

Two Poems

By **Peter C. Venable**

Undistracted

“Undistracted prayer is the highest act of the intellect.”

Evagrius Ponticus, *Chapters on Prayer*

“But let us be convinced of the fact
that we will never be anything else but beginners, all our life!”

Thomas Merton, *Contemplative Prayer*

To sit – still – in light or dark seeking neither
eyelids tight as mussel shells
silence deep as a storm cellar
inner voices hushed as shadow speech

then the brain storms with waves of phantasms
across the mind’s fantasmagoria theater
until sheer will shutters out all light

for a moment. Or two.

Mind’s eye blinks. The noonday demon stirs
your body’s temple into squirming,
curling and uncurling toes, tasting
that first wet kiss at the dark doorway

then your shin furiously itches
until its skin is under fingernails.

You blink, exhale and try again.

Peter C. Venable has written both free and metric verse for over fifty years and been published in *Vineyards*, *Third Wednesday*, *Time of Singing*, *Windhover: A Journal of Christian Literature*, *The Christian Communicator*, *The Whirlwind Review*, *The Anglican Theological Review* and elsewhere. A semi-retired clinician, he volunteers at a prison camp and food pantry, leads vespers services for senior citizens, sings in the annual December *Messiah*, and is graced with a happy marriage, a daughter and son-in-law and Yeshua.



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Stilling

A brother came to Abba Poemen and said to him, “Many thoughts come into my mind and put me in danger.” He sent him out into the open air, and said “Open your lungs and do not breathe.” He replied, “I cannot do that.” Then he said to him, “Just as you can’t stop air from coming into your lungs, so you cannot stop thoughts coming into your mind. Your part is to resist them.”

The Desert Fathers

Snow anemones sag to crystalline lawns,
windy swathes shredding their branches.

A Cardinal seems a cherry on a frosty limb,
fluffing at a female peering
from a Juniper bough.

Staring through the picture window,
the snowy frame presses my retina
and when eyes close

the white rectangle lingers
and fades into inner pitch.

Thoughts swell, burst into
a polar-capped squirrel’s nest,
a snow crystal sliding on glass . . .

deep breaths . . . silent . . . still . . .

until You fill all.