

# Recovering a sense of the sacred through prayer

[wccm.org/weekly-readings/recovering-a-sense-of-the-sacred-through-prayer](http://wccm.org/weekly-readings/recovering-a-sense-of-the-sacred-through-prayer)

4 August 2023



**An excerpt from John Main OSB, “The Consciousness of Jesus” in *WORD MADE FLESH: Recovering a sense of the sacred through prayer* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2009), p. 5.**

It is the simplicity of God, of the divine oneness, that calls us to meditate. It is also our greatest stumbling-block. For how can we with all our complexities know absolute simplicity? The mantra is the way through this block. It is a sign or symbol of the unity and simplicity of God. In all the classical literature of prayer, in St Teresa, St John of the Cross, Meister Eckhart, we find the common idea that the way to total union and continuous presence is the way of simple and selfless discipline. Selflessness is the way of the mantra. It leads us out of the labyrinth of self-consciousness. By its constant repetition it brings us gradually, and with much patience, to the silence where everything is resolved in the utter simplicity of God. In the divine oneness we become one . . . .v

**After meditation: Mary Oliver, “White Owl Flies into and out of the Field” in *DEVOTIONS: The Selected Poems of Mary Oliver* (New York: Penguin, 2017), p. 324.**

WHITE OWL FLIES INTO AND OUT OF THE FIELD

Coming down  
out of the freezing sky  
with its depth of light,  
like an angel  
or a Buddha with wings,  
it was beautiful  
and accurate,  
striking the snow and whatever was there  
with a force that left the imprint  
of the tips of its wings—  
five feet apart—and the grabbing  
thrust of its feet.  
and the indentation of what had been running  
through the white valleys  
of the snow—

and then it rose, gracefully,  
and flew back to the frozen marshes,  
to lurk there,  
like a little lighthouse  
in the blue shadows—  
so I thought:  
maybe death  
isn't darkness, after all,  
but so much light  
wrapping itself around us—  
as soft as feathers—  
that we are instantly weary  
of looking, and looking, and shut our eyes,

not without amazement,  
and let ourselves be carried  
as through the translucence of mica,  
to the river  
that is without the least dapple or shadow—  
that is nothing but light—scalding, aortal light—  
in which we are washed and washed  
out of our bones.

[Download Printable version](#)

Photo credit: [Jamie McCaffrey](#) on [VisualHunt](#)