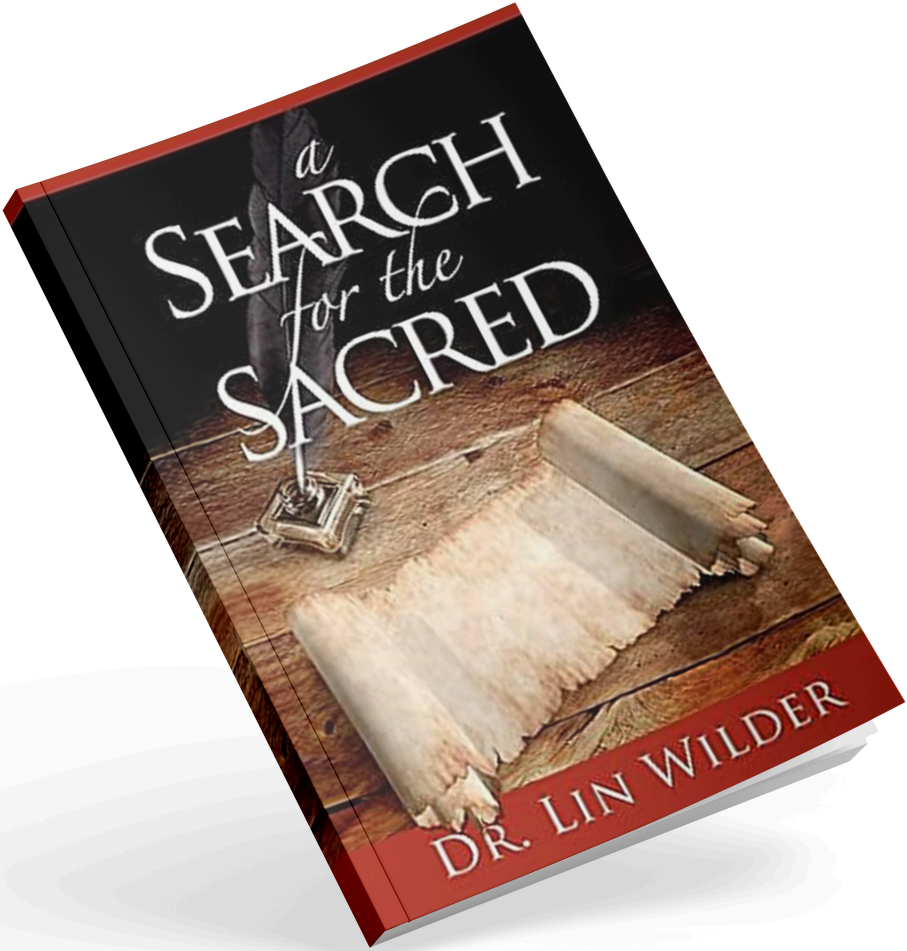
a SEARCH for the SACRED
DR. LIN WILDER

a Search for the Sacred

Dr. Lin Wilder

A Search for the Sacred

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First Print Edition

Create Space

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To John

Acknowledgements

The journey home began with a telephone conversation with a stranger. Early in that conversation, he asked what I was looking for and I answered, " a sacred place", explaining that I had been to Kyoto, to Delphi, searching for something, I wasn't sure what. And the man who became my husband told me about St. Benedict's Abbey, in Harvard Massachusetts.

But how can one acknowledge with gratitude all the souls placed in her path, all those who were filled with light and graced her-yes,even for those who deeply wounded her? Perhaps it is enough to trust that each person, each choice-even the most painful, beckons.

Suzanne Fyhrie Parrott, your interpretation of *A Search for the Sacred* has transformed my words into Something Much More-I applaud your insight and your heart.

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Notes to the Reader

Although I majored in English literature for my undergraduate degree, poetry eluded me; decoding Eliot's esoteric messages was an impossible task without my friend Margaret as translator. Many years later my friend Libby gave me a stunning leather bound journal along with a copy of Writing Down the Bones by Natalie Weinberg to take with me on my trip to Greece; a trip I had not expected to take alone. To my great surprise, I began to write poetry. And only then did I see why I could not understand the language of poetry all those years ago.

Poetry is the language of the heart; to be written or even to be understood, the heart must be made raw, it must bleed; the psalmist writes circumcised. It is no secret that growth and change-conversion can come only from pain not only felt but assimilated. In a culture averse even to the slightest discomfort, assimilating pain sounds like too tall an order and so it may be. But to the man or the woman searching for something unnamed, something huge, something so far greater than they, that kneeling in adoration be the only response, I dedicate this book.

Lin Wilder

Part One

Texas 1992 - 1995

October 1994

It is nearing the end of another Sunday
Another Sunday with you by my side
Busily putting up our sodden camping gear
Changing oil in the truck with man hands

It's five o'clock on another Sunday
Where you have weed -eaten the lawn
Stolen an hour in the fall sunshine

Where we've been alone together
It's nearly five o'clock on another Sunday
Which I approach with such dread and loss
It's worse in the Texas fall a stark shock
Reminding me of how few are these precious days

I want to demand the clock turn back to two
Or even better ten or maybe even nine
These sacred special Sundays filled with
You and me alone together, how many have we left?

The Sky

Why before this sky does all make sense
When the illusion of dark and light create
A glimpse of some holy order
That even I might belong to

Does the fall night sky reveal reality
In a way that dazzling sunshine obscures
Is there truth in the unseen shapes and forms
Of the forest we occupy for the moment

Oh for that sense of certainty of that sky
Right now-now when I sense time and my life
Slipping through my fingers-faster when I clench them

The Nurse's Nurse

Over forty years ago, she joined the staff
And has served since then with quiet dignity.
When we consider the traits of loyalty and devotion,
We think of Mary

Her approach to her work evokes images of her generation:
Integrity, compassion, honesty and altruism:
Notes on a character which endure in a society where little does;
When we look for attributes of a nurse, calm and competent
We think of Mary

She came to Hermann as a new graduate, became a head nurse
And began to think of Hermann as her home
Began to call Hermann staff her family
And now when it is time for her to rest,
We want her to know of our love,
Our gratitude
Our admiration

Belonging

Is there a place called home
Where memories and tradition await
Patiently hidden in places made deep
By relentless pursuit of useless truths.

Do we come trailing clouds of glory
Only to don the actors pose
And spend too may years and tears
Reclaiming wisdom lost so long ago

Saved finally by the knowledge
That human truth is shadow and illusion
Yet uplifted by one hope and prayer
That pure path toward peace and
Understanding lies patiently waiting
For our gaze to turn back to the
Place where we began.

Joy

He asked,
What is the source of your pain?
It comes,
She answered, from the source of
My joy.

Writing

Today, I've dreaded the writing
Is it sloth or fear of what will appear before me?
It's yet another Sunday afternoon, perfect and clear
Where it feels-no, I feel, connected, in touch, as if I
And all else fits in some great order.

But when this pen begins to write where will it
Take me and what will the words which appear
On this page do to that rare and glorious
Sense of calm and peace and wonderful silence?

That silence where words appear from a place
That is hard to reach-one that just appears.

And so I dreaded the act of seeing what would
Come for I revel in these times of quiet mind silence.

Completion

Mindwalk

Sweet oblivion

Final Escape

Beckoning

Who Was She

They called her proud and feared her independence
She seemed fearless and willful yet somehow hesitant
Born of a railroad man and a mother she disliked
She left, as women did in her day, to marry
Rather than continuing to mother her mother's progeny

She said that she wanted children more than
Anything and waited too many years by her count
To learn that her dream had happened
The bearing was hard and full of danger for her
And for her child but they never saw her weep
Out of fear or regret or the months of worry.

They said she wore the pants in the family
For she was in charge; clearly it was so when
He did as he was bade and seemed to suffer
Her dominance without complaint or anger.
Yet later, much later when the independence left
And the fear appeared with only anger remaining,

I asked her if she had liked being a woman
For I did not see a woman who had lived
Her life as she had wanted, I saw her to be settling
And to be consumed by unnamed dreams.
She was startled by the question and answered absently
As she stood by the stove that of course she had.

What's in a Name?

Capulet, Montague, a rose is a rose
Blazing sun
An ordinary man, born in America's heartland
Blazing fire
With extraordinary pain of love, finds the
Blazing heart

Out of the dark and the terror
Years of spine cold soul freezing moments
Packed with the knowledge no one wants
Of total final and ultimate surrender to what

You appear, my friend, as a beacon, piercing my heart
With your light
Transformed by work that I can barely grasp
By your journey
Moving quickly now to places I will follow
Dark and alone

Woman

Why do these thoughts wash over me in tears
What is it about these words and image of woman
Opening, accepting, enveloping in pure passivity?
How has this life brought me to this place to feel
Such awe at foreign familiar dark and soft warmth?

And who is it anyway sitting, writing the words
Intended to describe the indescribable sense of knowing
Things which bleed over their rim of verbal order
Inchoately capturing ancient expressions of surrender?

Having joined this black abyss of fecund consciousness
Now and then hearing whispers of images dimly understood
Where will the currents carry me and when done
Will this self be recognizable to who I used to be?

Commitments

There we sat in the room
Being asked to reveal secret and
Private parts which hide from
the Sun

The request hung wordlessly and
Palpable waves of tension crested
As they rolled toward each one of
to Open

Ourselves in ways that meant
Standing down to face ourselves
Testifying our most sacred thoughts
Publically.

You chose to declare commitments
Which were politically correct
And exposed no vulnerability,
no Risk.

You never mentioned love or growth or
God and spoke about your loyalty
To career and to your job but not
Listening I tried not to expect or
Predict and certainly not to react
To what you would not claim, your love
for Me.

And so I changed my commitments
And chose to commit to love in
The abstract and spiritual plane and
not You.

Sitting reeling from the emotions
Washing over me leaving dried tears
of Loss.

To Elizabeth

Imperious, elegant powerful
You are all those and more
So packed with vibrant opinion
And years of hard won wisdom.
The disease has taken your hair
                your weight
                your arm
Yet you remain wholly yourself
Resolute in not giving it you.
When you hug me and whisper
                I love you
I feel grace and blessing
                and honor
May I pay small tribute to your
                strength and
Tell you how profound is my respect
                And love
For one who lays quietly and
Proudly waiting
                For Love
                For Life

Cocktail Party 1994

And so, when will you marry him?
This after several moments of poorly conveying
Such certainty of the power of our love,
He is, you know, the wisest decision ever.
He completes me transforms and teaches.
Together with him, I can climb toward Love.

And so, he said, when will you marry?
As he listened to me pour out the feeling,
Talk through the sad and secular institution,
Ask what such license and property confirms
Or protects or conserves, he wandered to a
Place where only love, with all its risks, exists.

Part Two

Greece 1995

Talos

Do you live alone?
The question hung there suspended
While she hesitated before responding
To that most innocent of questions
From a young girl to an older woman.
Yes, I live alone.

Even after all this time,
The words rang out more loudly
Than she intended, perhaps because
Of the close still air in the small room,
Surprising her with their finality.

Yes, I live alone.
I do live alone.

Greece I

Dry tears well up in this faraway land
where ancient
Lives and loves loom in dusty ruins
of cities
Where truth feels just a breath away
If still
Enough to sense the presence of wiser
men who
Knew these human hopes for just places of
knowledge who
Embraced a land emblazoned by goddesses
and God
Known deeply in the heart's core through
work and
Study of self which seeks only this faith,
belonging
To a grander vision than this or that particular
life, yes
One which serves in small and homely ways
partaking
In daily obedience of vows made sacred
by use
Known only to voices which breathe whispery puffs
of truth

Greece II

Solace sought in this strange and arid land
Came not through words but reflections of past lives
Recorded by noble minds seeking wisdom and the
Grace to create a way to show others one path,
One temple in which, on bended knee, one could see God.

Is it the impressionistic harbor maxing clarity with essence of hue?
Or could it be the rolling mountains which fit together in uniquely
Grecian form?
And maybe these people descended from Gods secure in their
source,
But it could be that daily viewing could compromise the truth
Reflected by the air, the water, the sky and the wine.

Delphi

Above the entrance
Of the oracle of its namesake Dephi,
Was written the salutary phrase, Gnothi Seauton,
Know thyself.
And all you know
Is that its serene assurance
Suggests that it knows exactly how to be a dolphin,
And few of us have the foresight to be human.

Stalius

She lay there listening to the low murmur
Of male Greek voices without curiosity
About their meaning not even wondering
If they were talking about her.

Aware of her body and its dampness, only
Partially due to the wetness of the suit,
Wondering at the waves of desire keeping
Tempo with the incoming tide thrusting deeper and deeper.

Wanting that strange male body to
Cover her with warm wet lips and tongue
Chafing soft wet thighs with black unshaven cheeks
Wanting to enter with pure passion matching hers.

She lay there surrendering to the ferocity
Of the feeling, surprised and proud as
Desire climbed higher and wilder claiming
Female secret passive power.

Athantos

Glorious Greek sunflower

Defying human mortality

Seeks to become beauty

In the face of certain death

Greece III

Beyond joy

Beyond grief

Is the

Privilege

of this

Sunset

Pictures

When love is gone, we sweep out
Discarded photographs and memories to
Create room for new faces and display attachments
That is the way of old lovers and lost dreams.

But then I looked to find just one relic of
The torn fragments of our life together
And found only empty space awaiting
Claim by the next lover and framed by commitment.

Athens

Crumbling ruins reflecting dim images of wisdom and
Humanity which surpasses those who went before or after.
Instead of awe and reverence the dry wind carries
A myriad of foreign tongues shouting wait til I pose here,
Or take another picture for my eyes were closed.

This was a people who knew reason, practiced virtue,
And revered arête in their bodies, their minds and souls.
These were men who sensed their potential for nobility
Yet carefully constructed boundaries of limitation.

We pass through these dusty artifacts content to
Memorialize our insignificant selves on celluloid,
Looking forward to dinner slide shows of doing Athens.
Theirs was a time of hubris balanced by gods and reason
Ours is a time of hollow men proclaiming balance of power.

Yellowstone

Crumbling ruins reflecting dim images of wisdom and
In some years hence, will they look back in
Wonder or pity: in sympathy or sadness
At the loss of our cities, our thought,our churches?
Will they wander through relics and wish for a voice
to explain?

Just as we wander back through the ages awed and
Humbled by the sameness of our quests; of our
Similarities both in holy deed and hallowed grounds
Saddened by the lost wisdom; cherishing the broken
pieces of bone and philosophy.

Or will they write of us as barbarians lost in a
Medieval dark age of ignorance clothed in arrogance
Of science clothed in superstition and of nobility
clothed in horror?

Crack-Up

Is there no surgery to excise these memories,
Are there no scalpels with which to debride this
broken heart?
How strange that in this age of universal anesthesia
That no healer can palliate this pain with bromides
To ease these tortured viscera and calm this
tortured soul
If this be the price for loving wholly; so completely
That individual identity fades and blurs into otherness
Etched deeply into the very marrow of the soul
Then grant, dear God, the chance to love him
Forever.

Rebirth

Innocently we arrive, conscious of the need
To answer one question of our life.
And so we grow old and learn and gain experience
Then one day awake to discover that
We had a question which had to be
Answered before
We die,
Suddenly sensing dim memories of who
We could have been appear in words
And dreams.

Why must we require pain and loss
To understand the question must emerge
From places so deep and dark and so
Lonely that
We sleep
To escape that voice quietly gnawing
Its way through bone and muscle and blood.

Now I know all the roads I took, all
The men I used to shield me from
The awful knowledge that only I must
Go forth
In total ignorance
To decide whose life I shall live.

515

A house, you say,
Merely bricks, wood and paint
Needing repair, broken brick, discolored walls,
In a neighborhood requiring superficial excess.
Consider the property value and
Sell the old house.

Sell the old house
Filled with laughter and love and
Memories of joy so pure and powerful
That sunrise as well as sunset caught and held
Golden radiance and cast it through the rooms
Lighting our days.

Since he's left
These rooms should feel empty and dark
The peeling paint an offense to this critical eye.
The bedroom filled with lonely, loveless nights,
Dinner tables set for one with musical refrains
Of echoes from the past.

Be glad, you say,
A brand new life awaits you,
Discard those ghosts of bygone days and
Leave this house to old friends and lovers
Move on and forward and away from memories
Anchoring dead images of loss.

No! No! Screamed pure pain,
How can you expect to leave this place where
He and love and life combined to form
A perfect union for two separate halves which
Yearned to be whole and when combined fused
Passion, light and loveliness throughout
This old house.

Michelle

I want to touch you, she said,
I want to talk with you of shared despair
Of inconsolable longing, of uncontrollable rage,
Of inexpressible sorrow that I know you know.

Yes, she answered, it is all there and that
You call it female power makes me
Want to weep. Then do she said weep on
And so they held one another, breast to breast
As they wept.

Patchwork

When I bought the wedding ring quilt,
I did so because I thought it would always
Cover us
And keep us warm and safe as well as tell
A Story
About you and me, one which took many pieces and wove
Into one
Fragments of blues and greens and a myriad of patterns
And of lives.
But our life together is ending, at least the way we have
Lived it,
Together in a way that friends and families both
Admired and envied for they could see that you and I were
Becoming
One in ways that defied more common roles and rules;
A puzzle
Of contradiction refusing to marry yet cleaving to one
Another
In ways more holy than church or state could
Regulate.

Part Three

The Journey Home
1996

St. Benedict's Abbey

Suddenly I was there
On my knees with
Quiet tears coursing down
My cheeks in response

To feelings which were
So long suppressed and
Now foreign and exquisitely
Incisive as they pierced

Through the years of
Protective armor donned so
Long ago when I
Walked away from God

How did I arrive here?
And why was I deserving
Of such pure faith appearing
Without preamble or good works?

And why God, have you found
Me worthy enough to know you?
Once more forgiving this oh, so
Grateful recipient of unmerited grace.

Friendship

One in one thousand
beyond price
Once found, a gift from God.
is a friend.
Test first, less this friend
disappear
With times of trouble
or sorrow.

Your wisdom led us
to be friends.
Mostly refusing temptation
in knowledge
of obedience,
ever first
For those in love with
His law and trust the

Transformation of love
through fusion
Of body and spirit
Made holy
Through the sacrament.
Husband, wife
Pledge fidelity
And we two become one.

Ressurrection

What beauty in this morning sky
radiant glory
Priliveged creature, I, to see
You create anew

In wonder do I listen as You
proclaim your Lordship
The circling gulls sing out with joy
This is Sunday
You are risen

Lord, make of me Your instrument
Teach me to Love
Ignite in my heart Holy Fire
for sacrifice
for purity

Joy and sorrow, a gratitude
so great, each cell
throbs with Your mercy and the price
You paid for me.

Ponder

A word to taste and relish as it sits in the mouth
It's soft yet has substance.
Flexible but yielding
Like her

Try it and see how it feels in your mouth
Passive but strong
More than a word
Connoting other words
Like silence

When we ponder do we think and analyze?
No its more a waiting
To see what will come
Like Him

Silence

Finally, she reached the summit after years of climbing
stumbling, searching
Please, she begged, I need the answer, please.
One word, one word only;
silence

Desolate, she began the slow lonely descent
All this time, all this work, all this- for nothing at all.
Yet there was this word, silence, that began
an echo

Deep within where thoughts are frozen
Deep within where old tears and yearning live.
This word striking cords of memory both
strange and familiar

She dared to open her eyes to look, to see.
It was as if time had stopped and she saw
the mountains,
the frozen river
her breath.

She stopped, for the first time in so many years,
she stopped
standing still
listening
waiting

And she heard and she knew and she saw
silence
one Word
just One Word

September 9, 2004
Nancy

Elegance made practical; lady of distant shores
Inner seas where myths
Take form

Spirit molded shaped and formed; ever larger, wiser
Storms batter and ram
Inside

Woman of strength and endurance; portrait of courage
Will and Faith where joy
Will reign

9th Christmas 2005

There are some things that you should know -
For ours is an old love
Mostly silent and unspoken

When I think about our marriage
God reigns at the center
The alpha and Omega

You should know the Peace – the Joy that
He, through your open heart,
Brings to me each of our days

The God I searched for oer the world
Seeking never finding
And then there was you and your God

Suddenly freedom finally
Truth

You should know I thank you for your love
Your decision to love

Even at those times when the feeling is hidden
I am ever grateful
For having you my husband

How two became one in Him
Impossible mystery
You should know at least these things

Ally and Me
April 2006

When we lose someone dear and precious, it is if all the others who died before are lost to us again. Safely dormant in our memory this most recent death awakens and amplifies the loss of all those who have gone before. They uncoil, stretch and as they join hands the weight of all that pain and grief bows us over until we think we cannot stand or move or breathe again.

There is a vacuum in my heart shaped like a dog. His name was Ally and he was a Doberman. And if you know about Dobes, you know they are special- if you have ever had the privilege of being loved by a Doberman; you will know they are extraordinary. Ally was magnificent.

He was barely two weeks old when we met. My life was in complete and utter turmoil for I was leaving a place I did not want to leave and moving to a place I did not want to go. I knew I could not do it alone, I needed a dog. But not just any dog, a Doberman.

He was born of the Aeolus pedigree and his breeder who sold him to me said that his line had won many awards for best in show, obedience and many others. They were champions and she said this was the best litter in over twenty years- she was selling the puppies for $4,000 each.

Noticing my audible gulp, she said she had 2 males and 2 females whom she would sell for $1000-$1500 each. She recommended that I drive to her kennel so that I could meet these puppies. The breeder escorted me into a large garage type building and scooped

up 4 tiny bodies, put them on the cement floor and left me alone with them. When I sat down on the floor, one of the puppies extracted himself and wobbled over to me wagging his whole body. His other 3 litter mates stayed in their ball and watched me cautiously. In that moment, Ally and I started the 10 year journey that ended the morning of March 26th, 2006.

Ally was fearless. Our first "outing" was to a Petco store in Houston – he was about 4 weeks old. He saw an enormous Rotweiler, the dog must have weighed 120 or 130 pounds, this tiny puppy "attacked" the Rotweiler- straining at his leash while barking, growling with all the attendant ferocity of the 80 pound animal he would become within the year. The owner as well as the 5 or 6 other customers in the store cracked up. Throughout his life that fearlessness would remain a dominant feature of his personality.

He was about 3 months old when we left Texas for the move to Massachusetts that I had so dreaded. We arrived at Logan airport in late November of 1995; I retrieved Ally from the dog pick-up place and as we sat in the airport shuttle I am not sure who was more frightened, he or I. I had found a house to rent with woods for the puppy to run and grow into. I could only hope that this new job and home would work for us. But I had been in Texas for close to 20 years and the move to Massachusetts felt like a move to another planet.

I worked very long hours, too long to be fair to a rapidly growing, energetic and lonely puppy. But as the days passed into weeks, we adjusted into a routine that worked fairly well for the two of us. The breeder had taught me that crates are best for growing dogs- since they were pack animals, they felt safe and the items in the house would be protected from exploring curious puppy teeth. But during the times he was allowed out of the crate, all was fair game. He

was toughest to keep up during my morning workout and it must have been during one of those times that the cause of our first crisis occurred.

We had been in our new home for perhaps a month or so. At 2 or 3 am one morning, Ally was very suddenly terribly ill with vomiting and diarrhea. I called an emergency number for a veterinarian and reached a man named Dr. Rice. After explaining my situation to this man, he answered by giving me directions to the Tufts University Clinic suggesting that the dog's symptoms sounded like emergency surgery would be required and that his practice was closed as he was close to retirement. I will never know why this good man agreed to let me bring Ally to his office at 6am on my way to work. Dr. Rice told me that he had no idea what would cause such violent sickness in a dog this young and in his gentle way tried to prepare me for all eventualities. He explained what he would do and what his options were and that he would call me in the middle of the morning. I was meeting with my administrative staff about our budget challenges when my secretary interrupted us with a call from Dr. Rice. Taking the call, the listeners in my office heard only one exclamation from me: "what.....pantyhose?" And my whole office dissolved into gales of laughter.

Ally had found and swallowed a pair of my panty hose. Dr. Rice was astounded by the fact that the purgatives had resulted in the pantyhose being expelled without complication. He had been unable to identify anything on X-Ray and had had to rely on restoring the dog's lost fluids and continuing to cause vomiting hoping that something would be expelled. He said that it took him and his staff a while to identify what the object was. I picked up my dog later that afternoon with effusive gratitude for this man- when I asked if he could recommend a veterinarian for me to take Ally to, he grinned and answered, you already have one.

Our very best times during those first few months were spent behind the rental house exploring the woods where he could race with complete abandon during that winter and the spring. Or those weekends when we would take a run through the quiet streets of the town. Many evenings, we would simply sit listening to music and I would talk to him about whatever was on my mind.

When John met Ally and me later that year, it took a while for them to get to understand one another. John was accustomed to dogs but dogs that were mostly outside and sort of invisible. Ally loved being outside- if I was there but he was never invisible. Once John and I got married he bought a couple of books about Dobermans so that he could learn about this dog who was truly the very best friend I'd ever had. When he finished the books he announced that he got it now…that with a Doberman you just had to realize that it was your very good fortune that they chose to live with you and to love you…but that it was their choice.

What is it about the love between us and a dog? Is it that we envy the integrity of their being or the purity and simplicity of their nature? Where too much of our lives are frequently spent doing battle with our various selves- consumed by ambition or greed, an animal is never more or less than an animal. Where the love between persons is so often conditional, the love of a dog is, it just is no matter what. I think it no coincidence that dog is God spelled backwards.

John and I talked for hours about Ally the night he died. John did most of the talking while I was doing most of the crying. We talked of his spirit- that Texas sized heart filled with an indomitable spirit. John took many walks in the desert alone with Ally and he said he would think often about what might happen if they encountered a mountain lion, plentiful in the high desert mountains. That night

John said he knew exactly what would have happened. That if it had been necessary, Ally would have placed himself between John and the lion and would fight to his death.

There is a boulder on top of his grave that reads:

Aeolus' Ally Heart and Soul
August 7,1995 - March 26, 2006

> The gift which I am sending you is called a dog and is, in fact, the most precious and valuable possession of mankind.

Advent 2007

On Sunday, December 2 we end the longest period of Ordinary Time in the liturgical year. Almost 9 months ago we joined the universal Church in celebrating 40 days of the incomparable joy of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. And now we are invited into a different kind of celebration - quieter, more intimate and perhaps for women, more personal. Seasonally, Advent coincides with late fall and early winter - the harvest is over, a chill is in the air and we prepare for shorter days and longer nights. For some of us, our activities are less demanding and occur indoors with the fire warming our homes and our toes…contemplation seems a natural consequence of the changes in season and activity.

And our contemplation surrounds a very young girl, selected at the beginning of time to become the Ark of the New Covenant. Sinless, Immaculate Mary destined to partner with the Holy Trinity to save this world gone dark because of ignorance, because of sin, because of distance from God. Mary, the first and only human being ever created who is true to her nature: born in the likeness and image of God.

Consider the parallel stories we are given by Luke. On the one hand, we have Zachary and Elizabeth "both just before God, walking in all the commandments…" and we have the young Mary, "full of grace, having found favor with God" given to the Temple at birth and now to Joseph to wed. Gabriel appears to Zachary to tell him to:

> "Fear not, thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear a son…
> "…a son "… who shall be great before the Lord…..that he

may turn the hearts
of the fathers unto the children, and the incredulous to the wisdom of the just,
to prepare unto the Lord a perfect people."

We easily empathize with the learned priest Zachary who despite his education and his high standing as a Jewish priest cannot dispel his all too human doubt and distrust.
How can this be?
How can a woman far beyond her child-bearing years conceive a child?

And so he is struck dumb and has nine months of total silence to contemplate the miracle that he and his wife will participate in. Nine months of divine knowledge that culminates in understanding, understanding bred of stillness and total silence....

"Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel;
he has come to his people and set them free....
...This was the oath he swore to our father Abraham:
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,
free from the hands of our enemies,
free to worship him without fear
holy and righteous in his sight,
all the days of our life.

You, my child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,
to give his people knowledge of salvation
by the forgiveness of their sins.

In the tender compassion of our God
The dawn from on high shall break upon us,
To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the
  Shadow of death,
And to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Only two people on earth understand the miracle about to end forever the darkness of man: the eloquent priest and the girl Mary. Only these two can see, can touch and can taste the love that the God of Israel holds for His chosen people. Yet neither can speak about it. Zachary has been made mute and Mary has been created with a silent contemplative nature – one not given to verbal expression.

Can we imagine ourselves as that girl so filled with the spirit and knowledge of God that all she asks the angel Gabriel is how this will come to be? Mary, the new Eve, has complete trust in her God.

> "…And the angel said to her: Fear not Mary, for thou hast found grace with God…
> …How shall this be done because I know not man?"

Can we imagine a relationship so close, so intimate with God that the one answer from Gabriel suffices?

> "…The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called also the Son of God…"
> "…and Mary said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word."

No false humility here, no protestations of unworthiness or any outward sign of fear.

The Church gives us these four weeks to pray with Mary; to be silent with Mary and to ask for her intercession for God's grace of total trust and confidence in His will. For who is more like Mary than Jesus? While a babe within her body, Jesus "clothed her with himself" and filled her with his desires and affection. Our liturgy says that "Mary is the most perfect image of Christ, formed truly by the Holy Spirit".
It is Mary, the mother of God whom we imitate, not Mary the young girl. As Jesus is the Way to reach the Father, so Mary is the surest way to reach her Son.

A Canticle for Mary

At your appearance in the Temple today,
The celestial choirs chorus Holy, Holy, Holy
In praise of the majesty and mercy of Our Lord
May we raise our hearts and souls in song
This day

To thee, most exalted of all God's creatures
In anticipation of your perfect oblation
Through a soul despoiled of our parents sin
Emptied of all but the Lord, an echo of He
Who Is

All creation waits, Oh Blessed Lady, in hushed
And wondrous silence, the sound of your
Glorious let it be done according to Your Will.
Though child, more wise than Solomon, than
Moses.

Let us pray for a New Advent, a springtime amidst
The death of December and destruction of innocence.
You who witness betrayal, filth and perversion,
Intercede for this twisted and depraved generation
This day

You who walk on the clouds and are seated on the moon
Know the depths of sorrow no other creature has known,
Child yet wiser than all the Magi, accept our offering,
We who have no myrrh, no gold, no frankincense, only
Our sin.

Hope Holders

Do you wonder why these beliefs have taken root in your
Soul?
Roots which deepen, burrow into the secret places of mind and
Heart?
Year after year, prayer by prayer, tear by tear, doubt by doubt until
Fixed?
Do you wonder why you believe the impossible-god as infant born of a
Virgin?

Do you wonder at this girl child, at her trust in the incomprehensible
Answer
How can this be, she asked, how can this be, we ask? Why such
Love
For faded facsimiles of divinity, stumbling blindly toward light and
Truth?
The Holy Spirit will overshadow you, Gabriel answered… is that an
Answer?

Enveloped by wisdom, she carried eternity in her womb,
A child emptied of ego, of self, of sin, full, instead, of grace.
She who was filled with the hope of Adam, she who came
To dry the tears of Eve through her incomparable sorrows.

Do you wonder if there is a price for these gifts we have been freely
Given?
Must we not somehow offer back to Him some tiny
Crumb?
Struggle and sacrifice, penance and passion, some small
Sharing?

Finally we hear, we see and understand from her silence, her
Knowledge
Too immense for words, cannot be contained by the sea or the
Sky
We are to proclaim, to put in our hands and our hearts, to be
Hope holders.

Peace

Today while talking to You I understood the key.
Quickly I write before this wisdom
Drifts away
Just beyond my reach.

It is good to sing praise to the Lord
To make music to his holy name
Your deeds O Lord have made me glad
For the work of your hands I shout with joy
How great are your works, O Lord,
How deep are your designs;
The foolish man cannot know this
The fool cannot understand.

I understood then that praise and joy can consume-
Wonder and awe and thanks
Leave no room for anger
No words for bitterness
It is Love that exhumes all but You

Would that You grant this memory fired into my being;
Would then others see Your light in me?
Could then I be used as beacon
Out of the darkness?

Lin Wilder

I spent most of my life working at work and in school. Once I reached Hospital Director at a major academic medical center in New England and completed a doctorate in Public Health, I began wondering if there may be another way to live.

Fifteen years later, I wonder why it took me so long to learn that working for myself is far superior to working for another.

I have always loved to write and have published extensively in the fields of cardiovascular physiology, hospital administration and general management. And later when I converted to Catholic Christianity, I began to write for Catholic women's magazines on a variety of subjects.

I continue to love writing-especially about the challenges involved in working from home and all that the phrase entails: dealing with skeptical friends and relatives, developing a system to manage ourselves, how to self-motivate and avoiding some of the pitfalls of being a new business owner.

I have become quite passionate about the benefits of working from home and have decided recently to ramp up my writing in hopes that some of what I write may be useful to others looking for a better way to live without sacrificing a reasonable income.