

SUNBEAMS

The dying process begins the minute we are born, but it accelerates during dinner parties.

Carol Matthau

Why are so many Americans so unhappy . . . ? All manner of plausible causes present themselves, but the master cause may be the most elemental: *Homo sapiens*, a familial animal like the wolf or hyena rather than solitary like the bear, is genetically unequipped to live without the emotional support of uncles, aunts, first cousins, and second cousins, in addition to siblings, parents, and children. . . . Periodic gatherings for the ceremonies of birth, marriage, and death; the much more frequent celebration of birthdays, name days, anniversaries, and seasonal feasts; as well as webs of less-formal socializing, all serve to keep the machinery of human families in working order. That is how people live all over the world in village, town, or city — but not in contemporary America.

Edward N. Luttwak

He had the uneasy manner of a man who is not among his own kind, and who has not seen enough of the world to feel that all people are in some sense his own kind.

Willa Cather

Without an understanding of myth or religion, without an understanding of the relationship between destruction and creation, death and rebirth, the individual suffers the mysteries of life as meaninglessly mayhem alone.

Marion Woodman

I believe that we often disguise pain through ritual and it may be the only solace we have.

Rita Mae Brown

To seek God by rituals is to get the ritual and lose God in the process, for he hides behind it.

Meister Eckhart

Sooner or later we all discover that the important moments in life are not the advertised ones, not the birthdays, the graduations, the weddings, not the great goals achieved. The real milestones are less prepossessing. They come to the door of memory unannounced, stray dogs that amble in, sniff around a bit, and simply never leave.

Susan B. Anthony

I remember sitting parked by the roadside once, terribly depressed and afraid about my daughter's illness and what was going on in our family, when out of nowhere a car came along down the highway with a license plate that bore on it the one word out of all the words in the dictionary that I needed most to see exactly then. The word was TRUST. What do you call a

moment like that? Something to laugh off as the kind of joke life plays on us every once in a while? The word of God? . . . The owner of the car turned out to be, as I'd suspected, a trust officer in a bank, and not long ago, having read an account I wrote of the incident somewhere, he found out where I lived and one afternoon brought me the license plate itself, which sits propped up on a bookshelf in my house to this day. It is rusty around the edges and a little battered, and it is also as holy a relic as I have ever seen.

Frederick Buechner

We say that if a temple, or a symbol, or an image helps you to realize the divine within, you are welcome to it. Have two hundred images if you like. If certain forms and formulas help you to realize the divine . . . have, by all means, whatever forms, temples, whatever ceremonies you want to bring you nearer to God. But do not quarrel about them: the moment you quarrel, you are not going Godward; you are going backward toward the brutes.

Swami Vivekananda

In India, I was living in a little hut, about six feet by seven feet. It had a canvas flap instead of a door. I was sitting on my bed meditating, and a cat wandered in and plopped down on my lap. I took the cat and tossed it out the door. Ten seconds later it was back on my lap. We got into a sort of dance, this cat and I. . . . I tossed it out because I was trying to meditate, to get enlightened. But the cat kept returning. I was getting more and more irritated, more and more annoyed with the persistence of the cat. Finally, after about a half-hour of this coming in and tossing out, I had to surrender. There was nothing else to do. There was no way to block off the door. I sat there, the cat came back in, and it got on my lap. But I did not do anything. I just let go. Thirty seconds later the cat got up and walked out. So you see, our teachers come in many forms.

Joseph Goldstein

He was sitting at the table in the kitchen, all by himself, drinking a glass of ginger ale and eating saltines and reading *Dombey and Son*, and all of a sudden Jesus sat down in the other chair and asked if he could have a small glass of ginger ale. A *small* glass mind you.

J.D. Salinger

Ritual is necessary for us to know anything. You've got to get out and pray to the sky to appreciate the sunshine; otherwise you're just a lizard standing there with the sun shining on you.

Ken Kesey

It is said that if you take only one step toward Him, He advances ten steps toward you. But the complete truth is that God is always with you.

Mohammed

Sunbeams are welcome and may be sent to The Sun, 107 North Roberson Street, Chapel Hill, NC 27516. We're sorry, but we're unable to respond personally to your suggestions.