**Poems of Mary Oliver**

**Storage**  
when i moved from one house to another  
there were many things i had no room  
for. what does one do? i rented a storage  
space. and filled it. years passed.  
occasionally i went there and looked in,  
but nothing happened, not a single  
twinge of the heart.  
as i grew older the things i cared  
about grew fewer, but were more  
important. so one day i undid the lock  
and called the trash man. he took everything.  
i felt like the little donkey when  
his burden is finally lifted. things!  
burn them, burn them! make a beautiful  
fire! more room in your heart for love,  
for the trees! for the birds who own  
nothing -- the reason they can fly.

**Praying**

It doesn’t have to be  
the blue iris, it could be  
weeds in a vacant lot, or a few  
small stones; just  
pay attention, then patch

a few words together and don’t try  
to make them elaborate, this isn’t  
a contest but the doorway

into thanks, and a silence in which  
another voice may speak.

**The Summer Day**

Who made the world?  
Who made the swan, and the black bear?  
Who made the grasshopper?  
This grasshopper, I mean-  
the one who has flung herself out of the grass,  
the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,  
who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down-  
who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.  
Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.  
Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.  
I don't know exactly what a prayer is.  
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down  
into the grass, how to kneel in the grass,  
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,  
which is what I have been doing all day.  
Tell me, what else should I have done?  
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?  
Tell me, what is it you plan to do  
With your one wild and precious life?

**Wild Geese**

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| --- |
| You do not have to be good. |
| You do not have to walk on your knees |
| for a hundred miles through the desert repenting. |
| You only have to let the soft animal of your body |
| love what it loves. |
| Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine. |
| Meanwhile the world goes on. |
| Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain |
| are moving across the landscapes, |
| over the prairies and the deep trees, |
| the mountains and the rivers. |
| Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air, |
| are heading home again. |
| Whoever you are, no matter how lonely, |
| the world offers itself to your imagination, |
| calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting - |
| over and over announcing your place |
| in the family of things.  **Wild, Wild**  This is what love is: The dry rose bush the gardener, in his pruning, missed Suddenly bursts into bloom. A madness of delight; an obsession. A holy gift, certainly, But often, alas, improbable.  Why couldn’t Romeo have settled for someone else? Why couldn’t Tristan and Isolde have refused The shining cup Which would have left peaceful the whole kingdom?  Wild sings the bird of the heart in the forests Of our lives.  Over and over Faust, standing in the garden, doesn’t know Anything that’s going to happen, he only sees The face of Marguerite, which is irresistible.  And wild, wild sings the bird |

**In Blackwater Woods**

Look, the trees

are turning

their own bodies

into pillars

of light,

are giving off the rich

fragrance of cinnamon

and fulfillment,

the long tapers

of cattails

are bursting and floating away over

the blue shoulders

of the ponds,

and every pond,

no matter what its

name is, is

nameless now.

Every year

everything

I have ever learned

in my lifetime

leads back to this: the fires

and the black river of loss

whose other side

is salvation,

whose meaning

none of us will ever know.

To live in this world

you must be able

to do three things:

to love what is mortal;

to hold it

against your bones knowing

your own life depends on it;

and, when the time comes to let it go,

to let it go.

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| **The Journey**   |  | | --- | | One day you finally knew | | what you had to do, and began, | | though the voices around you | | kept shouting | | their bad advice -- | | though the whole house | | began to tremble | | and you felt the old tug | | at your ankles. | | "Mend my life!" | | each voice cried. | | But you didn't stop. | | You knew what you had to do, | | though the wind pried | | with its stiff fingers | | at the very foundations, | | though their melancholy | | was terrible. | | It was already late | | enough, and a wild night, | | and the road full of fallen | | branches and stones. | | But little by little, | | as you left their voice behind, | | the stars began to burn | | through the sheets of clouds, | | and there was a new voice | | which you slowly | | recognized as your own, | | that kept you company | | as you strode deeper and deeper | | into the world, | | determined to do | | the only thing you could do -- | | determined to save | | the only life that you could save. | |  | |  | |  | |  |
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**Logos**

Why worry about the loaves and fishes?  
If you say the right words, the wine expands.  
If you say them with love  
and the felt ferocity of that love  
and the felt necessity of that love,  
the fish explode into many.  
Imagine him, speaking,  
and don’t worry about what is reality,  
or what is plain, or what is mysterious.  
If you were there, it was all those things.  
If you can imagine it, it is all those things.  
Eat, drink, be happy.  
Accept the miracle.  
Accept, too, each spoken word  
spoken with love