisoned, the soil is strip-mined for resources to build profits, all of creation is nothing more than a commodity to be bought and sold.

How is this working for us?

Every five seconds a child dies. We have surrendered our ability to innovate and create to improve life, to ensure all have an abundant and joyful quality of life, to cure diseases, instead we accept the mundane-capitalistic model of commoditisation that has led to loss of hope.

It is time to personally regain hope and share it. Our elders knew how to do this. How you ask? Through the simple art of story, community was built. Most of the world still speaks in story having rejected the western ideals of statistics and science for what is truly needed to inspire.

How many stories from your childhood do you remember being told? What do you remember more a story you were told or a math equation?

By starting this journey I can guarantee you are yearning for a cosmic reconciliation, one as these words of Jesus spoke of not discovering paradise by breaking down the parts, but rather embracing the whole.

Panentheism teaches this, the loving Creator is within everything and everything is within Her. Once you accept this new reality, it is time to step into our destined role as co-creators, tap into the creative river and share your story.

Throughout this book there will be teaching, story sharing, but as with any pilgrimage it is not a passive experience. You need to put the work in to discover the authentic you. This is not an exercise in going through the motions and creating another façade to hide behind, rather it is the time to drop the façade or false selves we use daily and travel to our very core.

In that core, as Matthew Fox writes in his books, *The Coming Cosmic Christ* and *Original Blessing*, at our core is the Cosmic Christ we need to allow this true self to emerge. The emergent C.C. will displace our false facades and we'll be able to live as our true selves.

Through this pilgrimage we will explore as the Dalai Lama teaches, the difference between Job, Career and Calling and what it means to discover our true calling in life through the art of story. You will want to have a journal handy and pen/pencil/crayons/pencil crayons as you go.

Thank you for taking this journey, and by doing the work I hope this journey helps to heal you as much as it has helped to heal me. Roll up your sleeves and begin the work.

Unit One: Eight-Fold Path

Unit Two: It's All About Love

Unit Three: Job, Career or Calling?

Unit Four: Dancing the Circle

Unit Five: Closing Time

The pages of this workbook are intentionally one sided to allow you space for scribbling, doodling, writing and dreaming as you journey.

Namaste & Shalom;

Ty Ragan

November 5, 2007

Basic Monk's Bag of Tricks:

My faith comes out of personal and spiritual development within the monastic traditions, so as most life coaches talk of toolboxes, I prefer the image of a Monk's bag.

Here is what you will need for this journey, I encourage you to be active on the journey daily, all day.

- 1) A simple bag, backpack or attaché case.
- 2) A journal: a simple spiral notebook or one that speaks more to you aesthetically, whatever draws you to fill the pages.
- 3) A book of wisdom teachings (whether it is a Hebrew Bible, Qu'ran, New Testament, Buddhist Teachings, Rumi, poetry etc.).
Something to read a little of each day that inspires and uplifts you.
- 4) Pencil Crayons, crayons, Oil Pastels, Pens.
- 5) A toy (slinky or koosh balls work, something tactile).
- 6) Writing Retreat Centre (is it underneath a tree? A coffee shop?).

Load these items into your bag, this is for you to keep with you to use when inspiration strikes.

Begin your day by sitting in your writer's retreat, close your eyes, breathe in and out deeply, clear your mind, chat with the Sacred, be thankful for the miracles in your life, give over the pains.

Spend some time reading your Wisdom Book. Afterwards repeat your breathing. Cracks open your journal; start moving the pen or coloured pens on the paper. Don't stop; just let whatever is inside you pour out.

As Julia Cameron teaches in her *Artist's Way*, course these are morning page. W.O. Mitchell called it free fall. It is the starting of connecting to the creative.

Also within your Monk's Bag, I encourage as many writers do (another nod to the *Artist's Way*) a Creativity Date...once a week if possible, or at least once a month. To go for a few hours to do something that energizes your creativity. For me it is bacon and eggs, reading the paper at the local A&W followed by wandering Chapters Bookstore. For you it could be Tai Chi or lounging on a beach.

For your creative and personal health on this journey, it is suggested to begin the practice of a daylong retreat to a sacred space for you. Many convents and ashrams have self-directed retreat spaces available.

Further along on the journey, it is good to have a spiritual mentor to aid in your pilgrimage.

Enjoy the steps ahead!

Unit One

Eight Fold Path

I have discovered healing and transformation in a blending of Eastern-Western Faith Philosophies. This mixture has made up my healing pilgrimage to the Sacred in the art of story telling.

This section walks through the basic tenants of Buddhism with creative practices. It is going to be a unique starting point.

I am hoping there is no anxiety being felt at this point, yes the end will come and a new creative energy, but that should only niggles at the back of your mind as you journey.

A journey is made up of thousands of steps, obstacles and challenges. This section is the beginning of the first step.

Three Parts of Eight Pieces

Like ourselves, a whole interconnected series can be broken into smaller pieces. For the Eight-Fold Path these smaller pieces begin with three umbrellas: Wisdom, Ethical Conduct and Mental Development. Before we get to the eight smaller pieces in this whole, we shall explore the three mid-size parts.

Wisdom

In the Hebrew Bible, King Solomon prayed for Wisdom from the creator. He was classed as the wisest because of this answered prayer. Solomon's journey unfolds, a listener and partner on the journey can begin to realize despite this immense blessing of true wisdom, Solomon turned off the wisdom switch.

He sunk into that which keeps us away from true wisdom, Solomon sunk into seeing the world through materialistic eyes more concerned with amassing treasures, toys and women (maybe men?) than to be concerned with what truly breeds wisdom in a person and how that true wisdom can seep out into the community.

Under the umbrella of wisdom Buddha teaches two principles: Right View and Right Intention.

Soul Work: Open your journal and for five minutes put pen to paper, don't stop no matter what, write what Right View and Right Intention mean to you.

Soul Work: At this point of yearning for wisdom pause and close your eyes. Breathe in deeply through your nose, as you inhale let your stomach extend, as you inhale draw yourself in and up away from your waistband. Keep breathing as you slowly relax into peace leaving the world behind.

Listen to creation around you, if your mind wanders accept the wandering, make note of it and refocus back on your breathing.

After five or so minutes, relaxingly open your eyes. Take your crayons and open your journal. Move the colours and allow the Creator to speak through you, no care for form or practice, just create what you felt in your time of silence.

You have begun the journey towards wisdom.

Ethical Conduct

The next piece of the whole puzzle as Buddha taught is Ethical Conduct. What does this mean? A world where religion has become just another institution to not be believed, where elders are discounted as just another burden and children are to be left to their own devices is it any wonder that the term ethics makes no sense?

In 2006 I ran for Canada's Parliament as a candidate for the New Democratic Party. There was fear within the party hierarchy for a Christian who had been educated in post-secondary schools on the conservative to fundamentalist theological spectrum, to be an NDP Candidate.

Terms like morals and ethics were fear buzzwords, because they were seen as defined in many different ways by many different pieces.

The Dalai Lama in his work *Ancient Wisdom, Modern World* had a simple thesis by exploring all the world's religious and ideological systems. The thesis was simple, there was a core of beliefs that all humanity held sacred.

Soul Work:

What are your core beliefs? The non-negotiable in your life. Take five minutes, open your journal and make a list of these beliefs.

Now re-read your list, put a check mark besides those non-negotiable items that you have given up for material gain.

So why do morals and ethics as words hold so much fear? Like everything else in our world they have been made into commodities to be thrown around and traded like bad artistic counterfeits.

World has lumped these together into a simple term of values, but whatever word you use it comes down to our behaviour in the world.

Putting our faith into action. Shaping our character.
An ancient Norwegian proverb tells the truth simply:

The grass may wither. Cattle may die.
Cupboards will empty. Treasures rust.
Wealth spent and yes even myself may
die. But the one thing that will not
die is the reputation I leave behind.

Ethical Conduct shapes our character. When the individual decides to put in the self-work to live out Ethical Conduct.

Soul Work: Connecting your non-negotiable list to your actions this is the core of Ethical Conduct. Write this statement for the first item on your list:

I Believe _____

Because I believe _____

I will _____

Repeat this exercise in your journal for each item on your Non-negotiable list.

Now comes the hard part:

- Have you been doing what your belief statements say? Why or Why Not?
- What do you need to change in your life?

Finish this exercise with a time of breath meditation to just lie in your Creator's heart and feel Her love.

Ethical Conduct has four pieces of the Eight-Fold Path within it. These are simple statements that will be explored later on: Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood and Right Effort.

Soul Work: Open your journal, take ten minutes with pen in hand, don't stop moving pen on paper no matter what.

Write what these four parts mean to you:

Right Speech

- Right Action

- Right Livelihood

- Right Effort

Yourself can be transformed through rediscovering Ethical Conduct and just like in the movie Pay it Forward a little piece of your community can be made better.

I was lost in a wash of materialism as most teenagers are. This lock the world had on me led me to go to work after high school and take a year off. It led me to aim my sights lower than the dreams the Creator had for my ministry and me in and to the world and the positive changes that would be brought about.

It took many years and new experiences of serving in shelters, doing outreaches in cities across Canada. Working myself through the 12-steps of life recovery and realizing that my writing is a creative gift that needs to be used for good not ill.

It is in discovering what our true beliefs are challenging ourselves daily not to surrender them but to act on them that are important.

Mental Development

When was the last time you learned something new? It is a running joke with friends and family that I can wall paper my office, maybe my whole house, with the certifications and degrees I have earned. Yet for me I feel that when you stop learning, you stop truly living.

Whether it is meditation, prayer or other creative arts that you use to centre yourself you need time daily to centre yourself. My suggestion is time at the beginning of the day and end of the day. Spend time in thankfulness and gratitude for all the amazing miracles around you. At the end of your day I encourage you to spend time making a list of the good of the day.

Mental Development also takes good rest of the body. Proper sleep. This is time when you can create a season in your life for dream work. While you rest and fall into the deep slumber of night, your subconscious attempts to equip and empower you. Do you listen?

Soul Work: Take time with your colours and pen in your journal.

Answer this question after a short time of meditation:

How do you see yourself?

In Canada and much of the western world we like to apply labels to build up walls. Labels such as: rich, poor, wealthy, fat, skinny, strong, weak, smart, stupid, young or old.

Soul Work: Add to your previous journal entry.

- What are the labels that have been applied to you throughout your life?

- How have these labels shaped how you see yourself?

In the west we fear aging. The growth of the beauty industry and of the fitness gurus on DVD and infomercials it reveals the shallow soul of our society and us.

We hate ourselves and this feeds out of lack of Mental Development. We do not embrace change easily. We do not see the positives of aging, the growth of wisdom that comes with life changes.

Soul Work:

Draw or write out or both your feelings to this question:

How do you feel about growing older?

I feared aging and with the injuries I had suffered through my life I foresaw a decrepit and aged existence before my time. This fear seized me and resolved me to being unhealthy and eventually a melt down that revealed a slight chemical imbalance caused by childhood years on Phenobarbitol to cure convulsions.

Fear had been revealed. Yet I still felt inferior, as it was revealed that the woman I thought I would spend the rest of my life with could not handle my diagnosis.

What felt like pain at the beginning was revealed to be sweet release of burden and a chance to truly fall in love like I had never had before? In love with a beautiful life partner who took me for who I was, and through her love showed me that aging was not something to be afraid of, but rather to be embraced.

Soul Work: It is time to write out some lists to aid in mental development.

- Who are people that build you up?
- Who are people that tear you down?
- It is time to end the relationships that tear you down and direct more energy to those that build you up.
- What helps energize you?
- What deflates and wears you out?

Time to make some life changes and like Jesus taught separate the chaff from the wheat, eliminate that which is detrimental to quality of life.

Mental Development is in two pieces:

Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration.

Soul Work:

Write out what these two terms mean to your life right now:

- Right Mindfulness

- Right Concentration

By freeing the negative walls that enclose our mind and soul, we free our whole selves to change our world. It begins with one person...YOU.

Dream no little dreams.

-Tommy Douglas

Right View

In the social sciences your view of the world is called a paradigm. The essence being that we all have lenses in which we see the world, these lenses are shaped by our life experiences and any challenges that we face mentally, physically or emotionally.

For instance my paradigm currently has been shaped by a mild case of depression. A case of depression brought to the fore of reality by impacts on my emotional self.

What has becoming known in my paradigm is that our society can perform many miraculous things, yet we do not understand the full future impact of our choices.

My depression is hanging on, caused by a minor chemical imbalance that is left behind from childhood. I suffered convulsions as a child, and the medication used to cure me created this imbalance that I ignored for years, but with miracles that our society can create taking better care of myself emotionally, physically and spiritually mixed with 100 mg daily of Zoloft and I am back to better than my old self.

But this cycle of life did create a series of panic attacks and other points of self-harm in my journey before my 2006 meltdown around Christmas that revealed this underlying current. Suddenly I felt free,

not ashamed or stigmatized, but finally free as that thought in the back of my mind about why I always felt a little off was confirmed.

Ancient wisdom teaches about transformative failures, or to better challenge us to try again to succeed. The pursuit of excellence is a double-edged sword. Within true excellence Right View is emergent.

We know this because the Cosmic Christ has emerged in our souls, confusing the mire of self-centredness that is our personal darkness, as the enlightened Christ burst forth our self is transformed.

Soul Work: Pause in times of meditation throughout your day, noting down the times when you know your only concern at the heart of your actions is your self. What drives your self-centredness that keeps the emergent Cosmic Christ locked away in your soul? These are the moments that alter your Right View to the selfish view.

In ancient wisdom of the Norse we find the story of the god, Baldur's death. His mother heard the prophecy that her son was destined to die.

Armed with this knowledge she went forward and got everything on earth to promise never to hurt her son, everything except this small twig of a harmless plant, a child like plant-the mistletoe. Her view of the world saw this plant as harmless and never had it swear the oath.

Loki, the mischief god witnessed this.

The Pantheon of Asgard quickly created a game of throwing things at Baldur in their drunken revelry and laughing as the items bounced off harmlessly. All could participate but an old blind crone. Loki saw this crone, and asked, "Why do you not participate?"

"I cannot see."

Loki smiled to himself. As he quickly flew to where the mistletoe was and picked it. Loki returned to the crone and helped her to the circle playing their game.

Loki placed the mistletoe in the crone's hand and guided her to toss the mistletoe towards Baldur. The mistletoe pierced Baldur's heart killing him instantly.

Loki laughed as he watched the Asgardians grieve their loss.

A moment when the Right View was moved from seeing the world as the Creator does, to seeing it with your own shaded eyes. An instant that took a life of one that should not have died.

Soul Work: During different times in our lives we have surrendered our Right View of existing in the Creator's heart, and the Creator in our heart, for our own view of self-indulgence and self-centredness.

Like the story of Baldur's mother and the mistletoe we have these own stories of ours. Take sometime and write your own myth/legend of life where you surrendered the Right View for the self-view.

Ancient Norse Wisdom also tells us of the miracles that can happen when we shift away from our self-view to Right View.

The story of Baldur does not end with the mistletoe piercing his heart. Baldur was the first to die of the Asgardians, a foreshadowing of the deaths to come.

Asgardians in Norse Lore had a mortal enemy, the Frost Giants, who their trickster, Loki, married in to. Ragnarok was is the story of when our good and evil selves collide.

This is an eternal battle that each of us face daily within ourselves our own personal Ragnarok (in Islam it is known as Jihad). It was a battle of purification as all the Asgardians that had surrendered to self-view were lost in the battle with their enemies.

One would assume this was the end of Norse Lore, but it went one step farther. After the purifying battle came the rebirth of Asgard. The first reborn was none other than Baldur, who's Right View was well documented and had lost his life to the self-view of another.

What does this story tell us? Simple, even though our community and we can be lost in self-view it is never to late to fight harder in the battle, allow the war inside to strip away the false self to renegotiate back to the Right View.

Allowing wisdom to be reborn within us.

Soul Work: Spend some time redeeming your stories of self-view.

- What would be your Baldur narrative concluded?

- How would you be reborn after your own Ragnarok?

The journey of wisdom continues.

Right Intention

Another part of Wisdom is just not how we view the world, but the heart we bring to our actions. Just as self-view can taint and destroy, so can self-intent. When we centre our world just on us we close off our access to the Creator's River despite the wells of this Sacred Flow we try to access. It all is just a mask-a façade to continue to fake the health of our existence.

We return once again to Ancient Wisdom this time from Greece.

The story of Icarus tells us of intent and the cost we will face when we live in self-intent.

Icarus was a young man, the son of a creator who lived on an island. He would watch the birds and how they flew and dream of joining them for no other reason than his own ego or self-intent.

He snuck into his father's laboratory and fashioned wings with balsam wood, feathers and wax. He waited till a bright summer day and attached the wings to his body. Leaping from the highest window of the castle he flew out into the sky.

The wind whipping against his face, his father rushed out beaming with pride as he watched his son flying away from the island with the other birds.

His father watched as Icarus soared ever higher, screaming how he was like a god. Then the heat from the sun and the wax softened

and melted. The father ran to the edge of the beach as Icarus' wings fell to shreds and he plummeted into the ocean.

Icarus' father watched his son die.

Just like our Creator watches us plummet to death each time we shut our Her Right Intent (Wisdom) and rely on our own. We feed our emptiness and drive to define our worth by how much we earn and how much we own as opposed to just defining ourselves by being created very good in our Creator's image. A true blessing for us that we need to realize.

There are many times in our lives when we don't even realize that we have surrendered wisdom and become self-obsessed.

My time working as a minister in life recovery and the twelve steps tell me this. I have personally worked the twelve steps to recapture this aspect of God's wisdom and deepen myself in Her.

Soul Work: The Twelve Step movement is an amazing way to journey to our core. Here are the steps reproduced, take time in your life to spend a month journeying through with a trusted mentor to rediscover Right Intent and Her wisdom in your heart.

12 Steps

(Adapted for the Pilgrimage)

- 1) I admit that I am powerless over self-intent and self-action that surrender me to darkness.
- 2) I have come to believe drinking of the Creator's Well will restore me to the Sacred.
- 3) I have made a decision to drink of the Creative River deeply and let the Cosmic Christ reign in me.
- 4) I have realized and inventoried all my instances of self-intent and self-view.
- 5) I admitted to the Creator, my Spirit Guide and me the exact nature of my selfishness.
- 6) I am entirely ready to surrender my past to the Sacred.
- 7) I humbly ask Her to embrace me in love and re-ignite my creativity.
- 8) I have listed all those I have hurt and am ready to reconcile these relationships in Her heart.

- 9) I have reconciled relationships wherever possible, where my actions would not cause further harm.
- 10) I have continued personal daily examination and sought out or given forgiveness where necessary and reconciliation where needed.
- 11) Through prayer, meditation and creative endeavours I have sought to improve my conscious contact with the Sacred, seeking Wisdom from the River of Creation and Her guidance.
- 12) I have begun a Pilgrimage to the Heart of the Sacred and pledge to continue this creative journey with fellow travellers new and old.
- What is a true reawakening to you?

 - What does it mean to truly move away from self-intent and self-action?

We travel back to Ancient Assisi, Italy and to a young emergent mystic. He had just tapped into the Cosmic Christ that lives within each of us. His darkness had been confused and almost moved out completely. Who was this young mystic who had turned away from a world clouded in materialism?

Francis, a former agent of destruction in the Crusades, turned to the heart of the Sacred and answering a vocational call to help the poor yet still gripped by fear. Francis was seized by a normal fear of the day, that for those with Leprosy. Lepers were bullied and abused for simply being sick, and Francis was no different than the rest.

Until one day when he was walking and his eyes locked with those of a leper and the normal impulse as Francis' eyes gazed on the dangling fingers, rotting flesh, the putrid smells wafting to his nostrils Francis would normally feel like retching, lashing out in fear and anger.

That impulse was not there as Francis moved closer to the Leper. His eyes locked watching a beautiful reflection. They clasped hands, embraced in a hug and a full kiss of greeting.

Francis began to sob into the Leper's arms. "I am sorry Brother Jesus, I love you." He sobbed over and over again.

Francis had left the world of self-intent and self-view, he had embraced the true wisdom of the Sacred and as a result now saw what the Creator saw...that everything is created in love and very good.

These are the new eyes you are developing. Like Francis you are embracing Sacred Wisdom and moving forward in Ethical Conduct welcome to the tradition of Ancient Mystics in our Modern World.

Right Speech

Ethical conduct begins with words, how appropriate for human beings. How many of us enjoy gossiping? Do you realize when you start to gossip you are actually doing public speaking? It doesn't matter if it is one friend or multiple in the coffee shop it is a form of public speaking.

The greatest fear most humans have is public speaking (even over death! I'll be in the casket but not give the elegy?). Why partner public speaking with gossip? A possible veiled attempt to curtail gossip, maybe, but not really it goes beyond that. The heart of Right Speech is how we use our words, do we use our words to destroy or build?

Soul Work: Practice presence in your daily life, when talking with people BE present with the words and stories you share in these moments of public speaking. In your journal note down:

- Whether the conversation was positive and life affirming or did it drift to the negative and gossipy?

- Who was negative in the conversation? You? Your friends? How long did it take for the others to join in?

Phil Jackson, a successful NBA coach, once made the comment in his book Sacred Hoops that when a player was negative he would room them elsewhere on away games because negativity was more contagious than the flu. Think about it are you a plague carrier and the spreader of negativity that creates barriers? These same barriers you create through gossip between you and others this same negative energy can create barriers between you and the sacred.

This is what sin is, not being a bad person, we are created very good in the creator's eyes, sin is choosing self over love and that breeds negativity...which leads to the destructive words that gouge the hardest wounds to heal.

This is one piece of ethical conduct.

Soul Work: Write down all the negative words that have ever been used against you, now beside each negative word, what is the positive mirror of that word in your life.

Right Speech begins with respect of self that is then lived out to the world around us.

Right Action

It flows from the intent you put into your actions, if your intent is to be self, then you will eventually burn out...think of Charles Dickens' Ebenezer Scrooge character pre-ghosts. He was focused on self-intent and this intent led to self-action.

But if you function on Right Intention then Right Action should be a natural outcome. For it is actions that match your beliefs and these beliefs when you are fully aligned in mind, body, emotions and spirit will become Right Actions.

Soul Work: Write a list poem, this is simply a list of something...the theme for this list poem is simple:

My heroes and mentors.

Soul Work: Now comes the hard part, your list poem is a short introduction, free fall write in narrative a short or long piece (whatever comes out) of why this person is your hero or mentor.

It takes a lot to be an integrated whole, we live most of our lives in cognitive dissonance (a psychological term that means actions and beliefs are out of sync). I had lived this on and off in my life, doing things in my heart I believed was wrong but to fit in.

I already know where your mind is going on this and it is to the negative and destructive, but for me that was not it. I have been engaged three times because that is what the appearance of you did if you loved someone or wanted a family.

Yet that is not my true belief, the structure and ritual of engagement, wedding and marriage have been so maligned and abused by clergy, institutions and governments that I realize in my heart it has lost meaning.

The heart of this union has nothing to do with licenses, sex, only between a man and a woman, or between two people or having a clergy bless it. This union is truly between the two individuals in love, and made one in the heart of the sacred, the vows for me need to be free of constraint by governmental legislation or religious hypocrisy. Does this mean I will never marry? No, it means that when I do it will be because of true belief in what I am doing and the ritual around it, not because of fear of being ostracized or cast out for enjoying sexuality and love without labels.

Soul Work:

- Write out your own story of your false self, as many as you need.

- When were those times when you caved into societal or community pressure to fit in out of fear or anxiety or any other emotions?

- What will you do differently now knowing your personal values?

Take a moment to breathe in deeply the pilgrimage has been long we are delving deeply and doing a lot of soul work. Release the negative that tears you down and holds you back to the Sacred.

Right Livelihood

I pray to our loving Creator as you journey with me, you begin to see how intangible it is for us to break our lives into pieces and compartments. We reach Right Livelihood and we draw back to our soul work up to this point.

As a seminary student I was a Liberation-Wisdom Christian attending Canadian Theological Seminary (it is the seminary of the Christian & Missionary Alliance, the Christian Right), in one of my leadership courses my professor took us through an exercise, that I would like to take you through to help you understand where we are going.

Soul Work: It is time to create a personal time line. Pick up some poster paper (whatever colour leaps out to you) and three colours of post it notes (I personally like the fluorescent colours).

One colour is for Life events (for example: school, birth, deaths, changes in direction, careers, groups joined left, etc). Place these in chronological order onto the poster paper.

Now underneath write the emotions you felt or where changed for better or worse in that instance on another colour of post it.

On the final post it note, write out what you learned about yourself.

Look at your life in its vivid colours. This is your past. You live in the present where the Cosmic Christ is emerging within you and pushing your old-false self away.

Spend time with your journal and the Sacred, scribbling, writing, drawing, whatever comes out. How does knowing your journey up till now make you feel?

It was unique to stare out at this time line, some may class it as excessive navel gazing, but for me it started a journey that is in the midst of climax for this season of my life.

Soul Work:

Your history and your core beliefs are your story. Write your story using whatever artistic form you want...sculpture, gardening, drawing, song, words...whatever leaps out of you to tell your story till now and how this has shaped your beliefs and self in the Sacred.

Right Livelihood is moving out of our past whether they are joys, sorrows, abundance or desert experiences. It is living out our true heart of life, our passions...our true calling from the Sacred to change the world.

Parable of the Prodigal Son

(Paraphrased from the Midrashic stories of Brother Jesus)

There came a day when the youngest son of a wealthy landowner came to his father, "I want my half of the inheritance." The father was taken aback but consented to the request.

The son took his share of the estate, while the eldest son stayed with the family to help out around the property.

After a few months passed the youngest son found himself working for a pig farmer, hungry, cold and penniless he stared at the slop he was serving up to the pigs and coveted it. He thought silently to himself, even these pigs are eating better than me, my father's servants eat. When the idea struck him to go back to his father's house and beg a job as a servant.

He headed back. His father looked up from the fields and saw his son stumbling down the road.

Dad leaps for joy and races up the road whooping and hollering. He embraces his son, and calls his servants over. "Kill the best calf and prepare a feast, invite everyone, my son is home."

The eldest son locked eyes with his father. "What is this?! I stay and help keep the property, this beggar wishes you dead and

wastes half of your wealth and you throw a celebration while I can't even get one sheep for me and my friends."

"My son, you know everything I have is already yours but your young brother was lost in the desert and has finally come home."

Soul Work:

Take a moment of quiet reflection on this story.

- How has what you have experienced about right livelihood speaks from this story?

- How would you feel in this day when your Son wishes you dead to gain access to your money?

- How would you feel as the Son as you dwindle your ill-begotten wealth away?

- How do you feel when your father embraces you on your return?

Soul Work: Ancient Wisdom stories can seem distant as we read them, it helps to contemporise and place into our own world. Take the Story of the Prodigal Son or another wisdom story that speaks to you and place it in your modern day world and retell it using your words and pictures.

The Lost Child

It had started like any other day at home, but an angry daughter, Chelsea, confronted Mary, the screaming match had caught her off guard while simply watching CSI on television.

Then it came out, "I wish you were fucking dead! My life would be better without you. All I want is what I am entitled to...my money."

Mary was in shock. "Fine you think you can make it." She whips out her chequebook and scribbles out a cheque for \$5,000. "Here's your 1half' that you think you are entitled to."

Chelsea snatches the cheque from her Mum's hand and sprints out the door.

Months pass with neither speaking to the other. Mary has no idea what has happened to her daughter. Chelsea sits huddled in an alleyway, just inches from the small corner that is secluded enough she can use it as a toilet. The smells from the fast food restaurant waft into her nostrils. Her stomach grumbles loudly.

She tries to shush it quiet to no avail. Hunger, how long had it been since she last ate anything? The Crystal Meth was wearing off and she was staring blankly at the open sores she had picked this time.

It was a sick circle she was trapped in, needing the Meth to make it through the tricks to pay her pimp to protect her yet the Meth

making her look uglier so she had to do more depraved things with the johns in unprotected ways to make the same amount of money.

She quietly thinks of the wonderful meals, her warm bed, and her safe family with her older brother. How she missed it. Would her Mum take her back in as a maid? She wonders as she stumbles towards the c-train.

Mary's eyes fall on the street as she gets out of her SUV. "Chelsea!" She screams as she runs up and embraces her daughter. The door of the houseflies' open and Todd, her son steps out. "Todd! Chelsea's home! Order up the full meal deal!"

Todd harrumphs. "What the hell is this Mum she runs off and becomes a skank and you celebrate?! Well I work to help you and get nothing!"

Mary looks hurtfully at her son. "Honey you know everything is yours to use, but Chelsea has come back to us."

Soul Work:

Take time to reflect on your soul work up to this point.

- Where do you feel the Sacred leading you at this new emergent season of your life?

- What things would you like to try?

- What interests of the past do you want to recapture?

- What groups do you want to join or renew your association with?

After creating a list of this. ACT!

Right Effort

A new step on the same journey another piece of the puzzle if you will. Do not look to the end of the full emergent Cosmic Christ acting within you, that is unnecessary we know that is where we are going to Nirvana if you will, but what matters is the next step.

This is what was on the minds of explorers of old, Vikings would cry out to whichever deity of their Pantheon would listen during their raids to get them through that next step.

Now is the time in the journey as we begin to unify that you need to lean on the Creative River of the Sacred. There are many wells in the world to access this Sacred flow, and it is time to drink deeply of that.

As a member of my Tai Chi class said, the best approach to ritual is to pick and choose the best that empowers us. That is Right Effort. Pick and choose that which lifts you up and begin putting it into practice.

Parks and Recreation, YMCA and YWCA's or local community association's offer many introductory level courses on spiritual practices whether they realize it or not. There are offerings on effective breathing, yoga, creative writing, art, Tai Chi, martial arts and even meditation...discover a community that empowers and equips

you to commune with the Sacred whichever practice you choose,
sample many wells and drink deeply of the Creative River.

Soul Check In

Our pilgrimage has ended this phase.

- Have you been practicing using your Monk's Bag of Tricks?

- How is it going?

- Have you missed a day of Creative Communion?

- How did it make you feel?

- How are you feeling with your days starting or ending (both?)
with this creative flurry?

- Which sacred writings are speaking to your soul?

- Is it from one source or many?

I personally find readings from Rumi, the Ancient Christian Communities and the Dalai Lama really empower me for a more positive, life affirming and creative experience, how about you? Turn the page when you are ready and discover an expansion on your mission statements.

Unit Two

It's All About Love

Are you feeling more integrated at this point? I pray that you are as it should be becoming more evident within your soul work that we are not pieces but a whole.

This part of our pilgrimage addressed the core of this whole...Love. For without love there can be no other root emotion, each comes out of or is cured by that simple four letter word.

Love is the core of the Law and the Prophets according to Brother Jesus; as well it is at the core of the teachings of Islam and Buddhism (and a litany of other faiths).

This teaching was revealed by Brother Jesus when the Pharisees had plotted to trap Jesus by asking him which was the greatest Law; Jesus response was simple taking up a creed from ancient times: Love God with your everything and love your neighbour as yourself.

Soul Work: Respond to these ancient words with your new understanding from your soul work to this point.

- What does it mean to love the Sacred (sync God) with your everything?
- What does it mean to love you?
- What does it mean to love your neighbour?

This is the most misunderstood passage in the Christian Scriptures I will admit. Most people enjoy quoting it, love God and love your neighbour, but in our short text messaging like world we enjoy dropping the other key piece...Love your neighbour as yourself.

What does love of self-look like?

At this point you are probably ready to strangle me, but Ty I just spent all that time working on my soul to move away from Self-Intent to Right Intent and now you are saying to love Self?

Yes I am, but it is the self in the heart of the Sacred, not the Self of Self-Intent. This is the self that is connected to the Sacred, where the Cosmic Christ has transformed you so completely that you are no longer in little pieces and compartments but whole. It is this whole self that you look at in the mirror every day and smile at, not groan, not think I am too fat, too thing, too old, too...whatever.

Soul Work: Each day look yourself in the mirror in the morning and repeat this refrain: "I am created in the image of the Sacred. I am beloved. I am created very good."

In the evening before entering dreamland write a list of five good things from your day.

The root of love of self is self-respect, of deep communion with the Sacred and by complete surrender. Embrace this love in the healthy ways our Creator intended.

What does love of God mean? Now Ty you say, there are so many horrors done in the name of God how do you expect me to love that word...it is not the word you are being asked to embrace, it is the Creative River of the Sacred.

This is the Sacred that created you very good, that calls you beloved. It is the Sacred that exists in everything and everything exists in Her.

Every miracle that pours forth, every action of life is within the Sacred's Heart, good or bad, but in the midst of the bad is a true time of transformation. A change that strips away the false self and allows us to commune deeper (to drink deeper of the River) with Her (the Divine or Sacred is neither male or female, but both and everything. Truly like God-Goddess; Yin-Yang; Shiva-Devi; etc. Choose the terms that work best for explaining the Sacred for you).

Soul Work:

- Do you truly know that our Creator prays for us?

- Do you pray for your Creator?

- What would that look like?

Write a letter to the Sacred, use the personal terms you have chosen, this letter can be simple or deep it can take whichever form you would like and include art if you so wish. This letter's focus is turning over the negative you feel for the Sacred, and the positive that is emerging through your soul work, this is your story of the journey within the Sacred.

Place the completed letter in an envelope; address it to the Sacred's name you chose care of Heaven (Paradise, Nirvana-which term works for you). Walk to a local mailbox and drop the sealed envelope into the box and walk away. In your journal express how it feels to release your feelings of the Sacred in your life to the Sacred?

Our relationship with the Sacred has deepened as we are learning to love the Sacred, and ourselves but now for a new step loving our neighbour.

Brother Jesus explained the love of neighbour with this story from the New Testament, when a religious leader questioned Brother Jesus as to who our neighbour was, paraphrased here:

Parable of the Good Samaritan

A merchant was travelling the road between Galilee and Jerusalem, when bandits set upon him. They stole his wares and wealth leaving the merchant pinned under his own broken wagon badly beaten and dying.

Minutes after a priest came by and continued walking after having crossed to the other side.

Shortly after a Levite came upon the wreck and did the same as the priest.

Finally, a Samaritan who was looked down upon by all came upon the wreck and helped the merchant out of the wreckage and into his cart. The Samaritan tended to the merchant's injuries and took him to a local Inn where he paid for a month's room and board.

Brother Jesus closed off his parable by asking the question of the crowd, which of the three was the one who acted in love?

This story was jarring to the listener because those expected to help did not.

Who are these individuals in our own journey?

The second part of the hit to the listener is that Samaritan's, were not viewed as fully equal because of being half-Jewish and Half Roman, by the story listeners who are these in your world?

Soul Work: Discover your hidden barriers and stereotypes, rewrite the wisdom story of who are neighbours are in your own words and set in your own community.

After writing it, re-read it, who was cast in what role:

- Who was the victim?

- Who was the Samaritan?

- Who were the three that walked by?

- What does this tell you about yourself and your journey to the Sacred?

These are stereotypes we hold that build walls and does not allow us to step out to help those in need, much like those that kept on walking in the wisdom story.

From the Eight Fold Path to Greatest Loves it is now time to equip us to act more like the Samaritan than the Priest.

In my spiritual formation within the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans and Third Order, Society of St. Francis¹ I had to create a Rule of Life Ministry. This is a rule that challenges us to live what it truly means to be a minister of the Sacred in the world. A person to live out Love, what follows is the Rule of Life Ministry I have tweaked since leaving the Franciscans, after reading my rule we will begin to work on creating your own.

¹ These are lay orders formed around the Rule written 800 years ago by St. Francis of Assisi. The Third Order (TSSF) is Anglican and the Ecumenical (OEF) encompasses a broad depth of churches from Unitarian to Southern Baptist. I served my Postulancy with the OEF and my Novitiate with the TSSF; I stepped out of formation before life profession.

My Rule of Life Ministry

Is to recognize a Triune Faith and the diversity of the Body and the miracles that it can lead to. Through prayer (in the form of the Word, Meditation and vocal) to discern where I am meant to serve and by my service show the Love of Christ in my community, whatever forms it is meant to take in the Call of the Holy Spirit.

My lifetime ministry will be centred on God's calling, Christ's Wisdom and The Holy Spirit's empowerment.

1. Participate in the Eucharist as often as my faith community celebrates.
2. Practice daily self-examination at night during my evening meditations and to practice reconciliation with a mentor once a year.
3. Personal Prayer including meditation, intercession, thanksgiving, song, creative arts, writing, drama, Tai Chi and possibly dance and yoga. I will spend time daily in prayer for fellow travelers on the path, our political and spiritual leaders, for those still seeking to know unconditional Love, and those too scared to accept it. I will spend time just listening to God, and his creation to know where I am meant to be and how to serve.
4. Self-Denial: I am called to know, and show empathy, for the brokenness of the world and its materialism, but not to indulge

deeply in the gluttony of wants that have become needs in Canada. To share what God has blessed me with in service to those less fortunate whether it is spiritually or economically. As well as a voice for the voiceless in work for human rights and the relief of suffering. I will endeavour to a non-violent life.

5. I will take a retreat annually, and a weekly Sabbath.
6. Daily Bible study and meditation through spiritual and life formation materials, as well as daily prayers.
7. Live Simplicity through choosing to live simply, eliminating excessive possessions, answering the call for need when it is made, not envying or competing with my neighbour, and sharing the blessings God has poured out on me with those who do not have as much.
8. Work: I will practice Liberation-Wisdom Christian values in the workplace.
9. My Obedience is to follow Christ, in particular through my living of the Gospel Life, daily prayer, meeting with my Spiritual Director; financial donations to world changers and meeting with fellow travelers whenever possible.

Three Wisdom Teachings I centre my service on, knowing that I am saved by Grace, but must respond are:

James 2:18 (NASB): But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without works and I will show you my faith by my works."

Matthew 22:39 (NASB) "You shall love your neighbour as yourself; and the great commandment to Love God that came before it. (Matthew 22:34-40)

The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37).

Soul Work: Your journey has been coming to this point of focus.

Where you finish these prompts to create and craft your own Rule of Life, how are you going to respond to the Sacred's love for you?

My response to the love of the Sacred in my life is...

I will gather with others to break bread, enter discussion and celebrate creativity...

I will explore my personal relationship with the Sacred, myself and others (Daily Self-examination)...

My personal spiritual practices to drink deeply of the Creative River are...

To communion deeper with my brothers and sisters of creation and the Sacred I will surrender...

I will rest in the Sacred...

My daily times of study and discovering wisdom are...

Simplicity to me is...

My work practice is...

My obedience is to...

What are Wisdom Teachings/stories that resonate with your soul and you can turn to in desert moments when you are feeling detached from the Sacred? These are to be listed here.

Pick a form for these pledges and utter them as vows before a close-knit community of friends as this is your intent to drink deeply of the Creative River.

It is through the focus to my journey these words in my Rule brought me that I felt empowered to chase a childhood dream of mine. That dream? Run for Canada's Parliament in the neighbourhood I grew up in (and still live in) so kick back and enjoy this tale: My personal rule of life ministry talks of me being a voice for the voiceless. It is a simple line to attempt to describe a life long call God has placed on my heart throughout my journeys. From a high school student standing up against hatred in my community, to a writer who battled governments to protect the arts, to a simple letter writer for Amnesty International to a street pastor petitioning the provincial government of Alberta not to close a desperately needed homeless shelter that was seeing God's miracles pour out.

It was these actions that led to this line being written in my rule, and becoming more active within my country of birth speaking out to protect the social programs church leaders helped to build (social services, disability, public health care). It culminated on January 23, 2006 when Canada held a Federal Election; after eight weeks of an official campaign that I participated in as a candidate; I had the privilege of putting an "X" beside my own name on the ballot and a year of watching the impact afterwards.

My nomination was secured with Canada's New Democratic Party (NDP) on May 5, 2005 and my campaign began minutes after. Some

would say why would I take this step as a youth pastor, and a member of the Third Order, Society of St. Francis, there is other ways to be heard. For me it was a unique way to reach out to the community I live in and get down past the surface issues by raising awareness across a city about the amazing agencies, organizations and people that are trying to stop the bleeding of the pain of poverty and devastation we are wrecking on our ecology and each other.

A great example of amazing agencies was the Christmas party of Cornerstone Youth Centre their director Herb White invited the incumbent Member of Parliament, Art Hanger and I. During the tour of the facility it was great to be part of the educating process of my Member of Parliament and what simple preventative measures could do to curb youth crime. Since that night I have started facilitating movie nights at the youth centre to help Junior High youth in the area explore their values.

As a candidate door knocking I found what was needed was a listening ear, and someone willing to help direct people to the parts of government they could talk to, in some cases someone to act as advocate to those government or non-profit agencies on behalf of the person. The most shocking thing that I found after listening to individuals that said having a strong faith would hamper you in public life is how many people were comforted when I said I would pray for

them. After speaking those words as well, how many people asked for me to simply pray with them there on their doorstep, or after a debate, or at a bus stop.

Campaigning for a political party, as one with strong beliefs and principles is hard, because it is not simply yourself being put forward, you have to support a platform. I look at the core values of the institution and decide if they fit within the context of my role of ministry, for I have found at least in the Canadian Parliamentary system specific policy points become harder to impose even if you party achieves power because you are always succeeding a previous government and there's always the ups and downs of the economy to deal with. I found it easier to be able to step away from the platform and open up a dialogue with the people of my community, as I took a pastoral outlook and realized winning was irrelevant, this unique calling for this season (eight months) had given me the opportunity to reach out to those that were hurting and in pain, those that may never darken the doorways of a church or know where to go for help.

There was also the winter election conundrum as traditionally during an election the candidate does massive fundraising for their campaign to be able to purchase signs (which are once used and then disposed of to landfills never to decompose) and brochures and goes around in thousand dollar suits making promises they cannot keep.

My message was simple: I will listen and try to make things better, for I have hope that a better world is possible for us all. My attire was simpler, blue jeans and a hoody, as a youth pastor not a politician; I did not feel comfortable in the trappings of the office. Finally, when it came to fundraising I looked out at the hurting and those in need, saw and toured many organizations that helped children with developmental disabilities, abused seniors and the homeless that I knew I could not be as selfish as to ask for money for a campaign- rather I took the initiative of disseminating the information for people to direct their donations they would have sent to me to these amazing non-profits that were producing miracles for God's children. This was done on my campaign site.

When it was all over, and the votes were tallied I was third of five on the ballot and just felt a peace. Why you ask? Since some would say I failed my calling by losing. I felt a peace because I was proud of the hard work of my volunteers, I was amazed at how ever with donor burnout we managed to get agencies monies they otherwise would not have received this season and that I had always spoken from my heart and held to my beliefs...the best and most humbling part was the Wednesday night after election day being able to face the youth I minister to and let them know that yes when I say

one person called by God can make a positive impact no matter where they are called it is true.

These same youth over the course of the year blew me away by picking up on this message. They took up the torch through activism initiatives to challenge the Canadian Government to make fresh, clean water a human right through fasting and letter writing in conjunction with the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund over Lent. Over the past year this little group has raised through spare change over \$700 for various local, national and international non-profits. The most humbling was probably having one youth during the campaign tell me that I was her role-model and she was going to nursing school so she could help those in need, and another youth this fall telling me they were exploring a career in politics because they realized you could be honest and principled. For the youth I am ministering to and have ministered to in the past, it opened up the reality regardless of socio-economic backgrounds that your dreams can and do come true... or as the Gospel says, the impossible is possible with God.

Since E-Day Canada's Federal Government has been a minority government formed by the Conservative Party of Canada. What does this mean? It means that the Conservatives won the majority of seats of all parties, but not the majority of seats within the House of Commons. This means one year later, and two new national party

leaders, and there is agitation to force a new election as early as February as late as April or May of 2007 so once again I was asked if I would be throwing my hat into the ring again?

At this juncture of my journey the answer was not this election, possibly another Federal election, but leaning towards Provincial or Municipal politics. Would I run for the NDP again? Possibly. My bedrock belief on partisan political affiliation is that parties and ideologies are tools of the people. To this end in my life I have been apart of and worked with numerous political organizations and parties. The same process that led me to seek the nomination of the NDP in 2005 would once again be undertaken—research and prayer—to find the party I would run for because the goal is to find the party that would work the hardest for the people I represent.

I also discovered along the path that I would need better personal infrastructure in place for an even better run, this being ensuring I had holiday time saved up for the length of the official campaign to level the playing field with incumbents who are still drawing a salary during the campaign. I would keep the international prayer team I had during this campaign, but make sure that I have grown my solid core of volunteers with better planning and scheduling to use them to best effectiveness in canvassing the riding. Sadly yes, the next time around I would ensure that I had enough money saved

up (between \$5,000-10,000) to make a good first dent and have room to build. I started my first run looking it as an outreach ministry, my next run I will take the approach of building and equipping a short term missions team for a pilgrimage of hope in Calgary Northeast. These would all help to accentuate why I ran...

To give a voice to the voiceless and inspire a new generation to take up the reigns of care for creation and community leadership, winning or losing was irrelevant in this special calling of God.

Soul Work: Note the connections between this story and my Rule?

Open your journal up, and write a story of a time you chased a dream
tell the story like you are talking to a trusted friend.

Leave the story for a day. Go back to it and lay your Rule next to it.

What connections do you see?

A Personal Rule of Life Ministry is not a huge epiphany or aha moment, rather it is a confirmation of what is just below the surface, those strong core beliefs we dislike touching because it calls us personally on the self-imposed barriers to our creativity.

In the midst of discovering this intent in the Sacred's Love what happens is that our dissonance of life that we exist in melting away.

Our whole self finally unified, or frankly, another step closer. The embracing of the three-fold path of love, that like the Eight-Fold Path, is not really separate pieces but parts of the whole.

Our whole being is your story with the Sacred...another step on the pilgrimage complete and ready for the next step to be taken.

Soul Check In:

- How is your personal practice?
- What new things have you tried lately?
- Are you keeping your personal creative dates? Why or Why not?
- How do you feel after a creative date?
- Are you keeping your daily creativity? Why or why not?
- When you miss these times of creativity how do you feel?

What follows are three poems written during my time in street
ministry, your soul work follows.

Who's Your Daddy?

They say I'm insane
that I blasphemy
And teach false
that if I give him
Money
It'll go up his arm
or he'll go into a bottle
Not to hang out with her
She's a whore
Don't hang with him
He's a sinner
A liar
A cheater
He can't walk
But I say he can
across the river
Let him see
don't do that

I'm told
for it's a day
Of rest
But wouldn't you
Help your child
Even if awoken?
Make bread
Feed the hungry
don't do that
God's punishing them
they sinned
don't teach about Love
It's a Law
But it's a hope
A Joy
Don't Baptize
Only John can
I'm told,
But that's wrong
For the Spirit indwells
In us
Don't stop the stones

She's an adulterer
Doesn't matter
Don't listen to me
I'm told I know nothing
Not to go there
That's the wrong side of town
Not our people
But then
I'm only
Upwardly Mobile Lower Class
I'm from a melded family
My step-father's a carpenter,
We're from that province
Y'know the one no one wants to go to.
Ever been treated like this?
Mocked?
Spit on?
Laughed at?
Beaten Up?
It's okay;
they treated me like that to. .

An my Daddy's;

God.

What is despair?

I believe in you God

I know you are embracing me

But your arms

Are so cold

Or non-existent

What have I done so wrong?

That Jesus walked away

From my heart...

Escape?:

Escape from this life
Escape into the needle
With the straw...up the nose
Inhale the poison
Empty the bottle
Wear the beer goggles
Blessed escape
The cold metal
Bites the skin
Scarlet liquid trickles down
Twirling of a bullet
Click of a trigger
Blessed escape
From creations sin
The needle tears a whole
In tender human skin
As gracious release courses
Through the blood line
Darkness shrouds the soul
Chokes the light out

Slowly dimming the glow

As the heart's door

Slams shut...

Soul Work:

Respond to this question that was asked of me one cold winter night,
by a dying addict:

How do you get hope?

Unit Three

Job, Career and Calling

In his book, *The Art of Happiness at Work*, His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama put forward a decent observation that in the world of work there are Jobs, Careers and Callings.

A Job is essentially what it sounds like, something we do to pay the bills. In my life this job has been the Chuck E. Mascot at Chuck E. Cheese, Flyer Force, electronics assembly line and warehouse shipper receiver, meat department utility clerk, and bookseller. These are jobs taken to fill the gap and pay the bills.

Then there is what is known as Career, these are jobs that we take on because of prestige, power and/or the ability to earn more money.

I am not sure if I have ever held a job like this, but when I was growing up I ran companies through Junior Achievement and was part of the Future Entrepreneurs of Canada for exactly these reasons. Career is definitely a creation of the capitalist system that we exist in.

Finally the concept of Calling, this is what I hope your Soul Work to this point will help you discover. It is a job that regardless of monetary reimbursement you would do, it is what energizes you and makes you feel like Superman/woman. This is a true Calling; the

Christian Church calls it a vocation, for the Sacred Heart you exist in it is what empowers you to be a minister of the Sacred in the world.

Soul Work:

What have been your Jobs? Write a list poem of them.

What have been your Careers? Write an acrostic poem.

Do you have a calling? Write a freefall exploring what your ministry is in the world.

Calling is a hard thing to define; sometimes we attempt to limit ourselves to a specific vocation. What jumps to mind first is being clergy; or a monastic in the “religious world” where the structures have been a form of oppression.

Then there are times when we are counselled by friends or mentors to discover our career in life using the veiled language of lifelong calling. Think of some of the greats of legend and history.

If Baldur of Norse Mythology continued on the path after his resurrection after Ragnarok just being another godling he would never have been Chief of Asgard.

Arthur was a simple squire training to be a knight (canon fodder of the crown) when he stumbled upon a Sword in the Stone and by drawing forth Excalibur ushered in a golden age for Wales with Camelot and ascending to creating a kingdom built on equality.

Brother Jesus had a good job when he became an adult in his world at Thirty years old and left home to become a wandering Rabbi (teacher) and mendicant² who did not rely on male members of his followers for support, yet the women in the group chief among them his mother, Mary and Mary Magdalene who could have been a lead teacher in the movement, or an intimate confidant of Jesus to even Jesus’ lover or wife (or all of the above).

² Italian for open hand, was used as a slur in the ancient world for beggars. Most commonly associated with the Franciscan Orders.

Buddha was a prince of his world set to inherit a kingdom before he answered his calling and swore off violence, left all and became well...Buddha (awake).

Soul Work: Explore the spiritual writers that speak to your soul, and the wisdom stories that energize you.

Are these stories formed around individuals chasing their Jobs, Careers or Calling?

By delving deeper into your inspirations, heroes and mentors lives before and after answering they're Calling (or not) what have you learned about your own journey?

So what is my calling? Some say minister, but as has been revealed on this pilgrimage to the Sacred we are all Her ministers so that is self-evident.

My specialized Calling is simple:

To be a voice for the voiceless.

To general you say?

Well it has equipped me for a lifetime of writing and publishing on a variety of subjects from fiction to poetry to plays to commercials to sermons to prayers to spiritual formation articles to politics to social justice to whichever issue tugged at my soul to speak out on to editing several different independent newspapers (Calgary Democrat; SFO St. Mary's Fraternity; and Countesstory to name a few).

It took me to five years of ministry at Calgary's Mustard Seed Street Ministry as a front line support worker and three years with Inn from the Cold (a homeless shelter for families located in various church basements). My life unfolded after returning to the structured church at 19 into ten years as a builder of Children & Youth Ministries across Calgary with the United Church of Canada; Presbyterian Church in Canada and Anglican Church of Canada. It took me to young adult ministry with the Christian and Missionary Alliance and to teaching Christianity 101 with the Lutheran Brethren Church. I was a lay minister with the Roman Catholic Church and pulpit supply for the

United Church and restoration movement churches in Southern Alberta.

That is my religious life which is no different than my life, for the same passion I brought to these ministries I took out to the world where I served with various political parties writing policy, working on campaigns and running for Parliament in 2006 (another platform to espouse ideas of governmental/electoral reform; restorative justice and community reinvestment).

My calling is broad and has taken me through many schools to learn many different disciplines, it has me embarking upon a professional doctorate degree in Holistic Psychology to be better equipped to help people and has me serving with Hull Child & Family Services currently. My newly formed consulting business is a spin out of this idea of helping to empower those who our society disempowers and strips of their voice.

This is what Calling is about, like a Personal Rule of Ministry; it is narrow enough to bring focus into your life yet not so narrow that the challenge and beauty of the adventure of life is stripped away.

I hope & pray your Soul Work is helping you to this point.

Soul Work: This is stepping outside the journaling and creativity on the surface but it is not it is another step in the pilgrimage. It is time to seek out a mentor that can help you grow spiritually, professionally and personally.

Find someone you connect with and feel comfortable opening up to, sharing your life with. Someone that you feel will challenge you to go deeper in your pilgrimage and help you along the way (pick you up when you fall?).

Take a risk and open yourself up.

At this point I would like to share the stories of a family important in Hebrew History The Maccabees to further flesh out this idea of story and Calling.

Matthais

It was the time of Alexander the Great; a king; Anthiochus raged a war of conquering across Judea. Stripping the altars of the Hebrew God and instituting the Pantheon.

Matthais and his sons watched this pain inflicted on them. As a leader of the Hebrew people prayed at a false altar according to their faith; Matthais drew his sword and beheaded the man he viewed as a traitor.

Matthais led several rebellions against the oppressors and as the battles raged on he grew old and his time on earth drew to a close.

Matthais reminded his followers and especially his sons to hold God's love close and live against the tide, struggle for the swim up river against the flow to challenge the oppressors and win freedom again.

- Was this a story of a man living out a Job, Career or Calling to you?

Judas

His Father's words did not fall on dead ears. Judas took them to heart and before every battle and recruitment drive Judas would turn to his God to ask blessing.

Victories would grow and the legend of the great warrior king-messiah-freedom fighter would spread through Israel.

Soon Judas gathered his forces to cleanse their Temple. The army set upon the oppressors. Blood flowed in a horrible battle as Judas and his warriors cleaned out the altars to those they classed as false gods and wiped out the oppressors.

For eight days they held the Temple against Antiochus, retaking Israel.

- Was this a story of a man living out a Job, Career or Calling to you?

Jonathan

Judas dies and his brother Jonathan succeeds him as King of Israel, but with the inner-strength of Judas lost to the kingdom the dark forces reform and begin to rebel once again plunging Israel into conflict from within.

Demetrius from Rome feared Jonathan signing a treaty with Alexander and Jonathan joins with Rome allowing the Romans an easy in to Israel. Within this treaty Jonathan as King installs himself as the High Priest of the Temple bringing the temporal and secular authorities over the people together.

Jonathan brought many victories for Israel, but as he began to drift away from communion with God defeats mounted and so did casualties.

To solidify power Jonathan used religious language and his office as High Priest to sign a treaty with Sparta. The final battle Jonathan was in saw him captured and executed by the invading commander Trypho.

- Was this a story of a man living out a Job, Career or Calling to you?

Simon

As a nation mourned the loss of their king, his brother Simon ascended the throne and became High Priest of the Temple-state and church as one.

Simon's life was one of playing the game that is politics. Deepening ties with Rome and Sparta and doing what heads of states do to build those ties (worshipping each other's deities and giving what needed to be give to deepen relations).

The guiding principle Simon upheld was peace and sovereignty but to gain national identity Simon lets foreign nations creep more and more deeply into Israel territory.

Scribes are hired to write histories where Matthais and Judas are replaced with Simon to cast him in the best possible light. When Simon dies...does anyone mourn?

- Was this a story of a man living out a Job, Career of Calling to you?

Why explore the stories of the Maccabees? Simple they show how easily good intentions when you start a calling can easily become

distorted as you easily or struggle with the temptations that the Tester³ will put before you.

³ The Tester, some call it the adversary, or a demon to the angel or Satan or the Devil...it doesn't matter what term you accept for this part of you, this is the piece that tries to keep the Cosmic Christ subdued within you and locked away. Acknowledge this part of your being, thank the Sacred for this part of your being for it is in the self-testing and self-doubt we can strengthen and grow deeper in the Cosmic Christ, do not become discouraged.

Soul Work:

What are your wisdom stories of temptation, of choosing the easy path even when it meant you had to put aside your calling?

These are powerful stories in your life to share and explore. Within these stories what does it tell you personally about your journey to the Sacred?

"The goal in life is to discover what you love and make that your life's work."

-Wayne Ragan, from a Chat with an Entrepreneur 1995 (Ty's personal papers).

Soul Check In:

- How is your personal practice?
- What new things have you tried lately?
- Are you keeping your personal creative dates? Why or Why not?
- How do you feel after a creative date?
- Are you keeping your daily creativity? Why or why not?
- When you miss these times of creativity how does it impact you?
- Are you working in a Job, Career or Calling?
- What do you need to do to shift to serving in your calling?

Unit Four

Dancing the Circle

Our world is sick. It is a plague that has crept into each of our souls and masks the emergent Cosmic Christ, locking C.C. out even without us realizing it.

What is this plague?

H-I-E-R-A-R-C-H-Y.

Just this morning I was listening to Bruce Springstein's The Seger Sessions an old protest song struck a chord about this plague. Jacob's Ladder is the story of being trapped in the cycle of hierarchy in the world. It is about changing your position and improving your life by moving from the oppressed to the oppressor. Wrong mindsets to bring complete healing to creation and us.

This ladder motif feeds into our scientific, logical and modernistic world that is at odds with the emerging community world (yes we have moved beyond post-modernism). It is not a global structure that feeds creativity, care and hope.

It is time to use your emerging new self that exists in the heart of the Sacred to ignite creativity, care and hope in the world...to live out the Love Commandments. How? Use the ladder for a grand

bonfire, embrace the hands of those around you and dance the circle celebrating the beauty and miracles around us.

How do I know it is in the circle that reconciliation is found within creation? Because this is the circle I had to learn to dance. I was trapped in the old world way of doing and seeing things. As a writer I am quite creative and my stories and characters stretched boundaries that some could not understand, so much that I lost myself in my characters and not being able to decipher which was I and which was fictionalized character for each character had a piece of me.

My dancing of the circle was more Soul Work as I started a journey to strip away my false self. It was a journey that started one Saturday morning when I had gone for a creativity date for myself at my local A&W (can't beat their classic breakfast and coffee for writing up a storm).

On the page this morning tumbled out a meeting between me and an older man (mid-fifties) names John MacCurtis. John is not a typical person for he has been a character in my stories in different incarnations stretching back to my childhood.

It was a direct conversation as I began to realize how much of my life had been lost in masks and false selves. Okay I will admit the Zoloft I was prescribed after hitting the proverbial emotional wall helped. It was on the rebound (or is that rebuilding) after suffering a

series of anxiety attacks due to a mild case of depression that this conversation began to unfold.

Borrowing the concept of a Tulpa, a fictionalized individual that becomes real in our world (it is Tibetan I believe) and here was John, I could almost see him across from me and this former sidekick and leader of the super hero teams I wrote about was challenging me to a new quest.

A quest that was hard to describe or decipher, it was a journey within myself to my very core to embrace the Cosmic Christ within me. I chose the symbol of a Labyrinth for this journey and it became a series of stories, conflicts and dialogues with past story characters.

The wisdom writings of my faith talk about separating the wheat from the chaff in purification. This is what this journey of the Labyrinth was like. For those unfamiliar with a Labyrinth it is an ancient tool of meditation to walk, there is only one path in and out, but unlike a maze there is not any false ends, just a tour inwards to the centre.

I was on a journey to my core, with each contact with a major character of my past I tore away the falsity's from my own life that I had convinced myself were part of my story and let the fire claim them. Embracing the true me, letting my masks fall away till I reached my core.

With the walk came the stripping away of the institutionalized-black-gray-religiosity I realized that I had been faking for a few years and re-embraced my true spiritual practice.

It felt like a thousand tons had been lifted off my body, when I looked in the mirror I no longer saw someone I did not recognize, but could smile as I saw my true self. A holistic self where the Cosmic Christ at my core had stripped away the false selves and brought me into communion with the Heart of the Sacred, a communion that needs to be renewed daily.

Soul Work: Write a conversation between you and a fictional character you have created or enjoy reading about. This character acts as your foil/spiritual director in this meditation to begin a pilgrimage to your soul.

Write twelve more, one a week for the next three months each time using a different character. Meditate before and after.

What are you learning about yourself?

The dissolution of hierarchy in our personal lives allows us to quit pretending being something we are not; it also allows us to challenge our institutions for authentic renewal from the ground up. It has been this kind of true renewal that allows fresh eyes to see things.

Fresh eyes that reveal a new way to look at faith, within the Gnostic Texts there is recordings of Jesus and Mary Magdalene being

physically intimate (Gospel of Philip says kissing her on the lips).
Within the Gospel texts of the Bible there are stories of women intimately washing Jesus' feet or of Jesus circumventing social convention and talking to those he should not. Fresh eyes let you see beyond what is expected, beyond what should be...and takes you deeper into the Sacred.

Eyes that can accept Jesus as a man that loves; has sexual intercourse...maybe even a wife. Fresh eyes that can see the true equality within the early Christian Community and how valued Mary Magdalene and Mother Mary are. How it is not as simple as a dichotomy of whore and virgin, just more lies that the hierarchy feeds us.

Allows authentic renewal within our personal self; a self that Tibetan Buddhism teaches should be possible to love all. How do you feel love for all? As past lives and creative energy flows is it not possible that everyone we meet at one point or another was our mother, brother, uncle, aunt, father, sister or grandparent. We are all connected and it is this connectedness that is lost in the hierarchy that exists.

Soul Work: What lies have you told yourself? What lies have been told about you? How has our society shaped who you are?

Spend time reflecting on each of these questions to discover what living the ladder has done to your soul.

Lay back and meditate how would your life be different if you lived a life structured on a circle of true equality?

The circle is a hard thing to understand especially in the west where we are not a communal culture to begin with. We have embraced the lie of the Protestant Work Ethic where anyone can pull themselves up by their bootstraps; what a lie this is that we tell ourselves. Without family and mentors in my life I know I would not be writing this book, have my degrees and life experiences.

Soul Work:

Who has spoken into your life?

Take time to write each of them a personalized thank you card and
send it to them.

King Arthur understood equality that is why he chose a round table for his meeting table all were equal to the king and the king is equal to all. The word Panentheism takes this into our faith in the Sacred; for it translates simply as God in everything and everything in God.⁴

This concept of the circle, of all being equal and part of the creative process shatters the ladder and leaves it in splinters to be devoured by the flames of the party bonfire as we dance in the love of the Sacred.

⁴ If God is a stumbling block please insert the term for the Sacred that allows you to truly commune with Her.

Soul Work: Using words; music; dance; acting; colour or crafts
(whatever creative energy you feel flow to you now) express your
dance around the ladder's fire and truly free yourself from the confines
of the hierarchy.

Institutions have used the Ladder to declare who was in and who was out; who had the power and who did not. The Ladder has been used as a divisive implement to damage the sacredness of life and our rituals of passage.

It has shifted whole cultures since European contact, before European contact in North America many Aboriginal Nations were Matriarchal, yet to keep up trade they had to conform to the ladder. Community and equality tossed aside for commodities and wealth. A loss of calling to be supplanted by career or at the worst job and what do we have to show for it? Self-destructive practices.

Soul Work:

Write about how the opposite sex has changed your view on the world.

- How do you view the opposite sex?
- How do you view the same-sex?

Write a short narrative piece as a transgender person.

- What does it feel like to be both genders in one?
- What defines gender to you?

Part of dancing the circle is moving beyond labels and the labels that we use to divide. To dictate who can and cannot hang out with us or who can and cannot be a family or married.

All these need to be thrown onto our bonfire. I spent many years repressed because I could look at any gender and feel attraction or freely comment about their physical beauty, I did not gain true freedom to love deeply with my life partner Jaime, until I surrendered any attempt to label myself.

A new sexuality for dancing the circle is that the Sacred has created one who completes us in Her heart and when we connect with that one gender is irrelevant for Love transcends all.

Dancing the circle removes false selves.

Dancing the circle removes labels.

Dancing the circle removes sexual boundaries.

Dancing the circle empowers the dancer.

Dancing the circle frees the soul.

There is a story from the life of Jesus that speaks of Dancing the Circle. It is a time when Jesus was doing what he did; loving those no one else did, healing the sick (a old-age form of public health care).

When four men were rushing to see him they ran past a paraplegic beggar who was stuck in his own fecal matter and stunk to high heaven. Three of the four kept running on ahead.

The fourth stopped, his friends encouraged him to come. But he fought it saying they had to help the man. The other three tried not to exhale as they lifted up the mat with the man on it. Carrying him through town towards the house they heard the Healer was in.

Ignoring the strange looks and tsking of their neighbours as they attempted to help this man focusing on their desire to see the man healed. Arriving at the house they were overcome with grief as the overflow of people crowded in made it impossible to get the man through.

When one of them spoke up and pointed to the roof. They hoisted the man up and two of them cut through the roof. Debris fell inwards as the Healer's eyes looked up. The man who could not walk was lowered down into the centre of the room.

"Pick up your mat and walk." And the man on the mat did.

Soul Work: These men danced the circle and nurtured the sick as a mother would nurse and protect their young, moving beyond hierarchal labels to become fully realized in the heart of the Sacred. Your work here is simple yet hard, re-write the story three times from four different perspectives. In one you are Jesus; another you are the paralysed man; you are in the crowd witnessing this event and finally you are one in the group that lowered the man through the roof.

Soul Work:

- What have you discovered about yourself within this story?

The Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer is the way that Jesus, during his Sermon on the Mount in The Gospel of St. Matthew instructed his followers to talk to God, without fanfare, or in public for praise, but rather just with God—intimately for the term Abba that Christ used when talking with God, was not the stiff Father we like, but rather Dad or Daddy in the language of his day. Imagine being able to come to your creator so intimately, when even in worship at that time there was a separation.

For those who do not know what the words are, here is the contemporary version:

Our Father in Heaven

Hallowed be your name

Your kingdom come

Your will be done

On earth, as in heaven.

Give us this day

Our daily bread

Forgive us our sins

As we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation

But deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours.

Now and forever.

Amen.

Our Father: I do not know if we truly understand the intimacy God has allowed us to have with Him. From not being able to utter His name (the Nation of Israel) to now being able to simply chat with him as a friend, parent, and creator.

In Heaven: A unique idea, to be resting in paradise with our creator. A rest God has been participating in since the seventh day of creation.

Hallowed be your name: A deeper understanding of just who God is in creation, yes we can come before him in intimacy, but also reverence as God is the source of everything.

Your kingdom come: What is at the heart of God's kingdom? It was the Gospel that Jesus preached; the Kingdom of Heaven (sic God in the Gospel of St. Matthew) is near. So what is God's kingdom? Reflect through what God's love is in the Bible? What God's justice is in the Bible? And what is God's peace? These are all parts of the Kingdom that we pray to come.

Your will be done: What is God's will for creation? Is it how we treat one another and the environment now? Or is there something else at the heart of God? His will for us is seen in such statements as:

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

²⁹ Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. ³⁰ And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so. (Genesis 1:28-30, New International Version).

This is where God blesses us by giving us dominion over the earth, but this is not a dominion of destruction, but one of cure.

Same as his love commandments (Matthew 22:34-40) we are to love our God, our self and our neighbour. Who is our neighbour? The Parable of the Good Samaritan tells us that our neighbour is anyone in need.

Can you love your self? Just as your are? As God our creator sees you?

On earth as in heaven: What is it for God's will and kingdom to be on earth?

¹⁶Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷When they saw him, they worshiped him;

but some doubted. ¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in^[a] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:16-20, New International Version)

We are far off from where we have God's kingdom on Earth. But believers playing moral traffic cops to non-believers do not accomplish this; God's kingdom will unfold here by simple acts of love. Do you care for the earth? For God's creatures? Do you say hi to strangers with a smile? Do you resist road (or transit) rage? Provide a hug when needed? Or a shoulder to cry on? Build authentic friendships with people not so they are conversion projects, but because they have worth being made in the image of God?

These are the relationships that will realize God's Kingdom and will.

Give us today our Daily Bread: There are two ways to look at this, in St. Matthew's Gospel he writes of Jesus teaching to no worry about physical provision, but trust in God and you will not go hungry or in need (as the creatures of creation do).

Another is to contemplate the Eucharist (Communion, Lord's Supper), and what the bread represents-Jesus Christ, His sacrifice for us. A daily renewal of Christ's willingness to go to the Cross so that we could be at the feast table of the Lord.

Forgive us our sins: John 3:17 reads-for he came into the world not to condemn it, but to save it. We follow a forgiving God who will forgive us anything if we honestly come before him with a repentant heart.

As we forgive those who sin against us: With the right heart, God will forgive us any transgression. Part of having that right heart is having the spirit of forgiveness in dealing with others, not that there are no consequences for actions, but that we to have the heart of God to be able to carry on with the life he has planned for us.

Save us from the time of Trial: May we always be in you, God, or seeking after you, so when we leave this life we will be with you in Paradise.

And deliver us from evil: If we truly seek God's will & love in our lives, then we can see how God protects us from the evil one, we can see how God protects us from the evil one, and as temptations and evils get worse the closer we get to God, the easier it is to endure and over come.

For the kingdom: Is God's that we are helping to build.

The Power: Is the Holy Spirit empowering us to live God's love outwards in the world to one another and creation.

And the glory: Jesus' glorious coming again, and the promise that holds for all believers.

Are yours, now and forever: As we know everything comes from God.

Amen: So be it.

Soul Work: Embrace your understanding of the Sacred, take a prayer from a Mystic you respect or whose writing inspires you, and reflect on each line of the prayer to draw out your understanding of your journey.

Unit Five

Closing Time

I pray that during this journey you realize that the title of this section "Closing Time" does not mean our journey is ending. Rather the beginning of your journey towards the new you is closing off and it is time for: the next step.

Being reborn is a lifelong process of change, not only in the heart, but the mind, soul and body. Bringing our desperate pieces together as one from the fragments we live in.

Once you have discovered your Calling and use that as the focus of your life you will be amazed how your life changes so drastically.

I have been unified in the Cosmic Christ (insert your own term for the energy that makes us full) and it has brought new life to me.

A true soul mate has been found and deepened a relationship with. My political beliefs have never fit so closely who I am. I went from a man who has been Reform-Progressive Conservative-Green-Liberal-NDP to now being a part of the Communist Party of Canada. Why? Because it is about freeing the oppressed and no structure to me is more oppressive than the broken capitalism we live in.

Theological I am no longer attempting to fake being a Christian of the Centre-Right; I am firmly rooted in the Liberal Christian

tradition (if you need a denominational tie-somewhere between United Church of Canada-Unitarian- Universalist Association).

All these are labels that we use to define ourselves; vocationally I am a counsellor currently as well as a writer and teacher. My companies name says Ty Ragan Consulting as I attempt to help churches build youth and children ministries focused on Spiritual Formation not programming.

All these are pieces of a whole; my calling is to be a voice for the voiceless. I have journeyed to the Heart of the Sacred using Labyrinths and pilgrimage and in that heart I have been transforming and am being transformed daily.

Tonight the sun will go down.

The moon will rise.

You will sleep deeply

Your dreams will talk to you

As the sun rises

A new day begins

Like every morning

You are reborn anew.

Welcome to the next step of the rest of your life. Keep up with your daily practice; keep your pieces whole and remember:

The Sacred is in you; you are in the Sacred.

The Sacred is in everything; everything is in the Sacred.

Personal transformation creates global transformation.

Namaste (the place where all are equal) & Shalom (God's Peace).

Ty Ragan

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