

Theological Reflection: Session 4

Reverence for Life

Themes: Personhood, Transcendent Mystery

“The Summer Day”

*Who made the world?
Who made the swan, and the black bear?
Who made the grasshopper?
This grasshopper, I mean-
the one who has flung herself out of the grass,
the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,
who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down-
who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.
Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.
Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.
I don't know exactly what a prayer is.
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,
which is what I have been doing all day.
Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?
- Mary Oliver*

- If “paying attention” or “falling down into the grass” is a form of prayer, what is prayer? Do you pray? Why?
- Who did, in fact, make the swan and the black bear and the grasshopper?
- When does a black bear become a black bear? When does personhood begin?