



A Newsletter For Prisoners  
Based on the Conversations with God Material

B.P. 315  
Lac Saguay, Que.  
Canada J0W 1L0

\*\*\*\*\*NEW: [freedom\\_inside@hotmail.com](mailto:freedom_inside@hotmail.com)\*\*\*\*\*

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**What Is It All About?**

*On page 8 in this issue, you will find a beautiful poem called Life Between The Dash. I have always loved that poem and its message, the dates we are born and we die do not matter. What happens between those dates, in the dash, is where our life is.*

*I read this poem years ago. It feels like I've known the truth of its message forever. Living each day to its fullest is what I strive for.*

*But it stills leaves me with some serious questions.*

*My father passed away in 1991. His death spurred my search for the meaning of life and death. My son died in 2001, my sister in 2002, and my mother just passed in May of this year.*

*They are all gone. We know the dates of their births and their deaths and we know a lot of what their lives were about. But they all are gone now.*

*And I am wondering what is left. Why did they live? What was their life all about? What is my life all about? What is yours?*

*Do we have to be a Mother Theresa or a Hitler in order for our lives to make a real difference in the world?*

*These days, I find myself questioning Life. Is life real or an illusion? Is it important or kind of a game? Are my choices going to make a real difference, either for me or for others, in the long run?*

"Is life real or an illusion?  
Is it important or kind of  
a game?"

*I feel like I'm between lives right now. This feeling might be very familiar to many of you who are incarcerated! I feel like the life I led before my mother died is over and done with but the life I choose to live in Ashland has not begun yet.*

*But I am here now and I am not moving yet. And since I truly believe the Universe is ever working in my favor, I know this waiting period is for my benefit, for my own good! :-)*

*I don't do "waiting" very well at all. I'm the sort of person who wants things to happen as quickly as possible. I dislike waiting even for bad stuff to happen. I would much rather have them happen right now and deal with them than wait for the proverbial axe to fall. My sons know this about me which is why when, after a visit, it is time to say our goodbyes, they are not surprised when I all but shove them out the door.*

*So waiting for this next stage of my life to start is difficult for me. And I know what I need to do to make it easier, so easy in fact that it's not an issue anymore: I need to live in the moment as completely as I can. Live the life that is between the following dash,*

*Life in Canada-Life in Oregon.*

*Or any other dash I can think of. What a simple idea this is! Then why the heck do I find it soooo difficult to do?*

*I started writing this article feeling anxious about when the move would happen, when my house would sell, what I would do in Oregon if my house isn't sold soon. All these questions are 'normal', I guess. As a matter of fact, it would be very easy to find people to worry with. What will I do if....? Oh my, yes!*

*Worrying is very easy to do, don't you think? And it is always easy to find people who will worry with you, isn't it?*

*But when is the last time worrying helped you? When is the last time it made your life easier? Better? I don't know about you, but it has never helped me. And I cannot tell you how many times I worried about something that never came true. What a waste of time and*

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**What Is It All About?**  
(continued from page 1)

*energy that was!*

*So what IS my life about? For sure, I won't find that out by worrying about anything. I think I can plan for things that feel right to me but I cannot then worry about when or how my plans will come true. I have to trust the Universe. Send my intentions out there and then let go.*

*Letting go. That is my recipe for happiness. Be clear in my intentions, send this message regularly and strongly out there and then letting go. Letting go of my view of what the answer will look like or when it will appear.*

*That, by wonderful readers, is my definition of freedom inside, not the newsletter mind you, the real thing.*

*Freedom to focus on exactly what is in front of me now and knowing a Benevolent Universe has put it there for me. Freedom to focus on deciding how I wish to respond, how I choose to show up in the world.*

*I don't know why my father chose to live this particular life; or my sister, or my son, or my mother. I don't even know why I chose to come at this point in time and incarnate in this particular way. One thing I am sure of is that I don't know how things work much less why they show up just as they do.*

*One of the only things I do know is that I am forever grateful to have had my father, my sister, my son and my mother in this life. I love the relationships I had with each of them. And their deaths have helped me value life more, especially the lives of my loved ones.*

*So I don't know when I'll be moving to Ashland but so what? Much more important is to concentrate on my connection with the Divine here and now...and I remember to do that....some of the time!!!!*

*Still practicing,  
Janine*

**Christmas is You**  
by Neale Donald Walsch

I couldn't sleep last night.

I was up from 2 until 6, having another one of my Conversations with God.

"Tell me about Christmas," I said.  
"What is it really all about?"

And I heard, "What do you mean, what is it really all about? I've told you a million times what it's all about."

So I said, "Tell me again. I think I may have missed it."

And suddenly my head was filled with a Christmas Carol - one of the happiest and most triumphant of all the melodies of Christmas.

"Joy to the world," the song began, "the Lord has come."

But I couldn't get into it. I kept wondering, what is joyful about the coming of someone who is going to be a lord over us?

God! I said...I don't understand this!

And God replied, "You're right. You don't."

Then God said, "But at least you're asking a question. And that's good. It's really hard to understand something if you think there are no more questions to ask. You can't be given an answer if you think you already have the only answer there is."

"Well, I don't have the answer," I admitted. "So what's the answer?"

And God said, "The answer is that the Lord....who has come....is not a lord over you, but in you."

These words came to me at 2:57 this morning, and I pondered them in my heart.

"Then," I ventured, "the Christmas season is not just a remembering of the birth of a Babe. We'll sing about that Babe tonight, and honor his arrival, for he brought a new TELLING of a great truth - and a true LIVING of it - to the world. And these truly were tidings of comfort, and joy.

But this is also a celebration of the birth of the Christed one in all of us."

And God answered softly, "yes."

And then I wondered what all the songs, and all the messages, and all the feelings of Christmas would mean if I accepted this truth. If I really understood that the message of this season is not about one blessed being, but about all beings, being blessed.

Not about someone ELSE, but about US.

About ME.

But oh, my gosh, did that sound bad. I mean, it actually sounded like blasphemy. How could Christmas be about me?

Of all the self-centered, ego-maniacal thoughts!

This is about the coming of the Lord!  
This is about the Gift of the Magi!

But, my heart insisted, what if the gift was me? And what if the Lord HAS come to be in me, not over me?

I know that I can find a place for him OVER me, but can I find a place for him WITHIN me?

And what would it mean for me to do that? What would it mean for me to be not only a person who has been BLESSED, but a person who is blessed? And for me to think of YOU in the same way? What if I saw YOU as blessed? Would I act differently toward you?

I'd like to think I would. I'd like to think that I would be more kind to you. More gentle with my words, more caring with my actions, more compassionate in my thoughts, more honest in my dealings, more patient and generous and...and more aware of the wonder of you.

AND IF I THOUGHT THAT I WAS A BLESSED PERSON, would I act differently toward me?

I think I WOULD. I think I'd be more kind to myself. More gentle with my

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## SUNSHINE FOR YOUR SOUL THIS WINTER

In Invitation to join 2010 Winter Feast for the Soul

by Valerie Skonie

Director, Winter Feast for the Soul 2008-2010

As I begin to write this, the third article in this series of five articles, it is 93 days until the 2010 Winter Feast for the Soul begins on January 15<sup>th</sup>. The Feast (as we call it) is a period of time when we ask people around the world to commit to 40 minutes of spiritual practice each day for forty days. Spiritual practice can take any form that comes easily to you based on previous religious and spiritual history. It can be any one of the following:

Prayer

Meditation

Reading Sacred Texts

Yoga

Martial Arts

Journaling

Any activity that stills your mind and puts you in touch with the quiet place inside of you where Spirit dwells in stillness will do.

We have already talked about how you can start to build your mental muscles by practicing concentration/meditation for 15 minutes each day. It's about time to begin to extend that time from 15 minutes to 20-25 minutes. For many of you that will not be easy. Your mind is a literal thought-making machine. Some teachers even describe it as a jungle full of wild beasts that are almost impossible to tame. So, how in the world are you going to do that in your present situation?

Here is an idea. There is a meditation practice called *walking meditation*. This practice allows you to place your concentration in your feet...about as far away from your thought-making mind as possible. You will take one step at a time, walking slowly and deliberately with each step. If you begin your meditation with about 10 minutes of walking and then find a place to sit in a good erect posture for the balance of the time, you may find it easier to get control of your wild monkey mind and make it through your 20 minutes.

Here are the steps to take in beginning your walking meditation practice:

1. Find a quiet place where you can take about 10 small deliberate steps in one direction.
2. Drop your gaze to the floor.
3. Take your first step.
4. With each step say to yourself:
  - "Lifting", as you lift up one foot.
  - "Moving", as you move the foot forward.
  - "Placing", as you drop your foot to its new place on the floor.

You will probably find that as you place your foot on the floor you will automatically begin lifting the other foot.

Remember to make each step slow and deliberate and make each part of the step a separate movement. I usually find that ten minutes of this settles my mind and time will pass very quickly.

You don't need a lot of space for this

practice. You can walk in a small circle. I walk on a rug that is about 4 feet by 4 feet. What is important is that this practice will settle your mind in a way that all the efforting with your mind will not be able to do.

Here is some inspiration...I'm not sure if you know these Hollywood people, but they all meditate each and every day and attribute their success to that practice: Oliver Stone (director), Richard Gere (actor), Hugh Jackman (actor), Ellen Berstyn (actress). All are academy award winning individuals. Here is what one of them said in an interview:

*"I meditate for 30 minutes each day. If I feel as though I don't have time, then I meditate for 60 minutes."*

I think that quote says it all.

I hope this new practice helps you to stay on track.

I invite you to commit to the Feast by writing to the editor of Freedom Inside. By joining thousands of people around the world you will be part of creating

"A World at Peace, One Heart at a Time".

Who knows what will happen when we are successful.

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**Christmas is You**  
 by Neale Donald Walsch  
*(continued from page 2)*

<p>words, more caring with my actions. I think I'd be more compassionate with myself, more patient and generous and...and more aware of the wonder of ME.</p> <p>But is it POSSIBLE that we are ALL blessed?</p> <p>This I asked in the middle of the night, and the answer came back, stunningly, simply: "Yes."</p> <p>SOOO, I mused... this is the meaning of Christmas. That... that which is Christed is born in all of us. Lives in all of us. IS all of us. We simply do not remember this. And so, Christmas was created to remind us.</p> <p>Christmas, it turns out, is not about a particular religion, but about all religions. It is not about a particular person, but about all persons.</p> <p>It does not matter tonight whether you are Christian or Muslim, Hindu or Jew, Baptist or Buddhist.</p> <p>Or none of the above.</p> <p>When you give birth to the lord within you, you give LIFE to a wonder and a majesty and a wisdom and a love that can flow from you to all the world, and change the world forever.</p> <p>Isn't this the Christmas Story?</p> <p>And when we LIVE this story as OUR</p>	<p>story, are our lives not renewed, our separated selves made whole?</p> <p>Indeed.</p> <p>Our souls are stirred, our hearts are filled. And then it is WE who bring...joy to the world.</p> <p>The gift of Christmas is US, fully expressed and fully realized. It is US -- completely willing and totally ready -- to love without condition, to give without restriction, to share without limitation, to create without fear, to celebrate ourselves without shame or embarrassment.</p> <p>It is US, choosing to forgive without hesitation, to help without being asked, to rush in where angels fear to tread. Indeed, to lead the way for angels.</p> <p>Ah, to lead the way for angels. That's why we're here. That's why we've come to the Earth. To be a herald!</p> <p>Hark! The herald, angels sing. Glory to the newborn king.</p> <p>At this moment we can give birth to the royalty within us...the royalty that we ARE in God's eyes.</p> <p>You know, someone once said...if YOU saw YOU as GOD sees you, you would smile a lot.</p> <p>Well, this season is a night for smiles. For now, if we really try, we can almost see ourselves as God sees us. We can feel it.</p>	<p>That feeling is called love. Your love for life, and all those you love in this life. And God's love for you.</p> <p>Now, the Magic of Christmas is that it gives us permission to take that feeling, to take that love, and share it with all those whose lives we touch.</p> <p>With friend, and with stranger.</p> <p>With those who agree with us, and with those who disagree.</p> <p>With those who look and act like us, and with those who do not.</p> <p>We are invited during this time to feel this love, and to give it permanent place within our heart. To be the source of peace on Earth, and goodwill toward men and women everywhere.</p> <p>We are invited to walk the Earth not only as one who is BLESSED, but as one who is blessed. Not only as the Lord of the manner, but in the manner of the Lord.</p> <p>For that is what we are. We are the lord of our inner kingdom, and thus, of the outer one as well. And when we understand that, everything changes. We begin to experience the world, and to affect the world, in a new way.</p> <p>That is the Christmas invitation. And should we accept this invitation, we really can bring joy to the world. And heaven, and nature, will sing.</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;">First there was god.        Then there was the word.        Then god became the word.        I am god's word.        I am you.        I am.</p> <p><i>"Being in the present moment and actively acknowledging our divinity by focusing fully on wonderment attracts all energy into the moment.</i></p> <p><i>By choosing active acknowledgement of being divine and by focusing intently on finding love</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>through active wonderment, alchemists become one with the moment and therefore become merged with the energy of all.</i></p> <p><i>Learning this habit of being one with all energy in the moment is one of the keys to alchemical mastery.</i></p> <p><i>This is how we know god-as-self, in the moment of becoming that which is."</i></p>
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## INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

***Freedom Inside*** now contains 12 pages. We're growing and I just love it.

***A while back I bought an internet course called The Thomas Messages that I found wonderfully uplifting. I am now choosing to share this course with you in these new pages. There are 16 messages in all, I will include one in each issue until all 16 messages have been shared with you.***

***If some of you would like to receive the messages more quickly, please go to [www.emissaryoflight.com](http://www.emissaryoflight.com) and for a suggested donation of 50 US dollars, you will receive one of these messages every few days.***

***Here is how James Twyman, the author of the course, describes it.***

### THE THOMAS MESSAGES:

In 2002, a book was published called "Emissary of Love: the Psychic Children Speak to the World" chronicling my journey into the mountains of Bulgaria to meet a group of children who possess amazing psychic powers. One of those children, a young boy named Thomas, claimed to be able to send messages and insights over great distances, even to the other side of the world. I didn't remember this until I was sitting in a hot tub some months later and "felt him" inside me.

It was the first time I ever had an experience like this, and it was the beginning of a long discourse on the role of the New Children (sometimes called the Indigo Children) and their role in healing the world. These amazing lessons, all from the mind of Thomas, are the result of that dialogue. He claims that there are thousands of children in the world today who have the same gift, the ability to "align" with others who can then help them complete their Great Work.

If you are interested in learning this, or connecting with one of these young masters, then this course is the way. Thomas shares insights that will help you live a fulfilled life, and even teaches how to enter the "Grid" where the children work together.

It is important for you to decide why you are taking this course. Is it because you want to perform miracles? Do you want to feel more powerful than you have ever allowed yourself to be in the past? If these ideas approach the reasons you are reading this right now, then it would be best for you to stop. Find something else to occupy your time. You will not achieve these things if they are the goal you seek. However, if you are reading this because you have decided that you are on this planet to be an "Instrument of Peace," and to heal the world by healing your own mind, then please continue. If you open your heart and mind to these simple lessons and dedicate yourself to this mission, then you will achieve it. Guaranteed!

And here is the paradox: If you do seek these higher ideals, to love and to realize that you are already whole and enlightened, then the miracles will surely follow, and you will realize yourself to be more powerful than you have ever allowed yourself to be in the past. They are not the goals, but they are the products of a higher goal. You are here to learn how to apply the force we call LOVE. It is as easy as learning a certain technology that has been known by the mystics of many spiritual traditions for thousands of years. Now it is your turn to learn it, then apply it to your life.

## Message Fifteen

This lesson was a great surprise for me. I am normally able to predict the direction of the messages, but there are also times when they move in a direction I didn't expect. I try to stay out of the way and let them unfold on their own. And now we are two lessons away from completing our course, and everything changes.

Developing a strong connection with a Child Guide has been one of the most important element of this course. The words we read can never move us as much as our direct experience, and that has been the reason for having a Guide. Most of you have established powerful connections with the Psychic Children, and you have learned far more from that connection than from the lessons themselves. And that is as it should be, for your direct experience is the only thing that counts.

And now Thomas shares a deeper understanding of how that connection works, and how it helps us share in the work of the Children. It was a big surprise, but the more I thought about it the more sense it made. We sometimes have a vision of these children being like little Buddhas sitting in meditation waiting for us to open our minds to their influence. That may be true for some of the Children, but for most it is not true at all. My experience with Psychic Children shows that most of them are very ordinary, and yet now and then a light goes off and they access a place that is so deep and profound. A second later they may be acting like any ordinary child, for that is what they are.

If we're to truly accept what the Children are telling us, then we must be willing to let go of all our ideas of who they are and how they're interacting with us. That seems to be what Thomas is sharing with us today. He is preparing us for the final scene, the last lesson where everything comes together and makes sense. As I said already, I was surprised by this one, but it makes me anxious for lesson sixteen. Read and take these words into your own heart. See where they lead or what they inspire. If you are surprised like I was, let that be okay. The pieces of the puzzle are coming together very fast, and soon we will be able to see the whole picture.

*Try to remember the Vision I shared from the original messages. It has greater importance now than ever before. I described a church that has been stripped of its beauty and energy. You enter that church and see a scaffolding that reaches to the high ceiling. At the very top there are many children who are painting a mural of the New World. It is the most beautiful thing you have ever seen, for you know that it is more than a picture. It is a vision of what will be. But it cannot happen unless you participate in the realization of this dream. A child steps down from the scaffolding and reaches out his or her hand. The child is trying to help you leave the floor and ascend to the highest point where you can be of true service. You step forward and before long you are climbing, and your guide is helping you climb. Then you are with them, and you see that their picture is more than a flat, lifeless surface. It is real, and it is happening at that moment. You had to leave the old world to enter the new, and now that you have it is so clear.*

*Do you see how this story fits in with everything we have been learning together in this course? Everything has led to this point, when you leave the floor where you once lived your life, and enter the New World we are creating together. This is the shift to the next level of the Grid. It is all around you, but you cannot see it from where you stand now. You must leave the ground, or the way you have been living your life, to understand the reality that could be yours, or rather, that has always been yours. It is yours to choose NOW.*

*Most of the energy of this course has been focused on helping you establish a solid connection with a living Child Guide that will help you move to the next level in the Grid. This is the place you have been feeling in your soul since you were born. It has called to you and your soul has answered. But you have not had the energy to climb on your own. That is our role, and we are here to help you, if you will allow it.*

*It is time to share something very important with you that we have not been able to share till now. It is true that you have been connecting with Psychic Children who are here to help humanity accomplish the leap into a New World. You have felt our presence in your own life, and most of you have been able to establish strong connections with our minds. In this we are working together, and we are helping one another accomplish the True Goal. And yet, most of the Children you have been working with are not conscious of your connection with them. This is not true for all the Children, but most are only able to do this work on the super-conscious level, which means you could meet your Child Guide on the street and they would not necessarily be aware of your connection with them. You would appear to them like a character from a dream, for in many ways this is how they have perceived your relationship.*

*Does this surprise you? It really shouldn't since you have always done the same thing. Do you realize that? You have been communicating with other beings on this and other planets without ever realizing it. That is because your conscious mind is only one small part of your functioning. The only difference between what you have always done and how the Children are serving you now is that we are fully conscious of the world just beyond the one you are aware of. Therefore, we are able to draw you into that world whether we are conscious of our connection or not.*

*This may be hard for you to grasp, but you have been prepared well. Do not try to understand this with your mind, but with your heart.*

*Most of you have been aware of the presence of one particular Psychic Child working with you in your life. That Child may think that he or she is only imagining you, and may not*

# Thomas' Message

*realize that their imaginings are real. Others may only be feeling you on the higher levels of their awareness, but not know of you consciously. There are still others, of which I am one, who are aware of their connection with you, and are able to work on both the conscious and super-conscious levels. It doesn't matter which level your Guide has been able to access, because the benefit is the same. The goal is not to separate yourselves further, but to use this connection to fulfill the Real Goal:*

*Remembering.*

## **THE CONNECTION ALONE IS IMPORTANT!**

*It is the hand that reaches out to you and helps pull you up the scaffolding, igniting a deep, profound memory in your soul. This is true for you both, you and your Guide. You are fulfilling a pact you made before time began, and so conscious awareness is not necessarily the goal. The connection is the goal, because of what happens next.*

*When you unite your mind with the mind of another, especially a Child Guide, then you are both automatically drawn to the next level of awareness. The personality falls away and all the things your personality is drawn to, and you FEEL the New World. Then it is in your mind, and as long as you are able to maintain the psychic connection with your Guide, you are able to extend that Reality. Then it is made manifest for all beings, and leap is accomplished.*

*Look within to feel the truth of this. You are ready, and so are we. The Grid is where you are right now. Where else would it be? You have been afraid of the Light, and so you have been opening your eyes very slowly. Each time you gain more confidence, and more Light shines through. Then you are able to look around and know where you are. Does that make sense? It is almost impossible to talk about these things, or to think about them intellectually. But through the aid of your Guide you can now reach beyond the intellect to the EXPERIENCE.*

*It is important for you to strengthen your connection with your Guide this month, especially now that you have more information. They are not above you or beyond you. They are at your side, and have been there all along. Your willingness to awaken to them will help them awaken to you. You have been drawn to your Guide for very good reasons. They do not end when this course ends. Your connection and work with your Guide will continue, and it is best to be conscious of that. But it will happen either way.*

*We Love you,  
Thomas*

[In the next issue] will be the final lesson in our course. But it is far from over. In fact, [with the final lesson] it begins, or at least your opportunity to live what you have learned. Open your heart as wide as you can, and an ocean will flow forth to bless the whole world. This is the moment you have been waiting for.

Peace,  
James

## Life Between The Dash

I read of a man who stood to speak  
at the funeral of a friend.  
He referred to the dates on her tombstone  
from the beginning...to the end.

He noted that first came her date of birth  
and spoke the following date with tears,  
but he said what mattered most of all  
was the "dash" between those years.  
(1934 -1998)

For that dash represents all the time  
that she spent alive on earth...  
and now only those who loved her  
know what that little line is worth.

For it matters not, how much we own;  
the cars...the house...the cash,  
what matters is how we live and love  
and how we spend our "dash".

So think about this long and hard...  
are there things you'd like to change?  
For you never know how much time is  
left,  
that can still be rearranged.

If we could just slow down enough  
to consider what's true and real,  
and always try to understand  
the way other people feel.

And be less quick to anger,  
and show appreciation more  
and love the people in our lives  
like we've never loved before.

If we treat each other with respect,  
and more often wear a smile...  
remembering that this special "dash"  
might only last a little while.

So, when your eulogy's being read  
with your life's actions to rehash...  
would you be proud of the things they say  
about how you spent your "dash"?

by Linda Ellis

## The Great Escape

*Both tears and sweat are salty, but they render a different result.  
Tears will get you sympathy; sweat will get you change.*

Jesse Jackson

I have escaped from prison more times than I can count, thanks to my passion for reading books. Near the beginning of my incarceration at the Federal Correctional Institution in Tucson, Arizona, I came upon a story that deeply affected me.

In 1923, in a small Mississippi town, fifteen-year-old Richard Wright, who was to become one of the most renowned authors in American literature, walked into the local library and handed the librarian a note. It read: "Please let this nigger boy have the following books, Dreiser's *Jennie Gerhardt*, Dostoyevsky's *Poor People*, and Tolstoy's *War and Peace*."

What the librarian didn't know, and young Wright hoped she wouldn't discover, was that he had forged the note himself. He did this in order to use the library card a white friend had loaned him. As the librarian went to get the books, the nervous adolescent looked around the library. He saw an endless abundance of books on the shelves and reading tables. Wright thought to himself, *What joy to be free to browse among all these books at one's leisure—to dig in this volume or that volume, as one has a mind to.*

As I read the story from Wright, it resonated deep within me. I realized that even in this small prison library, I also had the freedom to dig. I no longer had as big a selection as is contained in most libraries on the outside, in any bookstore or on the Internet, but there were still hundreds of books to choose from.

Through the magic provided by books, I no longer have to lay on my narrow bunk with severe restrictions on my movement or schedule. Instead, I can fly to the Middle East on a secret peace mission for my government, walk along the hills and valleys of eighteenth-century New England, or fall in love and raise a family in Paris. Books have always been my passport to enrich both my mind and spirit, but now they are essential to my emotional survival.

Any book can lift me out of my confined existence. The best ones are

those where I vanish into the pages, moved by the author's language and imagination. The ultimate thrill is to read something that inspires me to sit down and write. These are the books that stimulate an idea or emotion within me, the ones I want to copy whole paragraphs from, so I can ponder the words at my leisure. For instance, *Chicken Soup for the Soul* books tell how other people have transcended difficulty and inspired themselves and others.

Books have illuminated my life with settings that are familiar to me. In one amazing week, I read Richard Bach's *The Bridge Across Forever*, which switches locales between Florida and California, two states where I spent most of my adult life; *Code 211 Blue*, a police procedural by Joseph D. McNamara, which takes place in San Francisco, where I lived most recently; and *Angel of Death* by Jack Higgins, which takes place in London, where I spent most of 1984 and 1985 doing seminars and falling in love with that cosmopolitan paradise. For me, reading is not escaping from reality, but choosing an enhanced reality in which to live.

One of the most precious gifts I can give to a fellow prisoner is to share my passion for books. A great satisfaction during my incarceration has been awakening some of the African-American prisoners to their own literary heritage through earlier black writers like Richard Wright and James Baldwin. Sharing some of the moments connected with books can make life more tolerable in some pretty intolerable conditions.

In my first year of incarceration, I read over three hundred books. My favorites were mysteries and self-help books, but I also enjoyed diving into a hearty diet of biographies, classical literature and poetry.

In the most unfamiliar place, I stay in touch with the familiar. Through the magic of reading, I often have the feeling of coming home, returning to a place where I felt loved and welcomed.

Jerry Gillies



*This month, we are starting a new page: From the Inside*

*This page is written by Tom, a prisoner who has contributed wonderful things to this newsletter in the past, so much so that I have asked him to become a regular. He has agreed, to my great joy.*

*Thank you, Tom  
Everybody, enjoy!  
Janine*

## *From the Inside*

### **The Birds Will Still Be Singing**

These are difficult times for many of us, and I've been thinking of how we can best go through this cycle. Albert Schweitzer gave us good advice with these words:

*"To the question whether I'm a pessimist or an optimist I answer that my knowledge is pessimistic, but my willing and hope are optimistic."*

This reminds us that we need a little pessimism (healthy skepticism) to give us caution and to deal realistically with "what is", and, at the same time, we need optimism to hope and dream and build a better future (idealism). Learning to enjoy the rhythms of this dance is to grow and transform.

In coming to prison, I lost all material goods, my reputation, my freedom, and my dreams, so I'm certainly aware of the cycles of life. What I've learned from this is that ultimately, after we've experienced enough of the highs and lows, the laughter and the tears, we develop a capacity to embrace the whole with its beauty and outrageousness in the graciousness of the heart.

Loss comes to all of us. It does not discriminate by age, culture, socio-economic status, religious affilia-

tion, spiritual maturity, or global location. We have a choice in how loss affects us and how we grieve. We can opt to turn away or we can choose to expect and accept loss as a way of life, to see it as a source of heart opening grace and growth. By so choosing, we can embrace loss in a lifelong healing journey toward wholeness.

The only adequate response when confronting uncertainty is to love as fully as we can in the little time we have. Life and loved ones, after all, are all the more precious because we can't hold on to them forever.

No matter what changes occur in our life, certain things will keep on happening. I'm writing this in the early morning and the birds will soon start singing: always on time, always on key, always jubilant. At least that's how they sound to me. Daffodils will still bloom in the spring. Writers will still write. Painters will still paint. Three in the morning will still be three in the morning. No matter what happens, life will hand us the invisible thread that connects us all, love will hand us the needle.

Tom  
Arizona

**SUNSHINE FOR YOUR SOUL THIS WINTER**  
*(continued from page 3)*

Forty days is an auspicious number. Any number of other famous people went off to the desert or were taken up to the heavens for forty days: Abraham, Elijah, Moses, Jesus, Buddha, Mohamed, and even Noah. The number is a number of transformation. See what it will do in your life.

*Should you ever hear that voice inside exclaim that you're working too slow, are too easily distracted, or that you should take life more seriously, please rest assured, dearest one, that it absolutely, positively is not me.*

*I'm the one saying, "You totally rock!"*

*The Universe*

# POETRY CORNER

Here is a prayer request that we received at *Freedom Inside*

## PRAYER REQUEST

*Pray for me that I will have a better day and peace from those who try to harm me.  
 Pray that after this ordeal of prison  
 even though my wife divorced me while here,  
 that I can still be reunited with my wife and kids  
 Pray that my brothers and sisters will see me for who I am  
 Instead of ignoring me and condemning me because I went to prison.  
 God knows the truth.  
 His purpose for me is in His hands.  
 Please keep me in your prayers.*

WH  
 California

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## BACK TO ZERO

*I've been forced to surrender, give up my pride  
 Goin' deeper in debt as I fight to survive.  
 I've got to sacrifice, find my way home,  
 Undo all broken chains, and all that I owe.*

*Back to zero, closer to zero  
 I see my reflection, in the law of the land.  
 I'm not your hero, I look in the mirror,  
 I see my reflection in the law of the land*

*Open up wide, catch a ride to the other side.  
 A raw, wild, open space, tumbling into grace.*

*Sun's shining brightly, there's children in need.  
 Warming up hungry hearts, secrets that feed.  
 The horrible beauty, mistrust and cruelty.  
 Stand strong in the center of it all, pray we don't fall.*

*Back to zero, closer to zero,  
 I see my reflection, in the law of the land.  
 I'm not your hero, I look in the mirror,  
 I see my reflection in the law of the land.*

SJ  
 California

## POETRY CORNER

### How To Pray

from Joe Wolfe

#### A Prayer for All Solutions

**Dear God: I Love You. You created me. I live in You and You in me. Only my own unconscious guilt & belief in this ego/false personality's individual identity keeps me confused. Thank you for everything you give me. Grant me the power to live in your presence, to accept your unconditional Love as I learn to forgive. Allow me to remember that You are with me always, with every breath I take, in every movement, in all thoughts, actions and feelings.**

**Remind me many times during the day until every second becomes another moment spent living in Your loving embrace and constant presence. Allow me to be a servant of Your will, a vehicle of Divine Love and a channel of God's will. Give me direction and Divine assistance as I surrender all personal will through devotion to You. Allow me the help to dedicate my life to the service of God. Grant me the ability to choose Love and Peace above all options while I commit to the goal of unconditional Love and Compassion for all life and all of its expressions as I surrender all judgment to You, God.**

**Make me aware that the world of my ego is a constant and tenacious tendency to react, to feel bad, guilty, mad, defeated, bored, scared, inferior, embarrassed, annoyed, lonely or superior and condescending. It gives validity to judgment regardless of the form and by reacting with judgment I feed and strengthen the ego's world and reinforce the seeming reality of a separation from You.**

**Remind me constantly to view all others as my brothers, to realize that we are all one and to forgive them for they are one with me, joined in One Mind and also innocently caught in the false ego identity's world of illusion. Never let me forget that I AM not this temporary body, but pure Spirit created in Your likeness, as I continue to live every moment in the knowledge that You are with me always where I AM;**

**You God, the Alpha & Omega, the All & Everything,... The Absolute.**

**[Spirit Light Outreach.org](http://SpiritLightOutreach.org) is an effort to deliver the message of Truth, Love, Light and the Peace of God to prisoners, twelve-steppers and the physically challenged**

**Do you have a poem that reflects the message in Freedom Inside?**

**If so, send it in, it just may be chosen for a future**

**POETRY CORNER**



**B.P. 315  
Lac Saguay, Que.  
Canada J0W 1L0**

**Know anyone who would like to receive this newsletter?**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Janine Cantin*

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