

Dark Night

On a dark night,
inflamed by long-longing--
O exquisite risk!--
Undetected I slipped away.
My house, at last, grown still.

Secure in the darkness,
I climbed the secret ladder in disguise--
O exquisite risk!--
Concealed by the darkness.
My house, at last, grown still.

That sweet night: a secret.
Nobody saw me;
I did not see a thing.
No other light, no other guide
Than the one burning in my heart.

This light led the way
More clearly than the risen sun
To where he was waiting for me
-- The one I knew so intimately--
In a place where no one could find us.

O night, that guided me!
O night, sweeter than sunrise!
O night, that joined lover with Beloved!
Lover transformed in Beloved!

Upon my blossoming breast,
Which I cultivated just for him,
He drifted into sleep,
And while I caressed him,
A cedar breeze touched the air.

Wind blew down from the tower,
Parting the locks of his hair.
With his gentle hand
He wounded my neck
And all my senses were suspended.

I lost myself. Forgot myself.
I lay my face against the Beloved's face.
Everything fell away and I left myself
behind,
Abandoning my cares
Among the lilies, forgotten.

-- John of the Cross
Translated by Mirabai Starr

Questions for reflections:

Darkness

What is your relationship with the dark?

If you have ever been afraid in the dark, what helped relieve your fear?

What does the darkness hide? What does the darkness allow you to see?

What messages have we gotten from culture (popular, religious, etc.)
about dark versus light?

Have you ever experienced the dark as especially beautiful?

Light

When has light come for you at just the right time?

When did it seem like light would never come?

What can light hide or cover up? What does light allow you to see?

Have you ever experienced the light as especially beautiful?

Risk

Have you ever taken a particularly bold risk?

Do you risk in relationships?

Who do you deal with anxiety around risk?

What risks are involved in following Christ?

How do you experience risk in church or religious connections?

Christ

What is your experience of what many call a “personal Jesus?”

Does this poem bring up any new ways that God, through Christ,
might seek to be close with you?