

VISIO



DIVINA

## *The Wisdom of Contemplative Vision*

### THE PLACE OF SILENCE

*Jalaluddin Rumi*

This is a poem of deepest intimacy. It speaks of a private place known only to the soul and the divine Beloved who haunts and loves the soul, a secret chamber into which the flowering and the flavor of divine Presence can enter. Some have called it the Cave of the Heart. Some have said it is found in the depths of the human Unconscious. Yeshua called it the Bridal Chamber. In Jewish mystical tradition it was depicted as the Holy of Holies — so sacred that only the Lovers and Knowers could enter there.

Though we may never have entered it, everyone has just such a place. It lies hidden within the depths of human being and consciousness. Things happen there. It is a profoundly hushed place, a place of deep and reverent silence—but things happen there. Everything flows into it and is present there. The whole universe and all it contains are gathered at this singularity which is the center-point of the turning world (as T.S. Eliot eulogized it in the **Four Quartets**). It has also been called *le point vierge* (the mysterious virginal point). Thomas Merton came to know it as “the point in you where you are here and now being brought into existence by G-d.”

We came from this virginal point into time and physical form. This is the deep well-spring of the human mystery—our mysterious existence in space and time with the potential to simultaneously transcend them! We are indeed temporal and spatial creatures, but we are also born from eternity.

We inhabit a “clime of duality” but we are nonetheless extra-terrestrial creatures who have come up out of the

wellspring of Eternity to live here in space-time. And while we are here, miraculous things happen.

Rumi hears the whispered words from the Logos speaking eternally to us. He hears choirs from the realm of beauty singing praise for the glory that is ours. He feels the transforming movements of the divine Artist as we are shaped, formed and carved from Image into its ultimate fullness.

The human soul is the clay or stone, the medium in which the Mind of the divine Artist perceives a beautiful new configuration or ultimate form.

Rumi’s visionary words give clarity, although they are also filled with mystery. Perhaps at times we sense this place and process intuitively, and yet it often remains hidden from the viewpoint of the rational mind. When we do feel it, it comes not through our physical senses but is perceived by the heart. Though this place is often occluded by space and time, it remains the secret doorway of Eternal Return, the portal to the Infinite, and the nest of Infinity. Only God knows what our existence will ultimately be there.

*Jalaluddin Rumi (1207-1273) was an extraordinary poet, a wise teacher, spiritual guide, and a Master of Islamic spirituality and Contemplative Wisdom. He played the role of a spiritual midwife to many Muslims, Christians and Jews in his day. His spiritual mentor was Shams-e Tabrizi, who awakened him. This ancient poetry is meant to do the same, to awaken us in our own day.*

## Reflections on Image and Text:

1. *It is difficult to comment on such a poem, or to explain it in anything but poetic speech, and even there words fail us. Perhaps the images and illuminations get closer to the sense of it. Contemplate the series of illuminations used for this visionary poem. Which image stands out most to you? Contemplate that image as an icon or mandala for as long as you need to, then move on to another and another until the whole set of images has a place inside of you.*
2. *What whispering from the eternal Word have you heard? What may you be hearing now?*
3. *What beauty moves you and shapes your soul? From where in your life or in the universe does the divine Beauty most often come?*
4. *Do you have any sense that your soul is a work of art? How would you describe it? Is it a sculpture, a painting, a musical composition, or perhaps a stained glass window?*
5. *When a sculptor carves a block of wood or a stone, what is that process like? If the stone or the wood were alive and sentient, what might it feel?*
6. *Reflect upon and describe how you imagine the divine Image to be that is shaping your soul.*
7. *What is the instrument or tool used for the divine carving that Rumi describes in this poem? What does that imply about the process that the divine Artist is using? How do you sense or notice it happening?*

## A Place for Notes and for Journaling your Answers:

*This reflection, text and its illumination have been provided by Alison Hine and Lynn Bauman as a means for contemplative prayer and spiritual vision.*

# LECTIO DIVINA

*The Contemplative Reading of a Sapiential Text*

*T*here is a place  
where your Word is born in silence,  
a place where you whisper  
to the human heart.  
There is a place where voices  
sing your beauty,  
and every breath  
carves your image into my soul.

—Arranged and edited  
for public reading and illumination by  
Lynn C. Bauman  
from the mystical poetry  
of Jalaluddin Rumi

These poems are found in the  
*Kulliyat-e Shams-e Tabrizi* (Volumes 1-VII)  
or the *Mathnawi* (Volumes 1-VI)

*Contemplating*  
**THE ILLUMINATIONS**







