Did you ever have words leap off the page while you were reading? This happened to me when I read in Thomas More’s *Utopia*, “Didn’t [Christ] tell His disciples that everything He had whispered in their ears should be proclaimed on the housetops?” (More 64). The phrase haunted me as I searched for a topic for my paper. Just like Kevin Cosner’s character in the movie *Field of Dreams* who could not ignore it when he heard, “Build it and they will come,” I could not ignore the message that I heard. The spiritual journey I traveled while reading the required texts for Great Books had to be shared.

The journey began with *The Epic of Gilgamesh* when I read of Gilgamesh’s grief over his friend Enkido’s death. My grief over my mother’s death from cancer two years ago was still a source of pain, and empathy stirred in me as Gilgamesh said, “How can I rest, how can I be at peace?” (Norton 33). I wept with Gilgamesh and peeled away lingering grief then discovered anger.

The anger was at my mother for dying and at my stepfather for making Mom’s life unpleasant. This anger was identified with the help of Achilles. As his anger emerged in *The Iliad*, mine became obvious to me. Patroclus’ words to Achilles “let your heart-devouring anger go!” (Norton 132) struck to the core of my being.

The discovery of a layer of grief and then a layer of anger was like peeling an onion; each inner layer was more tender and vulnerable. This set me up for the gentle words of St. Augustine that help me set my Lenten resolution to be kinder and more loving. Reading St. Augustine’s *Confessions* made me more prayerful. His words were inspiring: “The days were not long enough as I meditated, and found wonderful delight in meditating, upon the depth of Your design for the solution of the human race” (Norton 998). I decided to spend time one evening a week in meditation to calm down and just listen.

The next reading assignment of Dante’s *Inferno* created anxiety and worry in me. Descending into the depths of Dante’s Hell, I was aware of many levels that applied to my life in some way. When I tried to meditate, graphic scenes of Hell flashed through my mind: “High hailstones, dirty
water, and black snow pour from the dismal air to putrefy the putrid slush that waits for them below" (Norton 1307). Relaxation eluded me; affirmation was what I needed. While resting on my bed during meditation, my body sat up slowly, prayerfully, and effortlessly. A voice in my head said, "I will raise you up." My body went back to a reclining position feeling warm and secure.

As I continued to read the Inferno, the feelings of dread returned. Dante's words made me squirm as they slithered toward me from the page: "Their hands were bound behind by coils of serpents which thrust their heads and tails between the loins and bunched in front, a mass of knotted torment" (Norton 1380). The vivid descriptions were on my mind for my next meditation. Immediately upon lying down The Voice said, "Didn't I tell you last week that I would raise you up? Now relax."

Relaxation did come, and I focused on the floaters that drifted across my eyeballs. Suddenly one floater took the shape of a crown of thorns, and He said, "That was for you!" Tears flowed from my eyes, but there was a smile on my face and in my heart, and I said, "Thank You!"

While contemplating the meaning of the messages received, I began to read Thomas More's Utopia. In Utopia, Raphael talks about Christ wanting us to speak up about what Christ has taught us. Raphael says, "Didn't [Christ] tell His disciples that everything He had whispered in their ears should be proclaimed on the housetops?" (More 64). This felt like a message to me, and I knew that my experiences were meant to be shared.

Wanting to know more about this biblical quotation from Luke, I looked it up in my bible. Finding a completely different interpretation was a disappointment. My bible reads, "Everything you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight; what you have whispered in locked rooms will be proclaimed from the rooftops" (The New American Bible Luke 12:3 1150).

I felt confused. Should words from a source other than the Bible be accepted as God's? The confusion was present at the start of my next meditation, and The Lord said, "It's OK. Look for Me where you can find Me, and find Me wherever you can." These calming words told me that God can be found anywhere, in the Bible or in a novel, in a church or in a forest. Looking out the window, I saw a bright ray of sun coming through an otherwise gray, cloudy sky. The sunbeam was like a greeting from God. I made a promise to return the greeting and listen each time that I see the things of nature that remind me of God: sun coming through a break in the clouds, a majestic tree standing alone in a field, stars, rainbows, butterflies and hummingbirds.
In Utopia "everyone claims that His Supreme Being is identical with Nature" (More 118). "Most Utopians feel they can please God merely by studying the natural world, and praising Him for it" (More 122). Although I think that God expects more from us than mere study and praise, I do believe that our appreciation of nature is pleasurable to God, for God is alive in nature. He is also alive in me, and He is alive in you.

Works Cited


