

# **THE SPIRITUALITY OF BIRDWATCHING**

Michael F. Nartker, SM

## **INTRODUCTION**

Over twenty-five years ago my youngest sister got me interested in Birdwatching. She bought me a wonderful set of Binoculars which were small, light, and powerful and that I could also use for viewing the stars. She would take me walking in the nearby nature and wildflower preserves and we would see how many bird species we could identify. After several months I was hooked on birdwatching! (And I still used my binoculars to look at the stars every now and then.)

Over the years, I couldn't help but notice the similarities between ***birdwatching*** and ***spiritual life***. It was especially the excitement of discovery that comes with the practice of both.

Yes, the excitement of those few moments of catching the sight of a bird rarely seen with its unique bright feather patterns and familiar song, were all part of the reward of seasoned and novice birdwatchers alike. In the spiritual life, sometimes it seems God is like a bird just waiting and wanting to be caught! The reward for those who choose to follow the discipline of the spiritual life is indescribable. The only difference is that in the end you will be the one *caught by God*.

Knowing the feather patterns and the songs of many species takes years of birdwatching in order to build up the confidence and skill for correct identification. In the end, one still needs the advice of the experts. This is where a *seasoned specialist* or even a group of seasoned birdwatchers can be helpful. The wisdom and years of others go a long way in helping one become experienced. Of course, the key word is "experience," and that takes time and patience.

In the spiritual life "Theophilus," or ***God Lover***, as Luke called his sponsor, will look for a *Spiritual Guide* who is willing to walk the journey with him. This Spiritual Guide is a person whose knowledge is gained not just from his training and books but also from years of experience directing or guiding others. Needless to say, a seasoned Spiritual Guide is a rare person to find, but they are there.

The first and most important thing that I learned as a Birdwatcher and a Theophilus is that both practices require **patience** and **silence**! I purposely chose the word *practicing* because anyone can be quiet, but it is rarely practiced. Just jumping into the bush and trying to catch sight of a bird will only give the novice birdwatcher a few seconds of blurred feathers and a temporary cacophony of bird calls.

Needless to say, because a bird's hearing is excellent, unnecessary conversation will only keep them at a distance. My first experience after rushing into the preserve to catch sight of birds was disappointing until I learned that silence and patience are the key.

One time in my disappointment at birdwatching, I decided that I would just stand still and be quiet no matter what. I was eventually rewarded! As I stood still with my camera at my side, a bright yellowish-orange blur landed in the lower branches of a tree. I waited. After a short while the blur flew down and landed on the ground not far from me. I slowly moved my camera to my eye and started taking pictures. Eventually the blur, which I later identified as a Baltimore Oriole, came closer to the base of a small tree right next to me, seemingly oblivious to my picture taking! What a rare treat!

The whole time the Oriole sang his **specific song**. Without realizing it, I not only learned his song but could identify his presence just by hearing him sing. Birdwatching is one of the few disciplines where identification by hearing instead of just seeing counts as evidence for identification. The modern *bird reporting apps* on computers allows one to electronically enter bird songs as well as bird pics as positive sightings.

Several years I enjoyed reading different books by various spiritual authors and praying from my prayer book. One day, for some reason, I decided to just be still and sit in the presence of the Lord *without keeping busy with the written Word*. Most of the time, though, it seemed I was like one of the disciples in the garden of Gethsemane...sleeping. However, over time, there was a subtle change or shift that I almost missed. I noticed that this meditation time was not all sleeping. I really was awake. While it seemed like the time had dragged on forever, in fact, too much time to account for had flown by. Yet I was always refreshed and

wonderfully peaceful at the end of this quiet time. Whether time dragged on or flew by, a deep-down peace and freshness always rewarded me. I looked forward to this time that I literally gave to the Lord, even though it seemed like the Lord was giving to me.

Peace and refreshment, "...to safe waters you lead me, you restore my strength," Psalm 23.

Eventually, only the continued practice of the stillness and patience of a birdwatcher helped me persevere in this practice of *quiet presence*. It seemed as though I was waiting for a bird to land in my lap. Many years later, I now know that this was the best preparation for me to experience the Lord; as simple as waiting for a little bird to land in my hand.

Once on a retreat at the Trappist Monastery in Gethsemane, Kentucky, I happen to spy an older monk standing in the garden with his hand stretched out as if asking for an offering from some invisible person. Suddenly, a small chickadee landed in his hand and started eating seed that the monk had offered him. He saw me standing there, watching him in the distance, and silently beckoned me to come over and join him. I slowly approached until I was close enough for him to put some small seeds in my hand. He told me to just stand there quietly and the birds would eventually come and eat them. He later said that they are the most trusting of birds, even more so than city pigeons. The trick is to stand still long enough for them to land in your hand. And they did! Their little feet tickled, but I laughed out loud just for the sheer joy of such an experience...and, of course, scared them away.

I would like to invite you along on a casual journey of the Spirituality of Birdwatching. Maybe you will get hooked too. I do promise little exciting tidbits from my own store of experience to entice you along a way that is both satisfying and rewarding. I hope the reward will be a deeper spirituality and relationship with the Lord...and birds.

It is exciting knowing that birdwatching can lend itself so well in helping us participate in these ***Attributes of God***, which in the next section I will talk about.

# **THE SPIRITUALITY OF BIRDWATCHING**

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## **PART ONE**

Birdwatching has been around a long time, and the science of this practice is well known and has even been improving with recent **DNA** comparisons between the species of birds. The best thing about birdwatching is that the particulars are few. However, they are important. The *overall physical features* play an important role in identification of one species and subspecies from another. Besides **body parts**, there are the birds' *behavior, voice, plumage, and range*. While most of the above is obvious, pointing out the obvious can be very helpful. For example, the range of penguins are usually confined to the arctic and generally will not be found as far south as Ohio, unless one is at a zoo. So, no use looking for penguins in Ohio.

I will try to keep it **simple**, but one should know that there are significant differences between birds, for example, as in a hummingbird, a shorebird, a gull, a passerine (songbird), or an eagle. Generally, all birds have a bill, two eyes, two wings, tail, two legs with feet, and a main body part of various shapes. I told you it would be simple. However, each body part can vary immensely. The bill, for example, can be long and pointed like the hummingbird in order to reach the nectar inside a flower. It can also be short and stubby for eating seeds and nuts like a Cardinal bird (passerine). It can be wide and thick as in a duck or goose which is used mainly for grazing. Or it can be hooked and strong for ripping open prey, as in an eagle or hawk.

What attracts humans to birds, though, is the **color of their plumage**! And there is such a variety even in the plain grays and browns. When we add patterns and markings, we can tell quite a variety of species apart just by their specific markings which can be on their wings, or necks, or tails, and bellies. There is such a variety of colors also: reds, yellows, blues, greens, oranges, pink, purple, and of course white! Imagine mixing them all up in different patterns and you will have a very specific species of bird with its color and markings. It is almost too easy!

It is the same with our **spirituality**, so many different approaches, but yet so simple an approach. As mentioned in the Introduction, God is like a bird waiting

to be caught. There is a *subtle attraction* to the Creator that at first catches our interest deep down inside that we just can't put our finger on what it is that attracts us. The more we explore the more we are caught in the ***web of the great unknown***, or as Brother Lawrence writes in his book, "*Cloud of the Unknowing*", the mystery of God surrounds us like a cloud where we can almost touch but never fully know or comprehend. We can only sit quietly and allow the cloud to embrace us.

What is it about birds that attracts us so much? Is it just the fascinating colors and patterns, that make up the beauty behind such a simple creature? Or is it their freedom in flight that gives them the sky as their home and the gentle breezes and updrafts as their playground? Freedom and beauty are both attributes of God! And yet we want to capture such creatures to make them our own. Yet ***in the capturing they lose their freedom*** which is also a subtle part of their beauty. We want to capture God and put him in a cage, a tabernacle, or a metal box. And then, what will we do with him?

Hopefully, a true birdwatcher will never cage a bird, but will enter into the world of the bird itself. A true spiritual person will also enter the world of God. But how can one do that? One way to *enter the world of God* is to participate in **God's Attributes**. One way to enter into the world of birds is to give them feed, or water, and provide them with birdbaths, or to build them houses and shelters, and to even grow certain plants that attract them. ***Make your world like theirs***. I don't imagine that we can do this with God, but we can enter into **God's world** by participating in the attributes that define who God is. "God is love," as Saint John the Evangelist writes, "and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him," Chapter 3:16b. It is almost too easy!

There are other attributes of God that even the Greek Philosophers knew about: *Beauty, Goodness, Truth, Freedom*, and more. Participating in these Attributes of God allow us to enter into the World of God, it is almost like dancing. Maybe that is why birds are so attractive to us because of their *beauty* and *freedom*, but also their elusiveness. Only God cannot really be captured and caged, we only think we can! However, Saint Teresa of Avila does write that the most important virtue is **humility** and with **love** we can capture God and hold him!

Music and Art are two of the main disciplines that allow us to participate fully in these Attributes of God through our compositions in music and art. As we compose our music or paint our masterpiece we also participate in another Attribute of God, **Creation**. Imagine creating a piece of music and then playing that composition for others. The most wonderful thing is that those who **listen** to beautiful music also participate in this Attribute of God simply by hearing the language of the composer speak to us as he or she sings their song!

When we visit an Art Museum, we participate in the attributes of God by simply enjoying the beautiful works of art. We do not even have to paint; we just **simply enter into the artist's world** through his or her creation and allow that piece of art speak to us using the artist's language of visual symbols. So, when you are birdwatching, you are entering into the world of birds and allowing God's creation to speak to you using their language through their songs and calls, their colors and patterns, their behavior and even their mating dance!

Have you ever thought what God is saying to you through our beautiful feathered friends? When you start having **dreams of flying**, then maybe you have begun to taste the attribute of freedom – in your dreams – that birds enjoy as part of their nature! The attribute of freedom is letting go of whatever binds us to this earth, whether money, power, possessions, our anger or impatience, but eventually life!

As we **participate** in birdwatching **we become** like birds, free, spiritually free through **our practice** of patience as we enter into the spiritual world of God. When we love, **we become** like God who is love by our **participation** in God's attribute of love. But love is just one attribute of God that invites us to participate in all the other attributes of God. At one point we will begin to go deeper in this spiritual dance with the Divine. And again, birdwatching gives us this insight to how to go deeper in this practice of the Spirituality of Birdwatching. That is the topic of the next part in this series.

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### **PART TWO**

At the beginning I mentioned the **excitement** of birdwatching that comes with spotting new birds never seen before by the novice. As the learning curve increases and the sharing among other birdwatchers deepens, a kind of camaraderie develops that is unique to any and every discipline. This is the same with spirituality shared with others on the path to a deeper spiritual life. This camaraderie is important because it helps support each other in the sometimes difficult and dry times of birdwatching and the spiritual life.

As the birdwatcher is drawn more deeply into the world of birds another world begins to open up before him, ***the larger world of nature***. The two almost go hand in hand since the birdwatcher has to eventually leave his own backyard and enter into the larger world of birds. Certainly, one can stay in their own personal bird sanctuary with all their feeders and birdbaths and houses, but in the end, it is **limited** and **artificial**! To see the birds in their own ***natural habitat*** is the final goal of the committed birdwatcher, even if that takes them halfway around the world.

The excitement talked about above also deepens and becomes a **subtle presence** that almost welcomes the birdwatcher into the birds' world or habitat. This subtle presence awakens the birdwatcher to an attentiveness that is needed to be alert to the small details of the sights and sounds in the bird's world. It is almost a sustained quickening as the birdwatcher becomes one with the environment as though trying to be like a bird in its own attentiveness to its survival. One can almost share in the freedom of flying, especially with the larger birds when they ride the thermals above looking for prey. This is probably the nearest that a birdwatcher comes to sharing in the attributes of a bird that enjoys the freedom of the skies.

Truly entering into the world of nature was an ***experience that our ancestors*** lived every day, but we seemed to have lost that desire generations ago as we became more and more isolated from our environment by our modern-day life. The native Indians of America were very attuned to the world around them to the

point that even their dress and art imitated this world of nature and their Great Spirit was represented by the Eagle. My own **solo backpacking** trips gave me a taste of what it might have been like to truly live in nature, even though I was using modern backpacking equipment.

In the late fall and early spring, I would backpack by myself into the Laurel or the Allegheny Mountains that had hiking trails that went for miles into the mountains. The first night camping out in the wild by oneself was always the scariest, with every sound and noise announcing every kind of animal or beast that our imagination could make up. I usually didn't get much sleep the first night since I kept my imagination at full alert. However, in the morning I always awoke refreshed and wonderfully thankful to be alive as the evening terrors quickly evaporated.

Again, that ***quickenning excitement of the wild*** called me to hit the trails and go deeper into the forest. The experience of backpacking made me felt strongly that we were made for the wild and that we were more fully human when we returned to live and enjoy it to the full. Like a caged bird we needed to escape the comforts of modern life that we have ironically called "**natural.**" What must a caged bird feel, even though we provide it with food and water and love?

As the excitement of nature calls us to our true home, so our spiritual lives call through the subtle attributes of God which invites us to the **divine dance** each day. Whether at a Music Concert or at an Art Museum, even nature calls us to enter into the dance of the divine through nature. It has been shown through scientific studies that a good walk through the woods does wonders for our mental health. Through birdwatching our appreciation of God grows beyond this discipline to include nature itself. How wonderfully nature has sustained life throughout all these eons. And can evolution, on a smaller scale, be seen in the subtle difference of bird song announce a future species? Some species of bird look so similar that only their bird song can tell them apart.

As we become more comfortable in our modern world, we can easily forget where we came from and each passing generation finds it more difficult to enjoy, let alone return to nature. How many tribes in the world are left that truly live off the land and are one with nature? I am not saying it is an easy life, but it was a life that we have lost touch. As we become familiar with the spirituality of our



native American brothers and sisters, how far have we strayed from the simple directives of the gospel message, especially the two commandments that Jesus had given us; to love God and to love our neighbor as our self?

Even the native Indians of a hundred and fifty years ago would adopt their enemies when captured, as in Simon Kenton and Daniel Boone, as part of their family. **Servant of God Nicholas Black Elk** (1863-1930) an Oglala of the Lakota Sioux was a survivor of the massacre at Wounded Knee and is well known from his writings, *Black Elk Speaks*. Baptized a Catholic, he struggled with his new faith and his Indian spiritual history and heritage and how to reconcile the different halves. Apparently, he found a way. In 2017 the Vatican authorized his cause for canonization.

Over time the discipline of birdwatching will open us up to a much larger world that we will want to be a part of, or at least to get to know and understand. Our native American Indian brothers and sisters can teach us much about the nature we left behind but are only now trying to get in touch with again. They are the best trackers in the world, which would be an asset for a birdwatcher, but they are still in touch with and close to nature.

If we love and appreciate the different species of birds, how much more should we love and appreciate one another. This is the dance of the divine that calls us to love one another by going deeper into the nature of God. And yet God's attributes are all around us in nature. It is we who must enter the dance or leave God to dance alone. We make our little yard or space a sanctuary attractive to birds, but it is artificial and limited. What if we were doing the same for God, making our life limited and artificial? Would God find that attractive? What could we do to attract God? We mentioned this previously that Saint Teresa of Avila wrote that only by **humility and love** can we capture God and hold him!

In the Final Part we will go deeper into the spirituality of birdwatching and learn how to attract God and hold him with the Spirituality of Birdwatching.



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### **PART THREE**

I know what the caged bird feels, alas!  
When *the sun is bright on the upland slopes;*  
When *the wind stirs soft through the springing grass,*  
*And the river flows like a stream of glass;*  
When the first bird sings and the first bud opes,  
And the faint perfume from its chalice steals –  
I know what the caged bird feels!

I know why the caged bird beats his wing  
Till blood is red on the cruel bars;  
For he must fly back to his perch and cling  
When he fain would be on the bough a-wing;  
And a pain still throbs in the old, old scars  
And they pulse again with a keener sting –  
I know why he beats his wing!

*I know why the caged bird sings, ah me,*  
When his wing is bruised and his bosom sore,  
*When he beats his bars and **would be free**;*  
It is not a carol of joy or glee,  
But a prayer that he sends from his heart's deep core,  
But a plea that upward to Heaven he flings –  
*I know why the caged birds sings!*

#### ***“Sympathy”***

Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906)

Paul Laurence Dunbar was one of the first nationally known African American writers born in Dayton, Ohio. Dunbar was the first child born into freedom by Joshua and Matilda, his parents, whose experiences as slaves in Kentucky, influenced his writing as can be seen in the above poem *Sympathy*. My mother, who was well read, enjoyed his poetry, which I didn't appreciate until later in life,

since much of it was written in the negro dialect. She pointed out his home to us children, which I walked by many a time in that part of the neighborhood as a boy, which was quite tame then, not knowing the importance he played in American poetry and literature, even internationally.

If you patiently follow along with me in this last Part, I will show you how the Spirituality of Birdwatching leads us into the *world of God* through a **deeper love**, in the Divine Dance, a dance that includes all of nature. This is the *excitement* and the *goal* of the Spirituality of Birdwatching which goes beyond the discipline of just watching birds in their natural habitat but to a love of all nature, simply because it exists!

I would like to begin with the poem above, *"I know why the caged bird sings!"* (verse 21). We assume because he writes in verse 17, *"...(he) would be **free**."* The first stanza informs the reader what the bird enjoyed before he was caged in verses 2, 3, 4, 7, *"...sun...bright on the upland slopes...the wind stirs soft through the springing grass and the river flows like a stream of glass...I know what the caged bird feels!"* The owner of the bird thinks it is happy because it **sings** but is ignorant that the poor creature really wants to be free, again in verse 17 and 21, *"...when he beats his bars and would be free...I know why the caged bird sings!"* Maybe the young poet, Laurence, can appreciate *what the bird feels* when he listens to his own mother's stories about her life as a slave, as remembered by a friend of the family, LaVerne Sci.

We all have pets that we love very much and assume they love us, but that is where the deception lies. How do we know that our pets love us, especially if it is a fish, a turtle, or a bird? M. Scott Peck defines **cathexis** as an attachment to some thing or object or animal, such as our pets, stuffed teddy bear, piece of clothing, an article or good luck bracelet, etc. Cathexis is not love; he clearly states. But he adds that this type of **"love"** *is necessary to get sufficiently close to be able to truly love*. We seem to feel that our pet loves us, but how do we know? We can simply find out by taking its cage outside and opening the door. If it truly loves us it will never fly away. Some pet-store owners count on you doing just that since it keeps them in business.

As the above poem intuit, the bird *only knows the **freedom** it once had*, as we read in verse 8 and 9, *"...(as) the caged bird beats his wing till blood is red on the*

*cruel bars.*” Keeping a caged bird because we think they are cute is cruel, but knowing they are trying to escape is even worse, especially if we were an admirer of their freedom.

A birdwatcher, by definition, would never cage a bird but *only observes them in the wild*, in their ***natural habitat***. Part of the beauty of a bird goes beyond their feathers at the least to include *their sense of freedom in the wild* at the most. As love for the discipline grows the individual birdwatcher moves beyond the isolated and artificial habitat of their back-yard sanctuary to the open wild, since these things are just another way of entrapment. Birdwatching is more than a glimpse out the kitchen window at the bird feeder, but it is a beginning of a **cathexis** (love) through certain birds like the Cardinal or the Song Sparrow that visit our backyard sanctuary.

Over time the birdwatcher begins to observe *the different types of birds* in her neighborhood or local nature preserve. As commitment grows, seasonal visits by *migratory birds* along their routes may pay an unsuspected visit. Location is always important for spotting these events and forces us to move out of our backyard and even beyond our local nature preserve to locations where nature provides food and water. When we visit these **Hot Spots** in birding we are entering into the big league!

Serious birdwatching moves us from our backyard to the local nature reserves to those hot spots along migratory routes. Our commitment to birdwatching moves us from just looking out the window at our bird feeder to learning the local bird species to awaiting the seasonal migrations of birds in local hot spots. Our love for birds grows from the caged bird to backyard sanctuaries to appreciating our feathered friends in their natural habitats locally and even nationally and internationally! As we enter into the wonderful world of birds, we begin not only to learn their dance, but we find ourselves appreciating the dance that opens us up into all of nature.

As in our spiritual growth through love, we pass through many stages. The first one we mentioned earlier, cathexis, is not really love but introduces us to the others. In our English language we use one word for Love, but in Greek we learn there are at least five: STORGE or *familial love*, PHILIA or *friendly/ platonic love*, EROS or *romantic love*, XENIA or *guest love*, and AGAPE or *divine love*! Each

definition moves us to an exclusive love, like Eros, or to a more inclusive love, like Philia and Xenia. Only Agape includes all of the above mentioned and was used by the early Christians as the love of Christ.

How does nature fit into all of this? As we enter the world of birds, we see *Eros love* played out in the mating dances, especially in birds that mate for life. *Storge love* is seen in parents raising their chicks and even in teaching them to fly and hunt. *Philia love* can be seen in birds like the chickadees that overcome their fear of us to feed out of our hands. *Xenia love* is hard pressed in the bird world, let alone agape love. Let me know when you spot it. Supposedly the mythological bird, Phoenix, would die and rise again from its ashes, as the example of *Agape love*. It was known to feed its young from its own blood pecked from its breast.

Another aspect of Agape love, where one denies themselves for the sake of the other, can be expressed in different ways. As to birds, those who give their time and energy to deepen their love, understanding and appreciation for our avian creatures expresses this love best. This love and appreciation are best shown when we can love our feathered friends at a distance, respecting their space and world and allowing them the freedom to exit alongside of us but not as a part of us. The best we can do to show our love and respect is to enter into their world without disrupting it and leaving it undisturbed.

Imagine what it would be like to become a bird for real, if only for a day? What would it be like to fly free in the skies or soar on thermals for hours with ease? If we became a bird, could we teach our feathered friends about agape love, that goes beyond just loving ones own kind. That is where the difference breaks down. We as humans are given a great gift where we can choose to love birds at a distance, but we can love one another with this agape love. Every time another human dies for us out of selfless sacrifice, that is agape love. As far as I know, we are the only species that our creator has become human to die for us out of God's *agape love* for us!

Theophilus, the bird watcher, became the bird lover, which led him to become the lover of all humankind and creation. The First Theophilus became the lover of all through his love of birds, "Are not five sparrows sold for two small coins? Yet not one of them has escaped the notice of God." We have not escaped his notice either, since he has died for us because of *agape love* for us.

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### **FINALE**

Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you **love (agape)** me more than these?”

He said to him, “Yes, Lord, you know that I **love (philia)** you.”

He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” He then said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you **love (agape)** me?”

He said to him, “Yes, Lord, you know that I **love (philia)** you.”

He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you **love (philia)** me?”

Peter was distressed that he had said to him a third time, “Do you **love (philia)** me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I **love (philia)** you.”

Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.”

### **John 21: 15-18**

Jesus didn't speak Greek, but John, the One Whom Jesus Loved (agape) and the Evangelist who wrote this gospel, knew Greek and clearly meant **agape love, Divine Love**. In the beautiful passage above, which takes place the morning of the resurrection on the seashore in front of a fire, Jesus puts the question of love to Peter. “Do you love me, Peter, with a **divine love (agape love)**, a love that is willing to die for me?” We know Peter's answer before he even speaks, the Peter who denied Christ three times. Jesus now asks him three times in front of the fire. Three times Peter answers with **philia love**, a human love, **a friendly, platonic love**. That is obviously not the answer Jesus is looking for.

If God is willing to enter into our world because of love for us and His Son Jesus Christ who was willing to die for us out of love for us, agape love, is also willing to accept us where we are at, which is a human love, a friendly or platonic love. We

also know that to enter into God's world will eventually ask of us a divine love, agape love, a willingness to die for one another.

Theophilus, as mentioned at the beginning, was a lover of God, a platonic lover of God: Theo = God and philus = lover. Theophilus is also challenged, like us to become Theagapus, a Divine Lover of God. The spirituality of birdwatchers helps us to appreciate the wonderful world of birds that opens before us an appreciation for all of creation and prepares us for an appreciation of all of God's creation, especially humankind. It is a big step to make, like birdwatching where a lot will have to be given up, beginning with our backyard entrapment of birdfeeders. But it will also give a lot, a deep understanding and eventually a love of birds.

When we enter into the world of birds, we will never be the same. The change may be gradual and even subtle, but at some point, we will become like birds through our love for them, then we will appreciate their beauty and freedom, and this alone invites into the dance of the divine through God's attributes of beauty and freedom. The next step in this dance of the divine is left up to us.

Peter met the Lord on the way out of Rome and asked him one last question, ***"Quo Vadis, Petros?"*** *"Where are you going, Peter?"* Peter turned around and eventually met his death in Rome. We will eventually meet our death, but why wait until then to enter into the Divine Dance?